CANADIAN HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION BRITISH COLUMBIA

ADVOCACY UPDATE

An update on CHBA BC's government relations activities

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News from the Provincial Legislature

Continued discussions on the speculation tax

In April, CHBA BC was in Victoria for a series of meetings on the speculation tax. The first meeting on April 11 was with Minister of Finance Carole James and staff. CHBA BC raised its concerns that the speculation tax is causing confusion for communities both inside and outside the boundaries. Buyers are deciding to hold off on plans in all areas, for fear of a rate change or where the tax will go next. CHBA BC reiterated that its members, being small and medium-sized companies, are distinctly affected when contracts are lost to this confusion and fear.

CHBA BC was also in Victoria on April 27 to discuss the tax with the Ministry of Finance staff. CHBA BC advocated that projects under development or development land should not be impacted by this tax in any capacity. This will impact housing affordability and add significant costs if not properly addressed.



Image: CHBA BC representatives with Minister of Finance Carole James.

What's next for the speculation tax

In recent weeks, various municipalities have expressed concerns with inclusion in the tax boundaries. As of this text, the municipalities include: Kelowna, West Kelowna, Nanaimo, Langford, Sidney, North Saanich, and Saanich. At the same time, municipalities outside the boundaries have expressed concerns with not being included if the tax goes ahead as planned.

CHBA BC remains optimistic that more changes will take place to address the significant concerns that remain, both from the perspective of municipalities and industry. It would also be beneficial if these details are confirmed before the legislation is introduced this Fall, to provide clarity sooner rather than later. All members are welcome to contact CHBA BC with any concerns or new information on this tax.

Ongoing Consultations

Poverty Reduction Strategy Roundtable

CHBA BC continues to participate in a business roundtable on the provincial poverty reduction strategy. Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction Shane Simpson will release a consultation report in Summer 2018, with poverty reduction legislation expected in Fall 2018. Learn more about the strategy here.

Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) Submission

Minister of Agriculture Lana Popham has tasked an Advisory Committee to review the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and Agricultural Land Commission (ALC). An online survey and consultation period was open until April 30. Read CHBA BC's submission here.

Cannabis

Additional details on cannabis legalization are being slowly announced as the July 2018 deadline fast approaches. Recently, it was confirmed that four cannabis plants will be allowed per household, but the plants must not be visible from public spaces off the property, and home cultivation will be banned in homes used as day-cares.

For renters and landlords, cannabis smoking will be prohibited under existing residential leases that prohibit smoking tobacco. Personal cultivation under existing leases can also be prohibited, except for federally authorized medical cannabis. For new leases, the existing provisions of each Act where landlords and tenants negotiate the terms of leases will apply. Read all updates on cannabis legalization here.

While these updates are positive, there is significant work to be done on workplace safety. CHBA BC advocates that more support and review is needed to help employers approach this issue on job sites, to ensure zero-tolerance and safe workplaces.

New Issues

B.C. Hydro Solar Net Metering Program

In April, B.C. Hydro announced initial changes to the solar net metering program, where excess power can be sold back to B.C. Hydro, to restrict applicants from exceeding personal needs. CHBA BC will be advocating that this program should be continued rather than cancelled, recognizing that some adjustments might be needed. It is an incentive for homeowners to monitor their home energy consumption, supports housing affordability, and is vital for existing voluntary energy-efficiency programs.