



## HOUSING AND SAFETY

Safety and shelter are key points of interest for those living in BC. The pandemic brought with it social issues and economic turbulence that have had lingering ripples in our housing market and safety in our communities. More than 100,000 people moved to B.C. in 2021, and another 150,000 people in 2022, the most in 60 years. This newsletter digs into some of the new and innovative government programs and funding that are addressing affordable housing and safety in our communities.



# Homes for People

An action plan to deliver more homes for people, faster

**StrongerBC**  
for everyone

## HOUSING

Right now in B.C., finding a home you can afford, can be challenging. As a government, we are focused on getting more homes and affordable rental units built, and making the housing market work for people.

Two Actions plans have been announced that will dramatically change the accessibility of housing in BC in short order: 1) Homes for People Action Plan; and 2) Belonging - Action Plan for Homelessness.

# Homes for People Action Plan

This plan lays out the work to unlock more homes, faster, by working with municipalities to speed up permitting approvals, allowing for more multi-unit housing to be built, and making it easier and more affordable to rent out secondary suites. This is a \$4 billion investment over three years and a commitment to invest \$12 billion over the next 10 years to deliver more homes for people, faster. The Province is on track to deliver a projected 108,000 homes completed or under active construction by 2027-28 with tens of thousands more homes to come through other avenues.

Below I've listed the key points in this housing plan:

- deliver more middle-income small-scale, multi-unit housing that people can afford, including town homes, duplexes and triplexes through zoning changes and proactive partnerships;
- offer forgivable loans for homeowners to build and rent secondary suites below market rates to increase affordable rental supply quickly;
- build thousands more affordable homes for renters, Indigenous Peoples on and off reserve, women and children leaving violence, and build thousands more on-campus student housing units;
- deliver thousands of new homes near public transit, and launch BC Builds to use public land to deliver affordable homes for people;
- introduce a flipping tax to discourage short-term speculation;
- provide an annual income-tested tax credit of up to \$400 per year for renters;
- provide more homes and supports for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness;
- streamline and modernizing permitting to reduce costs and speed up approvals to get homes built faster; and
- strengthening enforcement of short-term rentals.

B.C. has already announced that it is investing in digital permitting to get homes built faster, to help people and the construction industry to make the building process quicker and more collaborative. [Learn more here](#)



## Belonging - Action Plan for Homelessness

This plan adds 3,900 new supportive housing units and 240 complex-care spaces province wide, and creates multidisciplinary regional response teams designed to rapidly respond to encampments to better support people sheltering outdoors to move inside. The Belonging in BC Homelessness Plan is delivered through initiatives across government and supported by investments of \$1.18 billion in the 2023 Budget, and \$633 million in the 2022 Budget.

Many of these strategies are currently underway. For example, three new supportive housing projects in capital region will provide new affordable homes to more than 130 people facing homelessness in the Capital Regional District. The Province, through BC Housing, provided \$5.7 million to the House of Courage project through the Building BC: Supportive Housing Fund. The Capital Regional District provided \$11.3 million through the federal Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI).



### Darry's Place, the Comox Valley Transition Society's new second-stage housing!

On Thursday last week, Minister of Housing, Ravi Kahlon, was in town and we were delighted to attend the announcement of the opening of Darry's Place, the Comox Valley Transition Society's new second-stage housing.

Second-stage housing provides short-term accommodation with on-site supports for women and their dependent children leaving violence. Residents typically move into second-stage housing after a stay in a transition house, and then live in the units for six to 18 months before moving to more permanent housing. We are grateful for all the partners involved in providing this crucial service in in Courtenay-Comox.



#### **OTHER PROJECTS IN PROGRESS IN COURTENAY-COMOX:**

- Cyprus Gardens 52 units for Seniors - Comox
- Wachiay Friendship Centre Housing - 40 units - Courtenay
- NIC student and student family housing - 217 beds - Courtenay

## Letter to Downtown Businesses

Here in the Comox Valley, issues around housing affordability, homelessness, and safety are a reality. On March 16th, the Courtenay Downtown BIA hosted a sharing event at which I sat on the panel along with Mayor Wells, and Representatives from Island Health The Fire Department and the RCMP. I'd love to share with you my Open Letter to the Courtenay DBIA.



