

THREE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FINANCE AND GOVT SERVICES COMMITTEE



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This week we are giving a presentation on three housing recommendations for the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services.

Recommendation 1: End municipalities fast-tracking the building code

The BC Building and Safety Standards Branch is only now proposing mandatory radon rough-ins for new housing throughout the province to mitigate toxic radon exposure – five years after launching the BC Step Code. VRBA warned radon increases in energy efficient homes when the BC Step Code was introduced. A National Building Code report says there are no safe levels of radon. Most radon-related cancer deaths, such as lung cancer, are in dwellings where levels are below Canada's radon maximum of 200 bq. BC's Step Code bypassed this national due diligence and many municipalities fast-tracked high energy efficiency levels. The main purpose of building codes is consumer protection and municipalities don't have the expertise to fast-track codes.

Recommendation 2: Cap municipal fees and regulations

High permit fees, Community Amenity Contributions, Development Cost Charges, etc have become big revenue sources for municipalities, often making new construction unaffordable. Many municipalities are posting million-dollar surpluses from building permits alone. If reasonable financial numbers can't be achieved in a project's pro forma, housing won't get built, or what does get built will be the least affordable. There were zero new townhomes built in six

CRD municipalities last year. We can do better.

Recommendation 3: Enable university electives in the trades

Vast numbers of students are pursuing university degrees majoring in the humanities and sciences and choosing electives. Many would enjoy practical electives in framing, welding and other skills. This offers a well-rounded education and employable skills during the summer and immediately after graduation. Construction provides good-paying jobs in every BC community. Some students might pursue construction as a career. We have trades schools and universities with the expertise to teach the necessary skills, and young people willing and able to learn.

We could offer many more recommendations, including more transparency on the ever-increasing seismic regulations. For what seismic event on the Richter scale are we building new homes?

This is a complicated area, yet there must be a way to translate the issue into understandable language, as Earthquakes Canada does with the Richter scale. In addition, new homes are likely among the safest on the west coast. The safety of thousands of older homes could be improved with a reno rebate for anchor bolts, bracing, tie-downs etc.

For more recommendation for boosting housing supply, affordability and health and safety, visit vrba.ca

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