



News/Blog: GVHS commends City of Victoria for taking decisive steps towards housing affordability

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of Victoria takes decisive steps toward housing affordability

The Vancouver Island Housing Leadership Network (VIHLN) is a coalition of non-profit affordable housing providers who serve on the frontlines of the housing crisis. We commend the City of Victoria for passing a motion to adopt the six calls to action for municipal governments to address our housing crisis issued this past September. Addressing such a motion this early in their term demonstrates a clear commitment to housing affordability. It is evident that Council is committed to accelerating process, promoting collaboration and accessing our collective expertise as called for leading up to municipal elections. Equally important is the commitment made to encourage other municipalities to follow suit.

As staff moves forward with examining and reporting back on a range of policies that could streamline a variety of housing options, we reiterate the importance of the following points which are directly geared toward generating impactful outcomes in terms of improving affordability:

- **Establish a 'Housing Centre'** – establish a separate Housing Centre with elevated status within each municipality to facilitate and accelerate the approval of affordable and supportive housing proposals and promote an affordable housing lens through all departments' decisions and policies.
- **Unlock land** – unlock access to municipal land, improving the financial viability of developing new housing.
- **Implement financial exemptions** – commit to exemptions for non-profits for property taxes, development cost charges (DCCs), and municipal improvement obligations.

The situation is becoming ever more critical as a result of inflation, increasing interest rates and generalized uncertainty. We can all agree bold action is required and the above steps are crucial to stemming the loss of existing affordable units and ensuring different levels of affordability are achievable in new housing projects. Without ample supply of affordable housing, we cannot prevent the growing number of individuals cycling in and out of homelessness, living in unsafe situations, shelters or on the streets, struggling with substance misuse/mental illness, and needing complex care. Failing to address today's challenges drives up costs, negatively impacts our communities and businesses and contributes to the crisis.

In issuing these calls to action, we represent organizations working across the housing continuum. Transitional and supportive housing provides homes and wraparound support for people moving out of homelessness. More people could move through the continuum into

independent living, but we need more affordable homes to make that happen.

We look forward to hearing the more detailed actions that stem from the City's strategic planning that will respond to our calls to action.

The Vancouver Island Housing Leadership Network is comprised of 14 organizations including BC Community Renewal Society of the United Church of Canada, Dawson Heights Housing, Gorge View Society, Greater Victoria Housing Society, Island Community Mental Health, Legion Manor Victoria, M'akola Housing Society, Mount Douglas Seniors Housing, Nanaimo Affordable Housing Society, Our Place Society, Pacifica Housing, The Cridge Centre for the Family, Threshold Housing Society and Victoria Cool Aid Society.

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