

NEWS RELEASE

Distributed January 29, 2021

Statement from B.C. Urban Mayors' Caucus on Meetings with the Province

Working to Develop a Complex Care Housing Pilot

Nanaimo, BC - Kelowna Mayor Colin Basran and Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps, co-chairs of the B.C. Urban Mayors' Caucus, released the following statement following meetings this week with Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Housing David Eby and Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Sheila Malcolmson to discuss strengthening mental health and substance use supports in the face of the ongoing homelessness and opioid crises.

"On behalf of the B.C. Urban Mayors' Caucus, we would like to thank the Ministers for meeting this week to begin to plan how we can work together to accelerate B.C.'s response to addressing the mental health, substance use and homelessness crises. It's great to see the priorities laid out in our Blueprint for British Columbia's Urban Future reflected in the Ministers' mandate letters.

"We are seeing historic investments from the Province to build more affordable housing, which is serving the needs of many people in our communities. Yet even with this unprecedented effort, people with complex needs are falling through the cracks and aren't being served by the supportive housing models and programs currently available.

"That's why the B.C. Urban Mayors' Caucus wants to work with Ministers Eby, Malcolmson and the provincial government to develop a five-site pilot project for 40 to 50-unit Complex Care Housing sites within a year: one on the Island, one in the North, one in the Interior and two in the Lower Mainland.

"This five-site pilot project is the necessary first step in filling a gap in the continuum of housing and health care to meet the needs of vulnerable people who require mental health and substance use supports and services unique to their needs. Some of them may need extra supports on a pathway to recovery. Some of them may need to be in this kind of care longer term. This pilot project is an opportunity to learn on a small-scale, five-site basis and then – building on the learnings – to create additional sites in communities across the province.

"The challenges we are seeing in our communities are expanding faster than the solutions. Our vulnerable residents are at risk without proper health supports to meet their complex needs. Our residents and business owners are frustrated. And economic recovery from the pandemic will be compromised without action now. It's time to try new approaches.

"As Mayors of B.C.'s largest urban centres, we look forward to working with the provincial government on this pilot and would like funding for it to be included in Budget 2021. We are here to help the Ministers and the Province make this pilot a success for all.

About the BC Urban Mayors' Caucus

The BC Urban Mayors' Caucus is an informal, non-partisan group of mayors from Abbotsford, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Kamloops, Kelowna, Nanaimo, New Westminster, Prince George, Richmond, Saanich, Surrey, Vancouver and Victoria, representing over 55 per cent of the province's total population. The group came together in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and acts as a unified voice on critical issues facing their communities and urban British Columbia.

The group published the Blueprint for British Columbia's Urban Future, which outlines four key priorities for urban communities across the province:

1. Mental Health, Substance Use and Treatment
2. Affordable Housing
3. Public Transit
4. A New Fiscal Framework

The blueprint can be found in the "Attachments" section of this media release.

-30-

Contact:

Leonard Krog
Mayor
City of Nanaimo
250-755-4400



View the online edition for more information -
<https://cnan.ca/36ooWdG>