

For Immediate Release

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Statement from B.C. Urban Mayors' Caucus and UBCM on Meeting with the Premier and Minister of Municipal Affairs on the local government financing system and complex care housing

SAANICH, BC – Kelowna Mayor Colin Basran and Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps, co-chairs of the B.C. Urban Mayors' Caucus, and District of Vanderhoof Councillor Brian Frenkel, President of the Union of BC Municipalities, released the following statement following a meeting with Premier John Horgan and Minister of Municipal Affairs Josie Osborne to discuss strengthening the municipal financing system and the need for complex care housing.

“On behalf of the B.C. Urban Mayors' Caucus and the Union of B.C. Municipalities, we would like to thank Premier Horgan and Minister Osborne for meeting to begin to explore opportunities for improving the local government finance system.

“Local governments need an expanded set of sustainable, predictable and reliable funding tools to address the needs of our growing communities, upgrade aging infrastructure, and create accessible and sustainable cities.

“The Premier and Minister expressed their support to work towards addressing concerns with the local government finance system. We will explore making this topic a focus of the 2021 UBCM Convention, building on the work now underway to update the Union of B.C. Municipalities *Strong Fiscal Futures: A Blueprint for Strengthening BC Local Government's Finance System* report.

“Local governments currently receive eight cents of every tax dollar, but are responsible for roughly 60 per cent of the infrastructure in British Columbia. The current local government financial framework is too reliant on property tax, which neither grows with the economy nor distributes costs fairly.

“We were also encouraged to hear from the Premier that he recognizes the pressing need for new complex care housing facilities in communities across B.C. to serve people with complex health needs who are falling through the cracks and aren't being served by the supportive housing models and programs currently available.

“In recent meetings with Housing Minister David Eby and Mental Health and Addictions Minister Sheila Malcolmson, the B.C. Urban Mayors' Caucus proposed that the Province initiate a pilot project of at least five Complex Care Housing sites, to be up and operating within a year to accelerate B.C.'s response to addressing the mental health, substance use and homelessness crises.

“We were equally encouraged to hear the Premier's commitment to working with all orders of government to find, and fund, the best care possible for the people of British Columbia. This is vital given the unprecedented escalation in the challenges facing our communities.

“A new model of care in B.C. which expands the availability of the full range of substance use and mental health treatment and recovery options, including the creation of appropriate housing

facilities for those with complex needs, will benefit everyone in our communities that are on the frontline battling these crises each and every day.

“The Premier agreed that health care is going to continue to be critical, from complex care housing and the vaccination rollout, to stronger mental health supports and ensuring our elderly residents have the care and support they need. He noted the province funds 80% of health care services, and a return to higher investment from the federal government will be critical to meeting communities’ needs.

“We committed to the Premier that we will work with him and all orders of government to ensure funding for a modern 21st century public health care system. This will help ensure there is adequate funding for pressing needs such as this new model of care as well as other currently un- or under-funded demands on local governments.”

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Media Contacts:

Mayor Basran
250.575.4535

Mayor Helps
250.661.2708

Councillor Brian Frenkel
250.567.8620

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

Read the Blueprint [here](#).