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Attn: Minister Eby, Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Housing

We are a group of community associations in Victoria, BC. We pay close attention to land use issues in our various neighbourhoods.

We are all aware of the housing crisis, particularly the lack of affordable housing. While the Province of BC is providing funding to build much needed new affordable housing, we are currently losing much of our existing older affordable rental housing stock. Most of the existing rental apartment buildings in our neighbourhoods were built 1974-79 under the MURB program, which provided tax incentives to build rental buildings.

From Victoria Housing Strategy Annual Review 2020

The existing rental housing stock is aging. The retention of aging stock and the development of new purpose-built rental housing is integral for ensuring sufficient rental supplies for Victoria's current and future population.

Currently many of these aging, privately owned rental buildings are being purchased by Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs). Several major companies have been leading these purchases, with two companies owning over 50 buildings in Greater Victoria. Other major REITs are also starting to show interest in the Victoria market.

While the experience with REITs is different based on the location and the specific company/trust, data from recent years indicates that they may negatively impact the affordability of older rental stock.

Some REITs maximize their profits by either renovating tenants or by renovating units as tenants move out and increasing the rents dramatically. This article by a University of Waterloo Professor explains the issues and suggests policy options: [Institute for Research on Public Policy June 2021](#). More locally, the Community Social Planning Research Council report "[Can't Go and Can't Stay](#)" states that "renovictions and demovictions are a significant factor contributing to rental housing instability" (pg. 16).

We believe that proactive steps should be taken now in order to further protect older rental housing to maintain its affordability.

**There are several policy directions that the Victoria Community Association Network is hoping the provincial government will consider urgently.**

- Create a provincial grant program to allow existing non-profit housing providers to purchase aging rental buildings directly from private owners. This grant acknowledges that non-profit housing providers do not have the same access to the capital that REITs do, and are missing out on opportunities to purchase these buildings.
- Create a provincial grant program that allows existing non-profit housing providers to undergo necessary upgrades and renovations on aging rental buildings wherever demolition can be avoided. New construction costs are rising rapidly and the number of newly built affordable units cannot keep up with what is required to provide necessary affordable units.
- Introduce provincial or municipal policy that would give government and/or non-profit housing providers the right of first refusal on privately owned rental buildings coming up for sale. This is being done in Montreal. [Right of First Refusal CBC Feb 2021](#)

Burnside Gorge Community Association

Downtown Residents Association

Fernwood Community Association

North Park Neighbourhood Association

Hillside Quadra Neighbourhood Association (DBAC and NAC)