

June 30, 2023

Premier David Eby
2909 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC. V6K 2G6

R.e.: 100 Day Plan and Bell McKinnon Northwest Neighbourhood – A Perfect Match

Dear Premier Eby:

If there ever was a project that fit like a glove into your 100-Day Plan, it is the proposed Bell **McKinnon Northwest Neighbourhood** (BMNN) in the Municipality of North Cowichan on Vancouver Island, 500 feet from the new Cowichan District Hospital. This 31-acre development, that could include up to 850 much needed multi-family housing units (townhouses, clusters and affordable housing), a hotel, a light industrial/commercial component, and a possible elementary school has been stymied by a group of “One Cowichan” civic councillors, despite repeated favourable reviews and recommendations by North Cowichan staff.

The Housing Supply Act within your 100 Day Plan includes promises to “address local barriers to construction so that housing can get built faster, including updating zoning bylaws and streamlining local development approval processes,” and states its goal is “to help local governments speed up local approval processes”. BMNN, which husband/wife owners **John** and **Elaine Lichtenwald** purchased 8 years ago and have been carrying \$60,000 per month in financing charges since, is in dire need of your assistance. This has caused them much duress and resulted in serious stress-related health problems as they reach the point of desperation. Our appeal to you for your intervention, Premier Eby, is based on the following points:

- **Blatant Institutional Delay:** In North Cowichan, the standard development procedures were flip-flopped due to political pressure by three One Cowichan councillors. Normally, the Official Community Plan (OCP) follows the development and creation of the Local Area Plan (LAP), which was already approved and would accommodate BMNN. The owners were dismayed that following the LAP’s approval that the OCP was amended by the new council to specifically restrict the BMNN plan by designating the lands “Future Growth”. During a council meeting prior to the changes in the OCP they were denied the opportunity to speak although they were on the agenda and had a highly respected Urban Planner ready to address some of council’s concerns. Their application was submitted to North Cowichan two years before the new OCP came into effect. They also gathered 300 local signatures against the proposed OCP changes that were never acknowledged. This was patently unfair, and a blatant example of **Institutional Delay**.

- **Affordable Housing, High Density & Multi-Family Residential:** The OCP identifies that 1,208 new units will be required by 2025, and that goal is not reachable without BMNN being developed. All forms of home units, including Affordable Housing, is in the owners plans. The longer the land is held by the owners the less affordable the homes will be. There is currently only one development application active at the municipality in the Bell McKinnon area.

- **Adjacent To New Cowichan District Hospital And Services:** Literally 500 feet away, the new \$1.446 billion Cowichan District Hospital Project is underway, and the affordably priced housing and servicing available through BMNN are not only welcome, but necessary, as up to 700 people will be employed at the facility. This means water and sewer infrastructure will be installed right to

the BMNN property line. The owners have already engaged in discussions regarding a traffic-calming round-about circle at the hospital corner for easy, safe road access.

- **Much Needed Municipal Tax Revenue In Perpetuity:** The BMNN combination of residential, hotel and office/light industrial space is expected to yield over \$60 million in property taxes by year 25 of the project for the Municipality of North Cowichan. All of which will fail to materialize, should the owners find it, as a last resort, necessary to sell the property so that it becomes part of First Nations settlement lands.

- **Committed To Carbon Neutrality:** BMNN fits well within the North Cowichan OCP's Climate Change guidelines, as it is creating complete, compact, more energy-efficient communities, which allow residents to walk to amenities, with the new hospital literally across the street. Everything within a 5 minute walk through neighbourhoods connected by Green Streets.

- **Elementary School:** The Bell McKinnon area has been designated as needing an elementary school. The owners have been in contact with representatives from the Ministry of Education on this regard. BMNN would be an ideal location for such a school.

- **Real, Grassroots First Nations Economic Reconciliation:** The owners have signed a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with **RavenStone Construction** of Duncan to be the main sub-trade contractor for the Project. This excellent First Nations owned company provides employment for Indigenous workers, and owner Dan Williams is excited about the project, as is the **Khowutzun Development Corporation** (KDC) which they partner with on other projects. KDC was wrongly shut out of major contracts on the new Cowichan Hospital, so approval of BMNN is an opportunity to right a serious wrong. BMNN is expected to result in many well-paying jobs for RavenStone, with other opportunities expected to arise for KDC and other firms. Premier Eby, we make this appeal for your support in light of the 100 Day Plan and the Housing Supply Act, since it is clear to the owners that they need the Provincial spotlight to shine on the BMNN plan to address the Institutional Delay that has stopped its development at Council level. This project is what North Cowichan and British Columbia needs in order to address the housing shortage crisis, and it is a unique opportunity to correct decisions that eliminated First Nations opportunities at the Cowichan Hospital - by giving approval to a development next door that has an Indigenous construction company as its main sub-contractor. We earnestly appeal for your intervention to allow this vital housing project to proceed.

Kindest regards,



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Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing
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