April 11, 2023

Deputy Chair Committee of the Whole  
**Ronna-Rae Leonard, MLA**  
Courtenay - Comox

Re: Street disorder in downtown Courtenay

Street disorder is stressful for all involved, leaving many feeling lost and needing help, dealing with break-ins, people sleeping in doorways, fires, vandalism, and more. I know we are a compassionate community, and I believe we can rise to the challenge to meet all our community's needs.

At the beginning of 2022, the escalation of street disorder had me knocking on the doors of many Ministries to find solutions. I was very relieved to learn from the Public Safety and Solicitor General that Courtenay was eligible for support to start a Situation Table. Rolled out in a number of communities across BC, these tables provide appropriate one-on-one early interventions for people who are often dealing with the RCMP, breaking down barriers and bringing coordinated resources. I introduced Courtenay Council to the opportunity to create a Situation Table in April 2022. I am pleased that our government is providing nearly \$70,000 to get it underway and build capacity. I'm grateful that John Howard Society of North Island has agreed to undertake setting the table up, building on their experience with Campbell River's Situation Table.

The provincial government is investing more in policing services, including bringing Next-Generation 9-1-1 to BC, allowing callers to text photos to dispatchers, giving the police more information as incidents are unfolding. We've secured agreements with the federal government to strengthen bail procedures, to ensure that the police and our courts have the ability and the resources to keep repeat violent offenders off the streets. Expect more announcements from the federal government soon.

We're overhauling mental health care to meet the urgent need to support people struggling with mental health and substance use challenges. Across BC, we're funding new adult substance use beds, including new beds here, creating a seamless model of addictions care, expanding services for

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youth prevention, and more. Last June, we opened the Comox Valley Foundry Centre, providing support to keep youth off the streets. We've also made changes to allow nurses to keep people in psychiatric wards, under the Mental Health Act, making it easier for people to receive the resources they need.

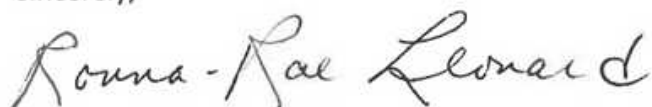
We are investing in affordable housing, reducing poverty, and improving the healthcare system work, to keep people off the streets, and prevent them from needing to take extreme measures, like lighting fires to keep warm.

Our recently launched "Homes for People" will work to ensure that every person and family in BC has a home that they can afford and that meets their needs. The lack of affordable housing holds back our economy and forces some people on to the streets, so we're adding affordable housing, speeding up building affordable and market housing, and more. Housing alone does not fully address crime on the street, which is why we are putting resources into ensuring that both temporary and permanent housing is available for people experiencing homelessness, along with resources and supports to keep people off the streets and safe. More news about this plan, and how it will help in Courtenay, will come in the coming weeks and months.

By gathering police, businesses owners, support organizations, judicial services, the local, provincial, and federal governments, and more, we can work together to meet everyone's needs. We have tools to tackle some of the issues businesses are dealing with, like restorative justice, which has shown to significantly decrease rates of recidivism. Of course, we need willing participants, which we can achieve by bringing people along with us, through positive relationships.

Working together, we can build a strong and vibrant community where business thrive and everyone can feel good about calling this place home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronna-Rae Leonard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ronna-Rae Leonard, MLA for Courtenay-Comox

## SAFE COMMUNITIES

In fall 2022, Premier Eby introduced the [Safer Communities Action Plan](#) - a set of actions the BC government will take to strengthen enforcement and services to build safe, healthy communities for everyone. [Over the months we have been working at digging into the actions including:](#)

- launching new repeat violent offender co-ordinated response teams, made up of police, and dedicated prosecutors and probation officers;
- The Province is creating dedicated police-prosecutor-probation officer teams to help keep communities safe by focusing on repeat violent offending throughout British Columbia. Through the Repeat Violent Offender Intervention Initiative, police, prosecutors and probation officers will work together to help strengthen enforcement and hold repeat violent offenders accountable in 12 regional hubs throughout the province.



