

October 9, 2020

File: CR-12-01
Ref: RD 2020 Oct 2

Andrew Wilkinson, Q.C., Leader of the Official Opposition
BC Liberal Party
PO Box 28131 West Pender St,
Vancouver, BC V6C 3T7
VIA EMAIL: andrew.wilkinson.MLA@leg.bc.ca; contact@bcliberals.com

Dear Mr. Andrew Wilkinson:

Local Government Matters 2020

On behalf of the Metro Vancouver Board of Directors, we are pleased to send you this letter as a continuation of our constructive working partnership with the BC Liberal Party in advance of the 2020 provincial election.

Our province is respected for its response to COVID-19 both for helping to keep BC residents safe and for laying the groundwork for a robust economic recovery. At the same time, we know the pandemic has exposed areas where our province and region are most vulnerable. We believe it is critical that government policies at all levels be examined through an equity and resilience lens to ensure that all residents can access social supports and that all may benefit from a recovery that advances economic, environmental and societal objectives.

As part of the *Local Government Matters* initiative, Metro Vancouver is reaching out to the three main political parties of British Columbia with a series of questions focused on four critical categories: *Pandemic Response, Resilience and Equity; Critical Infrastructure Funding and Economic Recovery; Housing and Affordability; and Climate Change and Environment*. The responses we receive will be featured on the website www.localgovernmentmatters.ca and as part of a media campaign.

Our intent is to raise the issues that are most significant to Metro Vancouver and to better understand the importance of these issues to you and your party, while also making it easier for voters to learn how these regional issues will be addressed by the parties contesting the 2020 provincial election.

As a federation of 21 municipalities, one Electoral Area, and one Treaty First Nation in a geographic area that is home to over half the population of British Columbia, Metro Vancouver plays a critical role in the provision of utility services, regional parks, affordable housing, regional planning, air quality and political leadership on important regional issues. Metro Vancouver is ideally positioned

to partner with the Government of B.C. and Government of Canada to realize common objectives to spur economic growth, address climate change, protect natural habitats and create more affordable and inclusive communities.

It is vitally important that we maintain an effective working partnership with the provincial government so that we can collaboratively and effectively address the complex issues facing the region.

Metro Vancouver staff will follow up with your campaign team to schedule a meeting to get a better sense as to the position your party will be taking in relation to the issues and questions described in the attached.

We and our Metro Vancouver Board colleagues look forward to your responses to these important issues.

Yours sincerely,



Sav Dhaliwal
Chair, Metro Vancouver Board



Linda Buchanan
Vice-Chair, Metro Vancouver Board

SD/HS/sm

Encl: Local Government Matters 2020 (*orbit doc #41602672*)

41534629

Local Government Matters 2020

Themes, Questions & Context

Pandemic Response, Resilience and Equity

Local governments throughout the province and across the country are on the front lines of the pandemic response – maintaining critical service levels, such as the delivery of drinking water and the management of liquid and solid waste to protect human health and the environment and playing a key role in important issues such as affordable housing.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed social inequities that must be addressed to ensure our collective long-term livability and resilience. Crises always disproportionately impact equity-seeking residents more intensely and we must work to ensure that people can access the support services they need and that all residents may benefit from B.C.'s recovery – a recovery that advances economic, environmental and societal objectives.

At Metro Vancouver, we recently launched the Regional Economic Prosperity Service aimed at attracting strategic investment to create well-paying jobs, to address the income and affordability gap to promote shared prosperity, where the economic worth of every resident grows in sync with the GDP – where First Nations are in control of their destiny, and where equity-seeking residents can count on a social safety net, and no one has to work a second job just to make ends meet.

Questions:

1. How does your party intend to support the health and wellbeing of B.C.'s equity-seeking residents going forward?
2. Will your party commit to applying an equity lens for planning and funding decisions?
3. How will your party provide additional wraparound supportive services, including for in-home, outreach, addictions and mental health programs?

