



## BRITISH COLUMBIA

VIA EMAIL

Ref. 632359

October 20, 2022

His Worship Al Siebring  
Mayor of the Municipality of North Cowichan  
7030 Trans-Canada Highway  
Duncan BC V9L 6A1  
Email: [mayor@northcowichan.ca](mailto:mayor@northcowichan.ca); [terri.brennan@northcowichan.ca](mailto:terri.brennan@northcowichan.ca)

Dear Mayor Siebring:

Thank you for your correspondence of September 21, 2022, regarding vacancy control.

I appreciate you reaching out on behalf of your constituents to advocate for vacancy control. Government recognizes that British Columbians have experienced hardship and increased cost of living due to rising inflation rates, especially when it comes to housing costs.

As you know, in 2018, Premier John Horgan appointed a Rental Housing Task Force to better understand what changes may be needed to modernize British Columbia's tenancy laws. Vacancy control was one issue that was considered by the Task Force. During their province-wide consultations, the Task Force heard from many individuals and advocates who were very concerned about rental housing affordability and expressed a desire for vacancy control.

Upon careful consideration, however, the Task Force determined that vacancy control could have the unintended consequences of reducing investment in needed repairs and reducing affordable rental stock. There was concern that over time rents may not keep up with rising costs to maintain and repair rental stock and vacancy control could serve as a disincentive for landlords to conduct necessary repairs and maintenance. This is particularly problematic in BC, where much of the purpose-built rental stock is aging. Additionally, during the consultation process, landlords and developers indicated that they are opposed to vacancy control and implementing it would cause them to reduce the amount of overall available rental housing supply in a market with already low vacancy rates.

While I appreciate that you feel that vacancy control would alleviate the housing crisis, decisions about rent increase restrictions need to balance the needs and preferences of renters and landlords to not negatively impact the rental housing supply. Because of the low level of rental housing supply across British Columbia, we are not currently considering implementing vacancy control.

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The Province has taken other actions to protect renters. We expanded the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) and Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) programs that provide rent supplements to low-income families and seniors and the BC Rent Bank program into more communities in the province. In addition, in response to rising inflation rates, government decided to cap the annual allowable rent increase for 2023 at two per cent, below the inflation rate.

The Province is also taking steps to improve renter security by addressing illegal evictions and renovictions. When a tenant has been evicted, the landlord must take steps to use the rental unit for the stated purpose for ending the tenancy within a reasonable period after the effective date of the notice. If the landlord does not follow through on the stated purpose for ending the tenancy, the tenant can make a claim through the Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB), for compensation equal to 12 months' rent.

In addition, recent measures to protect tenants from illegal renovictions shift the responsibility to landlords to apply to the RTB for pre-approval. This is expected to eliminate most renovictions, since landlords will only be able to end a tenancy in situations where that is the only way to complete the necessary repairs. Preserving tenancies will prevent unlimited rent increases that can take place between tenancies. For more information on these initiatives, please see the RTB webpage: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021AG0101-001278>

Thank you again for writing. We are committed to working with local governments to ensure renters have safe, secure, and affordable housing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Murray Rankin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Murray" and last name "Rankin" clearly distinguishable.

Murray Rankin, KC  
Attorney General and  
Minister Responsible for Housing

pc: Sonia Furstenu, MLA for Cowichan Valley  
Doug Routley, MLA for Nanaimo-North Cowichan