

CMHC Expert Panel on Housing Supply Submission from Homebuilders Association Vancouver (HAVAN)

1. What are the obstacles to increasing responsiveness of housing supply?

- First, participants in the discussion must accept basic notion that housing market is undersupplied. Unfortunately, this premise is not accepted amongst all those participating in the discussion on the housing market. There are some who, amazingly, feel that housing prices can be reduced to levels affordable to the majority of households via demand-side measures only. While HAVAN does not disagree with the use of such mechanisms, there must also be measures to encourage the responsive addition of sufficient numbers of new housing, in many forms, to meet the broad-based demand in our market.
- ‘Responsiveness’ is related to approval times. The Provincial Development Approvals Process Review (DAPR) is seeking ways to reduce approval times. Issues examined in this process include: the role/timing of local government (LG) approvals, Provincial approvals, and the role/timing of public input. The DAPR Report (https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/local-governments/planning-land-use/dapr_2019_report.pdf), prepared through a broad-based consensus on issues and opportunities for improvements in approvals process provided a ‘shopping list’ of opportunities to improve the process, for the Province, LGs and applicants. HAVAN strongly endorses the summary of opportunities from the DAPR Report, and looks forward to participating in the implementation phase of DAPR.
- Role of NIMBYism: Councils must take their role in ‘planning for the future of their cities’ more seriously. Excessive public consultation delays housing approvals (if not outright cancellation of proposed new housing projects). Maintaining the status quo, especially in established SF neighbourhoods, restricts supply, increases prices, and reduces housing choice for all home purchasers and renters. What are the ramifications of LGs that do not meet their Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy housing projections? How do we address a lack of political will/courage to consider the needs of all residents (and not only those long-time residents comfortably housed in high-value single family dwellings)?
- The rezoning process is major obstacle in process approval times. There should be more power given to the OCP/Pre-zoning process – applications that are compliant to the city-wide plan should skip rezoning and move directly to DP/BP.

2. How are skill shortages affecting cost and timing of new construction?

- While there is no question that this is an important issue in the construction industry, it is not the key issue in the housing supply shortage.

- Primary impact is on construction cost: shortages drive up the cost of labour
- Secondary issue is timing: delays in construction due to high demands on trades
- Government (at all levels) must change the narrative around the trades (not everyone can/should be a software designer); and emphasize the advantages of a trades career.
- Interprovincial migration can address a lot of these issues.

3. What other key issues could be addressed to facilitate more construction?

- Unlocking Single Detached Dwelling zoned lands for missing middle, gentle density housing – duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, fee simple row housing, stacked townhouses, with secondary suites and/or coach/laneway houses. Status quo policies will not allow creativity to find solutions -- especially when they are applied to the vast majority of residentially-zoned land in each city. It is important to provide more housing choice in all urban areas – we need to provide a greater variety of ground-oriented, family-friendly housing.
- There is an outstanding opportunity for all levels of government to show leadership by incentivizing an innovative transformation of Canada's stock of old, inefficient (from both an energy consumption and land use perspective) housing. Senior levels can mandate and/or incentivize 'gentle densification' of low-density SF-zoned areas using examples such as Small Housing BC's Permanently Affordable Homeownership (PAH) model (http://www.smallhousingbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/PAH-report_final.pdf). This would allow more rental, non-market ownership, and market housing to be developed in low-density neighbourhoods, without causing massive disruption of existing streetscapes. By allowing more housing choice, young families can return to these established neighbourhoods, and improve utilization of existing schools, community infrastructure, transit routes, and long-established retail and commercial enterprises. This also provides more opportunities for multi-generational living, and aging-in-place. A more sustainable form of urban housing, these buildings could also take advantage of federal, provincial, local and utility rebates, interest-free loans and other incentives to reach a higher level of energy efficiency, providing a win-win-win scenario for government, homeowners/renters, and the environment.
- Infrastructure investments from senior governments are critical in allowing densification of under-developed areas (Expo Line extension to Langley will allow/encourage densification of Fraser Highway/Willowbrook, but requires funding from senior governments).

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