

2021 Ministerial Meetings

Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training – September 8, 2021	2
Topic: Collaborate to improve programming for Early Childhood Education programs.	2
Ministry of Municipal Affairs – September 9, 2021	3
Topic: Increase provincial funding for public libraries and increase going forward in line with inflation	3
BC Housing Staff –September 9, 2021	4
Topic: BC Housing Long Term Strategy	4
Minister of Health – September 10, 2021	5
Topic: Increase in Long Term Care Beds	5
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General – September 10, 2021	7
Topic #1: Advocacy for improved regulation and enforcement of cannabis production	7
Topic #2: Additional investment in BCEHS to free up volunteer Fire Fighters to be available for fire and rescue services	8
Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Housing – September 15, 2021	9
Topic #1: Better protection for landlords to the Landlord Tenancy Act and incentives supporting long term rent	9
Topic #2: Incentives for property owners supporting long term rentals.....	9
Minister of Finance, Minister of Municipal Affairs, and Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General – September 17, 2021	11
Topic: Advocacy for intergovernmental cannabis revenue sharing	11
Minister of Transportation and Minister of State for Infrastructure – September 17, 2021	13
Topic #1: Land use planning and highway bypass	13
Topic #2: Ensure accessible health care on Route 3	13
Topic #3: BC Ferries Service Levels	14

Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training – September 8, 2021

Ministry: Minister Anne Kang, Deputy Minister Shannon Baskerville, Parliamentary Secretary for Skills Training Andrew Mercier, Senior Ministerial Assistant Michael Snodden

Sunshine Coast: MLA Nicholas Simons, DOS Mayor Darnelda Siegers, SCRD Chair Lori Pratt, Gibsons Mayor Bill Beamish

Topic: Collaborate to improve programming for Early Childhood Education programs.

Background: Capilano University is working towards adding programming to train more daycare staff locally to help build capacity on the Sunshine Coast. There are grants available for this ECE programming, but students must pay up front and wait for reimbursement. Recently, Capilano University offered an ECE course and reached out to their list of 26 people waiting to be trained. Accessing the course was challenging for students because they were only provided one week's notice of the start of the course. This did not allow the students to make arrangements to end their jobs, find child care, come up with the money to pay for the course and get set up for school. The Sunshine Coast Child Care Action Plan indicates that one of the impediments to achieving the identified targets is the lack of available trained ECE staff on the Sunshine Coast. Capilano University has been great in working with us. They worked towards adding programming to train more daycare staff locally to help build the needed capacity. They actively recruited potential applicants and gathered a list of interested students.

Ask: Recognizing the immense need for trained ECE staff in local communities, we ask that the Ministry of Advanced Education, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Child and Family Development work together to improve programming for Early Childhood Education programs and reduce the barriers to potential students to access these programs.

Feedback: The short lead-in time for the CapU course was because additional money was available at the end of the fiscal year so it was allocated for the course. Funding – capital money through the Childcare BC New Spaces Fund; MCFD Student Bursary Program (funding awarded retroactively), interest free provincial student loans. For 2020, the BC Access Grant was available, paid up front up to \$4000/year depending on need.

Typically, there is a 3-4 month notice period for new course intakes which gives the educational institutions sufficient time to fill spaces. So it would be April/May for September intake. CapU is a significant recipient of funding for ECE spaces. Other programs to investigate are Work Integrated Learning Pilot which may have expanded funding and Workforce Development Programming.



Ministry of Municipal Affairs – September 9, 2021

Ministry: Minister Josie Osborne, Deputy Minister Okenge Yma Morisho, Assistant Deputy Minister

Sunshine Coast: Darnelda Siegers, Lori Pratt, Bill Beamish, Aleria Ladwig, Leianne Emery, Heather Evans-Sullen

Topic: Increase provincial funding for public libraries and increase going forward in line with inflation

Background: Public libraries require continuous and increasing investment to provide opportunities for life-long learning, increase equity and social inclusion, and create cities that are healthier and more affordable. Since 2009, public library supporters have asked that the provincial government provide funding for public libraries that, at a minimum, includes annual increases to account for inflation. Despite these repeated requests, public libraries have been left with chronic provincial underfunding at approximately \$14 million. Taking inflation into consideration, the provincial funding has declined in the past decade, while the municipal portion has risen considerably. This decline in provincial funding reflects a regressive approach of shifting cost to municipal property tax payers. This year we are asking the provincial government for \$22 million for public libraries in 2022. This request for sustained, increased funding was supported by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services as part of the Budget 2020 and 2021 Consultation process.

The Chief Librarians indicated the impact on the need for their services given the closure of Service Canada offices.

Ask: We ask that, in 2022, the BC Government commit to increasing public library annual operating grant funding to a minimum of \$22 million and ask that annually the increase be tied to inflation to reflect inflationary and population increases and the increasing role public libraries play in achieving the goals of the province and our communities.

