

Hon. Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing
Government of British Columbia
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August 29, 2023

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Dear Hon. Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing,

No More Illegal Evictions: The BCCLA's Urgent Public Calls to Action for Accountability, Transparency, and Dignity for People Experiencing Homelessness

Thank you for your recent responses and meeting with us today.

As per our previous letters and submissions to the Federal Housing Advocate, the BCCLA is deeply concerned about the Province's recent and ongoing support of municipal evictions in Vancouver on Hastings Street and in Abbotsford at Lonzo Park (the "Evictions"). These Evictions took place illegally, without satisfying legal requirements of procedural fairness and ensuring the availability of alternative accessible and dignified housing for encampment residents. For one example, the FOI request made with respect to the Hastings Street eviction demonstrates that the City of Vancouver and the Province both knew there were hardly any shelter spaces—let alone adequate housing—available for those who were going to be evicted. Such forced evictions or decampments are not only inhumane but disregard established legal precedent, violate international human rights law, and grossly infringe on encampment residents' *Charter* rights.

The Minister and the Province must take urgent steps to prevent the perpetuation of these violations during the dire housing crisis in our Province and to hold municipalities accountable to constitutional and human rights law prior to initiating any further evictions. **The BCCLA requests the Minister's written response regarding the following public calls to action:**

(1) The Province must hold municipalities accountable to the rule of law

The BCCLA calls upon the Minister of Housing and the Province to take a public position that municipal governments must remain accountable to the rule of law and be transparent in their decision-making when initiating evictions. The Province must issue a moratorium or a binding requirement that no decampments can occur until all legal requirements are transparently met and the other four calls to action are satisfied.

(2) The Province must be transparent regarding the availability of supportive housing

The BCCLA calls upon the Minister of Housing and the Province to provide the public with accurate and updated information regarding present-day net supportive housing supply, including current vacancies, and the clear distinction between units which are temporary shelters or are supportive housing. Decampments cannot be justified by future housing creation given the ongoing net loss of supportive housing.

(3) The Province must ensure that human rights and dignity in living conditions are met in encampments and supportive housing

The BCCLA calls upon the Minister of Housing and the Province to ensure municipalities provide basic and essential sanitation and electrical services on the street or in encampments to respect the safety, dignity, and human rights of residents. It is crucial that the Province also commit to ensuring that tenancy rights are protected in supportive housing.

(4) The Province must urgently plan and create housing for the upcoming winter

The BCCLA calls upon the Minister of Housing and the Province to take proactive, urgent, and collaborative steps to create a transparent and realistic plan for creating new shelter and housing spaces for the upcoming winter. No more illegal evictions.

(5) The Province must meaningfully listen to and collaborate with those with lived experience

The status quo is not working. The BCCLA calls upon the Minister of Housing and the Province to listen and collaborate, meaningfully and actively, with people with lived experience of homelessness and precarious housing to determine strategies for adequate, accessible, and affordable housing, and to address systemic housing issues.

Sincerely,



Liza Hughes
Executive Director
BC Civil Liberties Association



Ga Grant (she/her)
Litigation Staff Counsel
BC Civil Liberties Association

CC:
Federal Housing Advocate, Marie-Josée Houle