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OFFICE OF THE CHAIR

September 6, 2024

The Honourable David Eby
Premier of British Columbia
PO Box 9041 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Email only: premier@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable Ravi Kahlon
Minister of Housing
PO Box 9074 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V9W 9E2

Email only: HOUS.minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Premier and Minister Kahlon:

RE: RURAL AND ISLAND HOUSING

At its August 21, 2024 meeting the Board of Directors considered the attached report and passed the following resolution:

Mawhinney/Colborne: SRD 672/24

Whereas housing needs are critical in rural communities and coastal islands, and rural housing projects which have applied for BC Housing support have not received it;

THEREFORE the SRD Board resolves to send a letter to the Premier and Minister of Housing calling on the Province to consider creating a rural housing stream and supports to facilitate construction of projects suited with the unique constraints of rural housing.

In urban, suburban and rural areas, across the province and the Strathcona Regional District, there is a housing crisis. The many voices emphasizing BC's acute housing shortage increases the challenge of small island and rural projects being considered.

There is value in funding housing projects in rural areas. Rural communities significantly contribute to BC's economic prosperity as well as providing important tourism and recreation for urban visitors. We are writing to respectfully request consideration of creating a funding allotment for rural housing projects, where the unique constraints they face will be understood and compared with similar applications. Funding streams where rural and urban projects are sparring for support are unlikely to result in small rural projects being viewed as worthy of investment.

Many rural areas do not have water and sewer systems for housing projects to connect to. As a result, rural housing projects often require construction of health-authority-approved water & sewer systems which adds to per-unit costs. Transportation of materials to rural and remote locations and accessing a

The Strathcona Regional District respectfully acknowledges that our corporate office and Strathcona Gardens Recreation Complex are located on the traditional unceded territory of the Ligw'idaŋ' people. We also recognize that we operate within the traditional, treaty, and unceded territories of the Ehattesaht / Chinehkint, Homalco, Ka:'yu:'k't'h' / Che: k'tles7et'h', Klahoose, K'ómoks, Kwiakah, Mowachaht / Muchalaht, Nuchatlaht, Tla'amin, Tlowitsis, We Wai Kai and Wei Wai Kum First Nations.

skilled construction workforce are limitations which can further increase costs per unit, decreasing desirability for funding decision makers.

It is one thing writing to detail our concerns and request solutions. However, accompanying our request with ideas for functional solutions may be beneficial; it is in this light the following suggestions are offered.

The Ministry of Housing has an Innovations Division which is working on standardized home designs. It would be excellent if they included consideration of standardized designs suitable for rural areas, including small-scale, multi-unit designs.

The Innovations Division is also focusing on prefabricated housing and panels. Ideally these prefab panels could be manufactured at a small scale using locally grown, harvested and processed wood products. Building the value-added forestry sector in this way could create employment closer to the source of raw materials and considerably increase the community benefits of timber extraction. Manufacturing panels for predesigned homes, panels which build homes for local needs as well as those of neighbouring communities, will build resilience and diversify rural economies.

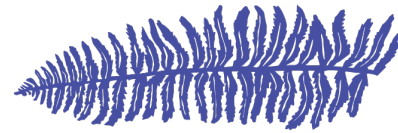
Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of the Strathcona Regional District's concerns regarding rural community and coastal island housing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Baker', written in a cursive style.

Mark Baker
Chair

Cc: AVICC
UBCM Executive
Rural Islands Economic Partnership - RIEP Housing Working Group



Robyn Mawhinney

Regional Director, Discovery Islands & Mainland Inlets
RMawhinney@srd.ca • 250.203.2468

Director's Report

July 18 2024

To: Chair & Directors, Regional Board

From: Director Robyn Mawhinney

Re: Rural & Island Housing

Across our region and the province, housing is a serious issue. Housing needs are as diverse as the SRD's communities & rural areas, and attainable, secure housing builds healthy communities.

Rural Islands Economic Partnership (RIEP) is an organization focused on building sustainable economic resilience for eighteen coastal islands and nearby rural regions. In consideration of housing's current critical nature, RIEP struck a Housing Working Group. This group is focused on moving the needle on housing on the coastal islands: through conversation it's become clear that rural island housing projects have not been viewed favourably by provincial housing funders. Across the islands, at least three housing projects, including two which are 'shovel-ready', were not supported in BC Housing's 2023/2024 call for proposals.

The many voices emphasising BC's acute housing shortage increases the challenge of small island and rural projects being considered. Therefore, I propose the following motion for the Board's consideration:

Whereas housing needs are critical in rural communities and coastal islands, and rural housing projects which have applied for BC Housing support have not received it, therefore the SRD Board resolves to send a letter to the Premier and Minister of Housing calling on the Province to consider creating a rural housing stream and supports to facilitate construction of projects suited with the unique constraints of rural housing.

Respectfully,

Robyn Mawhinney

Director, Discovery Islands and Mainland Inlets, Area C, Strathcona Regional District