



April 15, 2021

Mayor Lisa Helps
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Dear Mayor Helps:

Re: Provincial Response to 2020 Resolutions

UBCM has received the Province's response to your Council resolution(s) from 2020. Please find the enclosed resolution(s) and their provincial response(s).

Responses from the Province have been posted to the UBCM web site under Resolutions & Policy.

Please feel free to contact Jamee Justason, Resolutions and Policy Analyst, if you have any questions about this process.

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Yours truly,

Brian Frenkel
UBCM President

Enclosure

Whereas unaffordable housing generally reflects high land values that are driven up by speculation, which makes ownership very expensive to buy, but profitable for sellers and developers, and puts rental housing at a disadvantage when competing for buildable sites;

And whereas a lower property tax rate on improvements and a higher rate on land value could be made to keep taxes the same or lower for most properties, but would reduce the speculative gain from ownership and make rental housing developments more competitive:

Therefore be it resolved that UBCM request that the Province amend the *Community Charter* to grant municipalities the option of setting different property tax rates for land and improvements.

Convention Decision: **Endorsed**

Provincial Response

Ministry of Municipal Affairs

The municipal variable tax rate system does not allow for separate tax rates between land and improvements because such a system could be used to levy unfairly high rates on undeveloped or underdeveloped land. Different tax rates for land and improvements may provide an incentive to develop so that property taxes are reduced but will not improve the affordability of land. Land is assessed at its highest and best potential use based on zoning and market conditions.

The Province provides municipalities with other tax mechanisms to incentivize property development such as the revitalization tax exemption under S.226 of the Community Charter, which may be used to provide a tax reduction in order to encourage economic, social or environmental revitalization in targeted areas or properties, such as new development on vacant and under-utilized land.

A municipality may also reduce the costs of affordable rental housing development by waiving or reducing development cost charges using section 563 of the Local Government Act.

In addition, vacant land is often assigned to Class 6 (Business and Other) until the potential use of the property can be refined through the municipal planning and zoning process. The Class 6 tax rate is much higher than the residential tax rate, meaning there is already a significant tax burden on vacant land.

Whereas cost is a significant barrier to people accessing contraception, particularly to people with low incomes, youth, and people from marginalized communities;

And whereas providing free prescription contraception has been shown to improve health outcomes for parents and infants by reducing the risks associated with unintended pregnancy, and is likely to reduce direct medical costs on the provincial health system:

Therefore be it resolved that UBCM call on the provincial government to make all prescription contraception in BC available at no cost under the Medical Services Plan.

Convention Decision: Endorsed

Provincial Response

Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health (the Ministry) recognizes the right of all BC residents to make and implement informed choices about their own sexual and reproductive health. In recognition of this right, the Ministry is committed to removing cost as a barrier to BC residents' timely, effective, and equitable access to contraception.

The Ministry is reviewing options to provide contraception at no cost through the BC Pharmacare program. During this review period, the Ministry and the Province of British Columbia (the Province) will continue to provide BC residents coverage for select contraceptives.

Many BC residents have pharmaceutical coverage under the universal, income based Fair PharmaCare plan. Fair PharmaCare provides families with coverage for eligible prescription drugs and designated medical supplies based on their net income. The lower their income, the more help they receive. British Columbians with the lowest incomes do not need to meet a deductible and receive immediate assistance. Currently, the Province has several programs in place to provide access to no cost pharmaceuticals, including contraception for people living with low income.

In January 2019, BC announced a \$105 million investment to reduce or eliminate deductibles or co-payments for 240,000 lower-income families in our province. This included access to contraceptives in the BC formulary, such as oral contraceptive pills, hormonal injectables and some intrauterine devices (IUDs) – either as a Regular Benefit (e.g., one type of hormonal IUD) or for other IUDs requested by physicians through the Special Authority Program.

In addition, select PharmaCare plans provide coverage for contraceptives without the need to meet a deductible. The Recipients of BC Income Assistance Plan (PharmaCare Plan C) provides 100 percent coverage of eligible prescription costs for women receiving medical benefits and income assistance through the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. The First Nations Health Benefits Plan (Plan W) provides 100 percent coverage of eligible prescription costs and certain medical supplies and devices, including contraceptives, for clients of the First Nations Health Authority.

Additionally, Options for Sexual Health

<https://www.optionsforsexualhealth.org/>

is an organization with more than 60 clinics across BC staffed by nurses, doctors and trained volunteers. They offer birth control counselling, low-cost contraceptives and supplies, sexually transmitted infection and PAP testing, pregnancy testing and pro-choice options counselling, and general sexual health information (including comprehensive sexual health education workshops) and referrals. Some youth clinics in Fraser Health, Vancouver Coastal Health, and Vancouver Island Sexual Health Authority, provide access to free contraception; please note ages and contraceptives covered vary.