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CITY OF WHITE ROCK
ADMINISTRATION

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Their Worship Mayor Megan Knight
and Members of Council
City of White Rock
15322 Buena Vista Ave
White Rock BC V4B 1Y6

Dear Mayor Knight and Councillors:

Congratulations to you and your council in the recent municipal election. I look forward to meeting you in the near future. This letter is to thank the City of White Rock delegation for meeting with me in person during the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Convention. I was very interested in the issues the delegation brought forward, including the reconstruction of the White Rock Pier and the extension of the authority for a municipal vacancy tax to municipalities other than the City of Vancouver.

At our meeting, I learned about the historical, cultural and economic significance of the White Rock Pier and was impressed by the level of community fundraising that contributed to the repairs and reopening of the pier—this demonstrates to me the importance of the pier to your community. I am pleased that the previous funding provided by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs was also able to assist with repairs to reopen the pier.

Currently, all our capital infrastructure funding programs are closed for application intakes, and all local governments will be notified directly of the next opportunity to apply to a program. The ministry's Infrastructure Planning Grant Program, and the Asset Management Planning Grant Program administered by UBCM, can assist local governments in preparing for future capital programs.

I encourage City staff to reach out to ministry staff and work with them to help strengthen future applications and discuss your project. Please contact Madelaine Martin, Director, Infrastructure and Engineering, by telephone at 778 698-4748, or by email at Madelaine.Martin@gov.bc.ca.

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At this meeting, the delegation also requested that the *Community Charter* be amended to provide all municipalities with a vacancy tax, similar to the vacancy tax established under the *Vancouver Charter*. The authority for the City of Vancouver to establish an Empty Homes Tax on vacant residential properties was enacted in 2016 and pre-dates the provincial Speculation and Vacancy Tax (SVT). The SVT, which is the responsibility of my colleague, the Honourable Selina Robinson, Minister of Finance, already applies in all Metro Vancouver municipalities and parts of the Fraser Valley. It was recently expanded to additional areas that are facing intense housing pressures to help ensure empty housing stock is available for people who work and live in these communities.

I appreciate the City's commitment to addressing housing affordability in your community. The Province of British Columbia is not currently considering extending the authority to impose a local vacancy tax to other municipalities. New tax authorities would need to be used by all communities in B.C., which vary in size, needs and resources. The cumulative impacts of the local, provincial, and in some cases, federal governments each imposing a vacancy tax would need to be evaluated before providing a general authority for municipalities to impose an additional local vacancy tax.

If you have any specific questions regarding municipal speculation and vacancy taxes, I encourage you to contact Kara Woodward, Executive Director, Policy, Research and Legislation, by telephone at 778 698-3465, or by email at Kara.Woodward@gov.bc.ca.

I would also like to thank the delegation for inviting me to visit White Rock to take a tour of the historic pier. I look forward to seeing the repairs that have been made thus far, and I was pleased to hear that the ministry has already heard from the City's Chief Administrative Officer about scheduling an opportunity.

Thank you again to the delegation for taking the time to meet with me, and I look forward to working with you and your council.

Sincerely,



Nathan Cullen
Minister

pc: Kara Woodward, Executive Director, Policy, Research and Legislation
Madelaine Martin, Director, Infrastructure and Engineering