

Backgrounder: All hands on deck to deliver affordable housing across British Columbia

Bold new housing solutions are needed in our province. A comprehensive strategy that draws on all levels of government, non-profits, and homebuilders to create more attainable homes available for a range of incomes and backgrounds is a foundational commitment of David Eby in his campaign to become the next Premier of B.C.

Action for those without homes

The most acute symptom of the housing affordability crisis is that despite B.C.'s prosperity too many are unhoused without adequate shelter and support.

- Double B.C.'s capital grants for non-profits to allow shovel-ready projects in high-need communities with supportive Indigenous or local governments to build more housing to respond to homelessness, immediately.
- Increase the Indigenous Housing Fund and engage further First Nations and Indigenous-led housing groups to fund, build, and/or support housing for Indigenous people both in and away from traditional communities.
- Increase staff supports and services for people living in supportive housing including culturally appropriate programming, treatment, and care for residents, while continuing to build out complex care.

Securing housing for all

We don't have enough homes in our province for population growth, rental housing is seeing dramatic rent increases, or is being bought up by huge international corporations. This result in housing that is unattainable for many middle-class families, seniors and individuals who work, live in and keep communities healthy and functioning. We must secure affordable housing by partnering with the non-profit sector and safeguard it for the long term.

Rental Housing Acquisition Fund:

- Provide \$500 million in capital funding to jumpstart a rental housing acquisition strategy to quickly and efficiently provide one-time capital grants so that non-profits can purchase affordable rental buildings listed for sale, to protect the renters living there without displacement.
- Participating non-profits will be supported in obtaining private financing so that income generated by the current rents will sustain the financing and operating costs of the property, minimizing the financial involvement of the province on an ongoing basis. Tenants who need help will be supported by rent supplements to ensure building sustainability.
- Increasingly, in B.C. and across Canada, rental housing is being bought up by huge international corporations driving up rents for regular British Columbians. We will establish by law a right of first refusal for acquiring these at-risk homes and secure renters' housing.

Building attainable middle-class housing

Across the world, and in B.C., governments have intervened to build attainable middle-class housing to ensure people can afford to live in the communities where they work. Examples include the entire country of Singapore, the city of Vienna and, closer to home, the city of Whistler. A David Eby government will immediately launch BC Builds, a housing development initiative representing a substantial expansion of government's role in facilitating the delivery of middle-class homes that people can actually afford.

BC Builds:

- Work with First Nation and city governments, and private and non-profit partners, in both urban and rural areas to offer rapid approvals, increased density, land, and construction financing to deliver multi-family housing developments that can offer attainable middle-class housing for a range of incomes, both rental and purchase.
- Using tools like upzoning select parcels in participating partner municipalities, in combination with government's favourable lending rates, and matched with expedited approvals – and for some projects public land – will result in significant savings directed to further reduce the costs of housing for the people living in those units.
- These units will be accessible to B.C. residents only with eligibility determined by working with partnering municipalities to determine local priorities.
- Affordability must be built-in long term for all projects, including when homes are sold – options include co-op structures, community land trusts, and shared equity partnership models.
- Major review of all Provincial assets/lands that can be levered to build housing people can afford and ensure lands are dedicated to these purposes.

Leveling the playing field

Big and small investors alike are using the housing shortage to make excessive profits through short-term flipping. Rapid home flipping – the process of buying a house and selling it within a short period for much more than what was originally paid – has spurred speculative demand and excessive price growth, making homes more expensive for regular British Columbians. We want investments in long-term rental housing, but we don't want British Columbians competing in the resale market with flippers, so we'll use the data collected on real estate sales and returns to construct a Flipping Tax to discourage this activity.

A BC Flipping Tax:

- A Flipping Tax will apply on the sale of a residential property. The tax rate goes down to zero the longer the property is held. The tax will be highest for those who hold properties for the shortest period of time, and phases out after two years.
- As homes should be for people and families to live in, not for speculators to profit from, the tax will include exemptions for life circumstances due to, for example, death, employment loss, divorce, or disability. Builders will also be exempted to encourage housing construction.

- The objective is to prevent flipping rather than generate revenue to a select few, therefore there will be significant notice in advance of implementation to allow people to sell their investment properties and increase housing supply in the market.
- Because this is designed to discourage real estate speculation, any revenue will go back into building homes for British Columbians.

Dealing with frauds, cheats and criminals

British Columbians are tired of being told that gang members are ‘known to police’ while no apparent action is taken to seize the proceeds of their crimes. At the same time, large corporations and wealthy investors are using loopholes to avoid paying their fair share. All of this drives up housing costs for everyday people.

- Using the Cullen Commission recommendation to create a new enforcement tool will allow investigations into suspicious real estate transactions.
- Purchasers suspected of organized crime will be forced to explain how they got the money to buy properties, and properties that are purchased with the proceeds of crime will be seized to fund public programs.
- The beneficial ownership registry will be strengthened to ensure identity-verification.
- A new dedicated provincial tax enforcement team will shift our reliance away from Ottawa to identify people who declare poverty-level incomes but buy multi-million dollar homes for further tax review.
- We will close loopholes that enable billionaires and big corporations to avoid taxes, gaps such as the use of ‘bare trusts’.

Reducing the barriers to entry and delivery of attainable housing

We are in a housing crisis, and our laws should reflect that – where they’re preventing homes from being made available, or resulting in lengthy and unhelpful approvals processes, we need to change the game.

- Homebuilders in major urban centers will be allowed to replace a single family home with up to three units on the same footprint, as long as they are consistent with existing setbacks and height requirements. The Province will engage cities to ensure infrastructure can support this initiative.
- Secondary suites will be made legal in every region of the province.
- Reforms to municipal approvals processes outlined in the Development Approvals Review Process report will be implemented urgently in partnership with municipalities.
- Provincial permitting for housing will be ‘one-stop’ and simplified.
- Strata restrictions on rentals will be removed, and stratas will be given the ability to appear easily at the Residential Tenancy Branch to address any health, safety or quality of life

issues caused by tenant behaviour that are not addressed by the unit owner, at the cost of the unit owner.

- The 19+ age restrictions in some stratas will be abolished so that young families don't have to move out if they have a child. Strata restrictions for 'seniors only' will remain in place to ensure seniors have accessible retirement communities.
- Municipalities' 'housing needs plans' will be used to set minimum standards for housing delivery, with municipalities exceeding targets rewarded with additional community amenity support and those failing to hit targets supported through provincial intervention to meet growth demands.
- Short-term rental companies will be required to provide cities and regions with information about unlicensed short-term rental units in their community, empowering them to balance the needs of accommodation for tourism and accommodation for residents that works for their local needs.