## Community-based hubs to reduce violent crimes in BC

- expanding mental-health crisis response teams into more communities so police can focus on crime, and people in crisis are met early on by health-care workers and community members;
- taking the next steps in creating a new model of addictions care at St. Paul's Hospital so people can seamlessly move from crisis response in the emergency room, to detox, to treatment services, in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health and Providence Health Care, with plans to expand this model in the future;
- opening 10 new Indigenous Justice Centres to provide culturally appropriate support for Indigenous Peoples involved in the justice system to address the root causes of their involvement in the system and help them break the cycle;
- going after the houses, cars and luxury goods of high-level organized criminals, through the "unexplained wealth order"; and
- building public confidence in the prosecution system with new direction from the attorney general to prosecutors to implement a clear and understandable approach to bail for repeat violent offenders within the existing federal law. The new policy took effect on Nov. 22, 2022.



## SAFETY ON THE MOVE

I am very pleased that two projects in Courtenay-Comox have received Active Transportation Grant Funding:

- Comox - Lazo Road Upgrade - Multi-use path, dedicated bike lanes with painted buffer zone and traffic calming features on Lazo Road between Simba Road and Kye Bay Road.
- Courtenay - Dingwall Steps - Staircase consisting of approximately 150 steps with three rest areas, including benches and scenic views of Comox Glacier.

## Motor Vehicle Act changes will improve road safety

The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure B.C., Rob Fleming, tabled Bill 23, which proposes amendments to create a safer environment for vulnerable road users, such as cyclists and pedestrians, and supports the shift to increased active transportation.

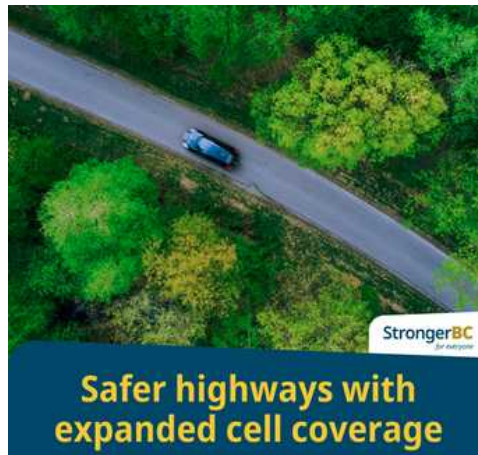
This is an issue near and dear to my heart as too many people in our community know cyclists who have been hurt or killed on our roads in the Comox Valley. When on Courtenay City Council, I initiated the first CV Cycling Task Force and fought to get the sign changed over the 5th St Bridge so motorists would know that cyclists were entitled to ride on the roadbed and not get off and walk across.



Bill 23 introduces changes that are part of government's Clean Transportation Action Plan to be released later this year, which will put forward a comprehensive plan to enable more modes of transportation to shift people out of cars and reduce vehicle travel.



This announcement was made in Campbell River, with our next door neighbour MLA, Michelle Babchuk who has been has been appointed the Premier's special advisor on connectivity.



**Safer highways with expanded cell coverage**



## People on BC highways will have better cell phone reception

The Government of British Columbia is investing \$75 million through the Connecting British Columbia program, administered by Northern Development Initiative Trust, to help fund projects that will expand cellular to at least another 550 kilometres of highway by 2027. The funding builds on a \$15-million investment made by the Province for highway cellular expansion in 2020, which is supporting 532 km of additional highway cellular coverage. Projects underway include 252 km and two rest areas to complete continuous coverage along the stretch of Highway 16 between Prince George and Prince Rupert, known as the Highway of Tears. Access to 911 and loved ones on this highways is an added layer of safety for travelers.

### Get in touch

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about any provincial issue, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are here to help you. My office can be reached at 250.703.2410 or [Ronna-Rae.Leonard.MLA@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Ronna-Rae.Leonard.MLA@leg.bc.ca) Our office hours are Monday to Thursday 10am-4pm. If the door is locked, simply knock or call 250.703.2410 to get our attention. Fridays are by appointment only.

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