

From: Eulala Mills [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, December 2, 2023 2:10 PM
To: david.eby.MLA@leg.bc.ca; premier@gov.bc.ca
Cc: HISTRA Association; Rachel Diment; Paul Diment; northinfo; lana.popham.MLA@leg.bc.ca; josie.osborne.MLA@leg.bc.ca
Subject: Urgent Appeal to Preserve Community Stability and Property Rights

Dear Premier Eby:

I write to you today not merely as a constituent, but as a member of both the Hornby Island and Saanich communities, seeking to convey the profound personal impact that recent legislative changes pose to our way of life.

The removal of long-standing property rights protection, specifically Legal Non-Conforming status for Short-Term Vacation Rentals (STVRs) across British Columbia, has caused more than just sleepless nights; it has ignited a palpable sense of uncertainty and concern within our community. Unfortunately, it seems that the plight of Vacation Rental families, who are predominantly deeply rooted Hornby community members, has not received the consideration it merits.

Allow me to illustrate the real-world consequences of these proposed changes through my own narrative. My mother spent two decades tirelessly searching for a place to call home on Hornby. In 1987, at the age of 60, she secured an undeveloped lot and built her home, realizing a dream she had pursued with determination and considerable sacrifices.

We lost Mom two years ago. Over the last 10 years of her life, she was able to do less and less physically and to afford less and less of the maintenance work needed to keep a rural, remote home safe and secure. Since I took on responsibility for the house I have had to repair septic, electric, plumbing, roof, cisterns and water collection, fencing and decks. Not to mention the work that was needed inside. It is a labour of love and we feel Mom in every board of her home, we look out the window and see where her ashes were spread, we know her spirit visits in the Herons at the shoreline.

Our community shares the urgent need for stable, long-term, and affordable rental housing felt across BC and Canada. However, ending Vacation Rentals on Hornby Island is not the solution to our local challenge. They cannot be long term rentals as they are almost all homes that owners occupy throughout the year. What they can do is provide crucial funding for affordable housing through the Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT). With only a very small number of rustic resorts, 75% of the MRDT

funds come from Vacation Rentals on Hornby. This year, Hornby expects to receive around \$50,000 from the MRDT, offering our housing efforts, for the first time, a regular, predictable, and annual financial lifeline. Allowing the continued legal operation of Vacation Rentals does more for affordable housing in our community than anything we have been able to do so far.

Now, faced with a local change that was predicated on the protections offered by 'Grandfathering', the Province's removal of Legal Non-Conforming property rights, makes the potential of losing the ability to offer our home as a Vacation Rental very real. This income is not a luxury; it is a lifeline that allows us to preserve my mother's dream. Without it, I fear I may struggle, and likely fail, to uphold her legacy for our family. Importantly, our home will never be affordable housing, and forcing our family out will not contribute to meeting urgent housing needs on Hornby. Yet the tax (MRDT) dollars it generates actually will. I gladly contribute these dollars and fully support a move towards the full amount supporting affordable housing needed in our community.

I understand the need to address housing, but I implore you to reconsider the changes to Legal Non-Conforming property rights. The removal of this protection leaves property owners vulnerable to significant harm. If complete retraction is deemed untenable, I propose a compromise—revise the changes to have Legal Non-Conforming rights expire upon the sale of the property, ensuring that rights do not extend in perpetuity while still protecting current owners.

The other critical issue for communities like Hornby, that have a seasonal and project-based workforce who need to be housed while they work on the island is the 90 day minimum for long term rentals. We often house workers for 4 to 8 week projects, and, because they have not been 'short term', have been allowed throughout the year. Hornby, like other rural and remote islands, relies on these temporary housing arrangements to keep its economic and workforce engines running. The Provincial changes to make rentals below 90 days 'short term' along with our current bylaws limiting short term rentals to May to September means that this would not be possible starting next year, creating real hardship for our community and all of its citizens.

I close with this, each community is unique in many ways and should determine where and how Vacation Rentals fit into their tourism and housing. At the same time, property owners must be protected from harm when, through no fault of their own, legal frameworks change. The context of real estate in urban centers is very different from that in rural, remote communities. Your legislation has gone part way in recognizing these realities. Fixing the harms on rural remote communities inflicted by removing the 90 day limit and on owners by continuing legal non-conforming regulations for current owners, removing those rights at the time of a sale can take you the rest of the way.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I trust that you will move this forward acknowledging the nuanced realities of our unique circumstances and communities.

Sincerely,

Eulala Mills

President, LevelHeaded Thinking
