

GOVERNMENT ADVOCACY STRATEGY – STATUS UPDATE

June 2023

This briefing provides a brief background and current status on the Board's direction from the January 31, 2023 strategic planning session concerning Board advocacy.

Related Board resolutions – January 31, 2023:

THAT staff immediately pursue a meeting with the BC Minister of Housing to determine how the Comox Valley will be impacted by the BC government's commitment to addressing the housing crisis in order to help inform the next strategic planning session;

THAT staff develop an advocacy strategy to lobby the Ministries of Municipal Affairs, Environment and Climate Response and Transportation and Infrastructure on the topics of climate response and active transportation, with future advocacy on housing and social supports to be pursued once the Comox Valley Regional District Board direction is set and centred on an aim to identify and secure long-term funding stability for such topics.

Key Actions and Events

March

- Staff presented the [Government Advocacy Strategy](#) to the Board on March 21, 2023.
- The strategy was endorsed and staff were asked to consider the inclusion of advocacy on health and safer communities as a priority in the strategy. This is further explored under next steps of this briefing note.
- Ministry of Housing office agreed to coordinate an in-person meeting in Victoria in late spring that would include a delegation of the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Chairs and Mayors to discuss housing priorities in the Comox Valley.
- The Board met with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Anne Kang on March 23, 2023 via Zoom. This introductory meeting provided an opportunity to introduce the CVRD's key areas of interest for advocacy to the province: Housing, Climate Crisis, Emergency Management and Active Transportation.
- The CVRD sent a follow-up letter to Minister Kang confirming these priority areas and offered to host the Minister on a tour of the Comox Valley over the summer, including meeting with local government representatives.

April

- On April 14, 2023 The Honourable Kahlon, Minister of Housing, attended a ribbon cutting for Darry's Place – a 40-unit building that provides second-stage housing for women and gender-diverse people leaving violence and elected officials and staff from the City of Courtenay and Village of Cumberland met with the Minister at that time.
- In late April the province unveiled its housing strategy [Homes For People Action Plan](#).
- Staff met with Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure staff to request an introductory meeting. The Minister's office agreed to coordinate a meeting over Zoom for late May or June to discuss Active Transportation priorities.
- The CVRD and municipal staff met to prioritize Active Transportation projects with a staff report to be brought to the board in July so that these priorities may be shared with The Honourable Rob Fleming, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

The Comox Valley Regional District respectfully acknowledges the land on which it operates is on the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.

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- Staff met with the Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness staff to request an introductory meeting. The Minister's office agreed to coordinate a meeting for late May or early June to discuss emergency management and climate readiness.
- Letter sent to provincial and federal Ministers requesting a meeting to discuss senior government leadership on Island Rail Corridor Planning.

May

- In early May, a joint announcement with The Honourable Kahlon, Minister of Housing confirmed \$10 million in provincial and federal support for Naut'sa mawt, a building with affordable housing units and culturally safe programming that will be owned by the Wachaiy Friendship Centre and operated by M'akola Housing Society.
- In late May, a letter was sent to Minister Kahlon to express CVRD's support for the ongoing efforts by the City of Courtenay to secure supportive housing and shelter space. The CVRD confirmed funding is available through its services for this purpose and encouraged collaboration between the province and local governments to identify a solution.
- In mid-May, the Electoral Areas Services Committee followed up with Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure staff to identify three key issues involving traffic and road safety for consideration in advance of the next meeting with Ministry staff scheduled this fall.

June

- The CVRD Chair presented to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services. The following three recommendations were made to the committee:
 1. That the Government of BC supports the City of Courtenay's request for funding and/or support to invest in safety net beds and units, in order to address a growing homelessness crisis in the Comox Valley.
 2. That the Government of BC establishes a new contribution model similar in size and structure to the Canada Community Building Fund in order to accelerate local government climate-related investments.
 3. That the Government of BC provides stable, funding for emergency management programs that do not require local governments to depend on grants, which restrict our capacity and ability to plan for disaster response and meaningfully consult with Indigenous partners.
- The committee sought further discussion on the CVRD's carbon pricing strategy as well as challenges around funding emergency management programs through grants. Read the [presentation transcript](#) (see Draft Segment 012, timestamp 9:30am).
- Minister Kahlon announces the purchase of the Super 8 Motel as a temporary supportive housing solution, when the province was unable to reach a deal with the Travelodge.

Next steps

- If the Board directs in its planning session that health and safer communities should be a strategic priority for the CVRD, then inclusion of this topic in the advocacy strategy would be considered at that time. Advocacy would be appropriate only once specific goals and actions to implement this priority are identified by the board within the context of the CVRD's strategic plan. Alternatively, health and safer communities can be incorporated through the CVRD's advocacy and service delivery that is related to housing.
- Given the Ministry has announced three BC Housing Initiatives in the Comox Valley this spring and has already met with City of Courtenay and Village of Cumberland elected officials and staff, it is unlikely a meeting before the Legislature rises for summer will be a priority for the Minister's staff. Therefore it is recommended that CVRD staff proceed with submitting a

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request for a meeting at the UBCM conference with follow-up steps to be determined pending the outcome of that meeting.

- As meeting dates with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and Emergency Management and Climate Readiness are still outstanding, requests will be made to meet at the UBCM conference.
- Other UBCM Minister and staff meeting requests to include: The Ministries of Environment and Climate Change, Municipal Affairs and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, as per the Government Advocacy Strategy.

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