

Province's Soil Regulation Boosts Housing Costs



On May 11, 2022, we wrote to David Eby, then Minister Responsible for Housing, regarding the lack of affordable landfill sites for dumping clean soil in Greater Victoria.

The costs of excavation for new housing have been steadily rising, as more regulations are imposed.

We explained that the rising costs of dumping clean soil are adding thousands of dollars to the price of new homes. "Some builders are hauling loads past Duncan, taking several hours for a single round trip."

The BC government's reply completely missed the mark, revealing they did not understand the issue.

They said the "Province will look at measures that can expand building deconstruction and material re-use across BC, creating new opportunities in areas such as remanufacturing."

Instead, they added another layer of complexity and cost.

"The BC Government has approved new soil relocation legislation that will come into effect on March 1, 2023."

It was intended to test soil from commercial and industrial sites, not residential.

However, landfill sites are now requiring testing of clean soil from residential areas, citing the province's regulation.

The government made it more difficult to dispose of clean soil, adding thousands of dollars to new housing in the highest-priced province in Canada.

It's classic unintended consequences, also harming the environment. The regulation's costs encourage more illegal dumping, as reported in the Vancouver Sun and Times Colonist.

Local governments have asked the province for "more enforcement to quickly shut down bad actors."

In addition to illegal dumpers, "bad actors" include the BC government which ignored our request to address this issue two years ago, and instead piled on a regulation being misapplied by landfill sites.

This government has much to say about making housing more affordable, yet they created unintended consequences ranging from higher housing prices to illegal dumping.

They need to fix the regulation and how it is applied, which they admit serves no useful purpose for residential sites.

An additional solution may be the creation of more landfill sites, perhaps on suitable provincial land, to accommodate the government's goal of creating thousands of homes over the next decade.

These issues are resolvable, but the first step for solving a problem is understanding it.

We have again written to Premier David Eby and Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing hoping for a better result.



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