Feedback: No promises were made but thanked for the information on the need.

BC Housing Staff –September 9, 2021

BC Housing: Regional Director, Development, Lower Mainland with BC Housing Naomi Brunemeyer, Ministry: Executive Director of the Homelessness Policy and Partnerships Branch Raymond Fieltsch

Sunshine Coast: Darnelda Siegers, Matt McLean, Andrew Yeates, Andrew Allen, Bill Beamish, David Croal

Topic: BC Housing Long Term Strategy

Background: Over the last 18 months, local facilities have been used to house the homeless but these facilities will not be available for the long term. In Sechelt, at the end of March the lease expires. There are a number of projects complete or in process in our communities here on the coast. However, there needs to be a long-term strategy in place to provide the continuum of housing and care needs for vulnerable populations of all ages. Gibsons needs certainty around yearly winter homeless shelter.

Ask: Whose role is it to put a long term strategy in place?

Feedback: The Building BC program and the Housing Hub are two programs that we can access. We can invite BC Housing to our Housing Table meetings and they will attend.



Minister of Health – September 10, 2021

Ministry: Minister Adrian Dix, ADM Phillips, Senior Ministerial Assistant Alex MacDonald, Ministerial Advisor Theresa Ho,

Sunshine Coast: Darnelda Siegers, Bill Beamish, David Croal, Lori Pratt

Topic: Increase in Long Term Care Beds

Background: In late 2016, the Sunshine Coast Division of Family Practice doctors, sent a letter signed by all the doctors to then Minister of Health Terry Lake. The letter was sent a few months after the contract was signed between VCH and The Trellis Group for the construction of a new 128 bed LTC facility. This building was due to be completed in 2018. As you know, it is still not constructed, although it is moving forward. We are now in late 2021.

In the 2016 letter, they looked at the adequacy of LTC beds in our community by looking at the number of beds per 1,000 persons over age 75. At that time, the average number of LTC beds for other communities within the VCH region was 91.5 per 1,000 persons over age 75. Given the numbers at that time, they indicated that in 2016, we required 57 additional beds to bring our community to the VCH average. After closing 2 old facilities in Sechelt, the contract with The Trellis Group would only provide a net increase of 20 beds. This number of beds was already inadequate in 2016. They went on to say that, in 2018, when the facility was to be up and operational, given our aging demographic, and using the same calculations, we would require an additional 126 beds or another complete facility.

Now we are 3 years farther along and we know the need is dire. Our hospital has 40 acute care beds. At any time, there are a number of patients awaiting LTC placement who must remain in the hospital as there are no beds available for them in our community. They wait months and months for a placement.

Quoting from the letter from 2016 “While awaiting placement these patients are looked after by acute care nurses who have not been trained to work on largely geriatric residential care wards. The cost of looking after these patients in an acute care hospital is three times what it would be in a LTC facility. Furthermore, rather than having the [full complement] of acute care beds we effectively have [far fewer] to service our population’s acute care needs, which are significant in an elderly population.

The end result of our LTC bed shortage is hospital overcrowding. Our emergency department often has half a dozen or more beds occupied by admitted patients who regularly have to wait days before a bed is available on the ward. Consequently, our emergency room physicians

struggle to find space to properly examine new patients.... Sick patients are often discharged prematurely resulting in increased patient readmission rates. As a result, our physicians, nurses and support staff find themselves working in an increasingly stressful environment.”

We are now at September of 2021, 5 years after the physicians penned their letter. Given that it takes time to build LTC facilities, I had a conversation last week with Marie Duperreault, Director for Sechelt Hospital and requested that we be provided with more up to date numbers on the care bed needs for the Sunshine Coast so we can look at not only how to address our current needs but also plan for the future.

Ask: Since the Federal government recently announced it would be providing funding to the provinces to address LTC needs, we want to find out how we can access a share of it to address our need for additional LTC beds on the Sunshine Coast. We are looking to you and your ministry staff to assist us in determining the next steps to take to have this be prioritized and acted on in the short term.

Feedback: The needs for long-term care beds on the Sunshine Coast are well known. They are a priority and, once the new facility is built, the current facilities can be repurposed. The work to determine what they will be used for has already started. Continue working with VCH to move those projects forward.



Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General – September 10, 2021

Sunshine Coast: Darnelda Siegers, Matt McLean, Lori Pratt, Bill Beamish, David Croal, Andreas Tize

Topic #1: Advocacy for improved regulation and enforcement of cannabis production

Background: When an applicant fills out an application for a Personal Medical Cannabis license, there is no requirement that they comply with municipal or local government bylaws or building codes for the facility they will be growing in. Unlike the process for liquor licenses or for retail cannabis facilities, local governments are not consulted or informed during the application process for a license for an individual to produce cannabis for their own medical purposes. Local governments are also not consulted or informed by Health Canada when licenses for personal/medical cannabis production are then issued. On Health Canada's website it states **"you are also expected to comply with all relevant provincial/territorial and municipal laws including local bylaws about zoning, electrical safety, fire safety, together with all related inspection and remediation requirements."**

Many times, licenses for production of cannabis for an individual's own medical purposes allow for 400 – 500 plants to be grown. In one recent situation, two partners cohabitating were each granted licenses for 500 plants. This high number of plants is legal yet can have a very detrimental effect on housing stock and the quality of a neighbourhood. Despite many requests from municipalities in response to community and neighbour complaints around safety concerns, odour control, and other building code requirements, Health Canada does not provide the information on location of licensed facilities to municipalities that is required to enforcing compliance with bylaws, requires building permits and/or inspections for these licensed facilities. Ensuring zoning and building bylaws and building codes are followed and enforced is a serious safety concern for municipalities. We need to be able to inspect, enforce bylaws and building codes, and apply penalties for non-compliance to ensure public safety in our neighbourhoods.

ASK: We ask that the Provincial Government support our request to the Ministers of Health, Finance, Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and the Prime Minister to revisit and revise the number of plants that can be grown for medical purposes in residential properties and that local governments be consulted and informed prior to issuance of a license for personal production of medical cannabis to ensure compliance with local zoning and building bylaws and building codes to ensure the safety of our neighbourhoods and communities.

Feedback: Minister agrees with our stand. The province has no jurisdiction. When the province was looking at legalization, they travelled to Washington state and Colorado and learned that there should only be one legalized stream instead of two. We have two and it doesn't work. There could potentially be funds through the Civil Forfeiture Grant Program (9 streams) that could help provide some funding for our needs for additional bylaw enforcement.

Topic #2: Additional investment in BCEHS to free up volunteer Fire Fighters to be available for fire and rescue services

Background: A letter was received by the District of Sechelt from the Chair of the Sechelt Fire Protection District. It stated that the increasing demand on their services to provide pre-hospital medical assistance as First Responders to BCEHS is causing increased stress and burnout on members. The unsustainable business model of relying on volunteer firefighters to fill BCEHS staffing voids, the opioid crisis, and the pandemic have exacerbated the situation to crisis levels. If the downloading continues to increase, the SVFD will have to make adjustments to their medical response model to ensure the health and safety of the volunteers and their ability to provide fire and rescue services to the taxpayers.

Feedback: Aware of the situation and looking to address it by making BCEHS positions receive full-time rather than on-call pay. Requested that the letter be forwarded.

Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Housing – September 15, 2021

Ministry: Honourable David Eby, Associate Deputy Minister Responsible for Housing Angela Cooke

Sunshine Coast: Darnelda Siegers, Matt McLean, Bill Beamish, David Croal, Nicholas Simons

Topic #1: Better protection for landlords to the Landlord Tenancy Act and incentives supporting long term rent

Background: A lack of supports for landlords is adding to our current housing crisis. Many property owners on the Sunshine Coast have the ability to rent out a portion of their homes and cottages, but they prefer to not rent, or prefer short-term rentals. Short-term rentals are more lucrative without the risks that come with long term tenants. Reviewing the Tenancy Act in collaboration with landlords along with tenants may help address these issues. More education for landlords on their rights and responsibilities and support by the Residential Tenancy Branch would be beneficial. Adding incentives may help reduce the number of empty homes, cottages or suites.

Request: Add protections for landlords to the Landlord Tenancy Act and incentives supporting long term rentals.

Topic #2: Incentives for property owners supporting long term rentals.

Background: The housing crisis on the Sunshine Coast has reached critical proportions. Even with supports from BC Housing and many local community groups, many of our vulnerable citizens are precariously housed. Businesses and government agencies are not able to adequately staff their operations because there is no workforce housing. Our health care system and policing service are suffering. Adding financial Incentives for landlords would also help reduce the number of homes sitting empty and add much-needed stock to our residential options.

Request: Create incentive programs to support property owners in offering long term rentals.

Other topics that were discussed were renovictions, security for long-term tenants, incentives for landlords who rent for workforce housing, good tenant registry.



Feedback: The Provincial Government set up a fund and allocated two billion dollars to help finance housing projects. The funds are currently fully earmarked for projects but will come back to BC Housing and the Housing Hub for reallocation in approximately a year to a year and a half for allocation again. We could identify potential housing sites and/or projects and work with BC Housing to have them ready to move forward.

There are delays right now with the Residential Tenancy Branch and the minister's office is addressing this.

If landlords invest in their property, they can reflect the investment in increased rents charged. The province recognizes that they need to invest in purpose-built rentals to build up housing stock.

