

Statement from the B.C. Urban Mayors' Caucus on Provincial Budget 2021

Date: Tuesday, April 20, 2021

VICTORIA, BC — On behalf of the B.C. Urban Mayors' Caucus, Co-Chairs Kelowna Mayor Colin Basran and Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps released the following statement following the tabling of Provincial Budget 2021.

"Today's Provincial budget includes measures that will set our communities on a path to building back after the devastating impacts from the pandemic beginning with \$900 million in new funding for testing, contact tracing and personal protective equipment, so we can ensure a safe and fast recovery.

"We are pleased to see many commitments in the budget, three that align with our B.C. Urban Mayors' Caucus Blueprint, which presents a vision to address the most pressing issues facing cities across B.C. as we fight and recover from COVID-19.

"The shortage of affordable housing continues to be a critical issue in our communities and dedicated provincial attention to the issue is an essential part of the solution. The Province has made significant investments already to bring additional housing, both supportive and affordable, to our communities and we're pleased to see those commitments continue with this budget.

"Minister Malcolmson has also confirmed that the Province remains committed to the complex care housing that is sorely needed in our communities and that there will be funding to fill the need once more detailed plans on the level of supports are developed by the cabinet committee later this year. We look forward to meeting with the Minister and her team next week to continue to work together on developing the pilot projects that the BCUMC has called for.

"We know the impacts of this crisis have spread throughout our communities and at worst into residents' homes and families. That's why we are pleased to see the historic investments of \$500 million in additional funding for mental health services and substance use treatment to better connect people to the culturally safe and effective care they need.

"Victoria has seen the benefits of free transit for youth, and we're excited these family savings are going to be shared with every community across B.C. at a time when every dollar counts for our residents that may be out of work or have had their hours cut. Additionally, we know making transit a habit for young people can make significant emissions reductions in the future, helping us all meet or beat our climate goals.

"Through extended tax credit, tax exemptions and grant programs, the Province is providing much needed stimulus to our local businesses that are just trying to keep the lights on till we can open up again. These business owners are our friends and neighbours, and we're grateful for any support they are provided. Further, the Launch Online program is an excellent boost for many and will leave a lasting legacy moving them into the future.

"Leading through a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic is no small task. As we move through to recovery, we're thankful the Province continues to consider the unique challenges cities face and that they remain open to conversations regarding a new fiscal relationship with today's municipalities.

"As the Mayors of B.C.'s largest urban centres, our Caucus looks forward to continuing to work with the provincial government as partners and for the benefit of all our residents."

Mayor Helps and Mayor Basran will be available to media to discuss the budget.

Mayor Basran
250.575.4535

Mayor Helps
250.661.2708

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](#).