Critical Infrastructure Funding and Economic Recovery

Infrastructure is critical to protecting quality of life and well-being — it provides the services we all depend on and helps keep residents and ecosystems healthy.

Municipalities manage, own and operate 60% of the public infrastructure that supports our economy and quality of life. Local governments make peoples' lives better, and local solutions have significant regional, provincial and national impacts.

According to a recent survey, Metro Vancouver and its residents strongly believe that investing in infrastructure must be part of B.C.'s and Canada's plans to 'build back better' from COVID-19. Metro Vancouver is ideally positioned to partner with the Province of B.C. to realize shared objectives to

spur economic growth, address climate change, protect natural habitats and create more affordable and inclusive communities.

Over the next five years, Metro Vancouver has identified more than \$6 billion in shovel-worthy infrastructure investments to strengthen our systems for drinking water, liquid waste, housing and regional parks. These projects have the potential to create thousands of long-term family-supporting jobs while protecting the environment and making the region more resilient to climate change.

Questions:

1. If elected, will your party commit to reassessing the funding model for local governments – with a view toward providing long-term, predictable, sustainable funding?
2. Will your party commit to partnering with local governments – to working together with Ottawa when necessary – to garner the Federal government’s fair share for critical investments in infrastructure projects?
3. Will your party commit to funding at least one-third of the Iona Island Wastewater Treatment Plant project, which under federal regulations must be completed by 2030?
4. Will your party commit to providing additional resources for expedited approvals of local government projects and initiatives?

Housing and Affordability

The COVID-19 pandemic has added urgency to the need to address the shortage of affordable housing in the region. As one of the largest affordable housing providers in B.C., Metro Vancouver is in a prime position to expand the stock of quality affordable rental housing through the implementation of the Metro Vancouver Housing 10-Year Plan.

Metro Vancouver has committed \$190 million over the next 10 years to add a minimum of 1,350 new and redeveloped housing units. By partnering with BC Housing, CMHC and others, we can double that amount.

Meanwhile, the region continues to experience high rates of homelessness, with many individuals living on the streets, in temporary hotel rooms and short-term accommodations. Waitlists for social housing remain long and more low-barrier housing units are required to meet the unique needs of equity-seeking populations, including youth aging out of care, Indigenous individuals and families, seniors, people with complex health issues, and women and children fleeing violence.

Questions:

1. If elected, what specifically will your party do to support an expanded inventory of affordable rental housing options for the Metro Vancouver region?
2. Will your party commit to co-investment with Metro Vancouver on its Housing 10 Year Plan?

3. What actions will your government take to secure additional low-barrier housing units for equity seeking homeless populations?

Climate Change and Environment

While local governments have focused on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, we haven't lost sight of the climate emergency. Climate action is a shared commitment with member jurisdictions, the Province, Canada, and our residents. Metro Vancouver is committed to becoming a carbon neutral region by 2050 and is accelerating actions to adapt to climate change and reduce GHG emissions.

As stewards of one quarter of the region's land base, including 13,000 hectares of regional park land and 65,000 hectares of sensitive protected areas, Metro Vancouver is uniquely positioned to protect greenspaces and enhance the natural ecological services that can help buffer our region from climate change impacts such as floods.

Metro Vancouver and health officials recognize that spending time in nature is an effective way to reduce stress and support physical and mental wellbeing, and our parks are more popular than ever.

Through the Regional Parks Land Acquisition Strategy, Metro Vancouver aims to grow the regional parks system into a connected network of resilient parks and greenways. Co-investment with other orders of government is a key priority to enhance climate change resiliency and protect sensitive ecosystems from development pressure.

Questions:

1. How will your party further support adaptation and mitigation of climate change impacts?
2. Will your party commit to partnering with Metro Vancouver to expand and acquire regional park land?
3. Will your party commit to establishing a greenhouse gas reduction program in alignment with the Metro 2050 climate change strategy and the targets as expressed in the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report?