STR's have eroded workforce housing. The UBCM report will be released shortly and can act as a guide for local governments

One of the initiatives the provincial government is evaluating is incentives to create long-term rental suites in homes. This is a potential longer-term initiative.

Minister of Finance, Minister of Municipal Affairs, and Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General – September 17, 2021

Ministers – Minister Selina Robinson, Minister Josie Osbourne, Minister Mike Farnworth, Assistant Deputy Minister – Cannabis, Consumer Protection, and Corporate Policy Mary Shaw

Sunshine Coast: Darnelda Siegers, Matt McLean, Bill Beamish, Andreas Tize, Nicholas Simons

Topic: Advocacy for intergovernmental cannabis revenue sharing

Background: Each year the federal and provincial governments receive millions of dollars in revenue from the legal cannabis industry. The initial 2 year agreement saw the federal government retain 25% of excise tax revenue with the remaining 75% going to provinces and territories with the understanding that provincial governments would share the cannabis excise tax revenue with local governments. In addition to the federal excise tax, BC is also adding a 15% markup to the price of cannabis and sales are also subject to PST and GST. The agreement with the federal government recognized the impact of and cost of legalization on local governments. Gross revenue in 2020 was approximately \$290 million.

Request: That BC support our request to the Ministers of Health, Finance, and Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and the PM that cannabis tax revenues be shared with municipalities and RCMP.

Feedback: Our issues with regards to enforcement are not unique to our area. This is an issue that they are hearing from many jurisdictions.

BC hasn't been realizing the sales they anticipated. Gross revenues are around \$30M per month provincially. They want to continue to work to assist in shifting the illegal growers to legal framework.

Ministers Robinson and Osborne will be working with UBCM to address revenue streams for local governments.

Issues – province does not receive any revenue from medical cannabis but only from their own legal stores.

The current MMR regulation has created illegal production challenges.

There is pressure from the product grown in the legal medicinal market.



Suggest we connect with other local governments and UBCM and then reach out to Ministry staff for a briefing on the evolution of the MMR regulation. It could cover off the policing, revenue issues and commercial operations as well.



Minister of Transportation and Minister of State for Infrastructure – September 17, 2021

Ministers – Ministers Rob Fleming and Bowinn Ma

Sunshine Coast: Darnelda Siegers, Matt McLean, Bill Beamish, David Croal, Nicholas Simons

Topic #1: Land use planning and highway bypass

Background: The Sunshine Coast Highway is the only route connecting our communities on the Sunshine Coast. With a quickly growing population, a larger highway will be needed in the future. The highway is the only route to access the hospital. The current highway route traverses residential neighbourhoods, town centres and pedestrian-friendly tourist destinations. A new, larger, highway would accommodate the increasing population, provide options for travel during emergencies and provide a long term plan for transportation considering sea level rise, as well as improving our wellbeing by reducing the amount of traffic in residential and tourist areas.

Request: Create a plan for a new highway for the Sunshine Coast and begin land acquisitions for when they are needed.

Feedback: A new engagement process is underway. Engagement with community and key stakeholders will be taking place yet this fall with a goal to be complete by Spring 2022. The process hasn't yet been determined as they want input from the community and key stakeholders as what the process should be.

Topic #2: Ensure accessible health care on Route 3

Background: For many, the ferry is their only option for travelling to essential medical appointments. The current system (TAP and MAL forms) is not working. Priority boarding needs to be guaranteed for those travelling for essential medical reasons, including systems that work for those who have limited ability to use online systems. Please revisit the current program and coordinate with the Ministry of Health to put a system in place that supports residents living in ferry dependent communities to access the necessary free transportation for medical services not available in their communities.

Request: Guarantee priority boarding for people travelling for medical purposes.

Topic #3: BC Ferries Service Levels

Background: Preamble of the Coastal Ferry Services Contract includes the following description: Integral to economic growth and development in BC, and (to) getting people and goods to their destinations safely, efficiently and on time (which) is essential if BC is to be competitive in the world economy in which it operates. This is a significant statement that speaks to the province-wide importance of the ferry system. It further states that, for the travelling public, fares and schedules should be predictable and consumer choice should be expanded significantly, when financially viable. Changes are happening fast in the current environment and service level reviews are needed to ensure access. Our route is classified as a major route yet we do not receive funding as the other major routes do.

Request: That the Provincial government review the Coastal Ferry Services Contract and implement changes to increase Core Service Levels for coastal ferry routes that support additional sailings and reduce wait times during peak travel periods.

Feedback: There is a solution in place to December 31st to address medical appointments. A long term solution needs to be identified. A new services contract is to be in place within the next 2 years as the current one will be expiring. The province recognizes that this is a huge issue for our community. Also, recognize that the community wants to focus on the public interest and not business priorities.