Eight Myths about Homelessness in Maple Ridge and the Burnett Street Development

1. The Province has refused to meet with the City of Maple Ridge

Since 2017, BC Housing has hosted three public information sessions for residents:

- January 31, 2017 – On behalf of the Province, BC Housing organized a public meeting where former MLA Marc Dalton and former MLA Doug Bing addressed public concerns and questions about homelessness in Maple Ridge.
- January 29, 2018 – BC Housing, in partnership with Fraser Health, The Salvation Army and RainCity Housing, held open houses to share information about three proposed housing projects in Maple Ridge;
- March 15, 2018 - BC Housing, in partnership with Fraser Health, the Salvation Army and RainCity Housing, held a second community open house. BC Housing, along with our service providers, have also invited residents of Maple Ridge to register for dialogues sessions to inform and educate about the Burnett Street development.

BC Housing and Provincial government staff have also met with City of Maple Ridge to address the need for supportive housing in the community. Most recently, Minister Selina Robinson met with the Mayor of Maple Ridge on February 25, 2019 to discuss options that would assist vulnerable individuals in the community.

2. The Province’s plan is to ‘warehouse’ people without providing health services

The primary purpose of supportive housing is to connect vulnerable individuals with support services they need to move forward with their lives. Fraser Health is providing a range of on-site health services to tenants at Royal Crescent and future tenants at Burnett St, including:

- mental health assessment and support;
- substance use counselling education and treatment, including the Maple Ridge Intensive Case Management (ICM team) providing wrap-around services for clients with severe addiction;
- public health immunizations and overdose prevention and response;
- nurse practitioner primary care;
- harm reduction supplies; and
- home health nursing assessments, wound care, palliative care, and shower and personal care support.

3. There isn’t a need for supportive housing in Maple Ridge

Local shelters are full. Approximately 100 people utilize the two active shelters in Maple Ridge on a nightly basis, including 35-40 former residents of the tent city at the emergency shelter. Many individuals continue to congregate in small camps throughout the community.
Adding to the need, the lease at the temporary shelter at 22239 Lougheed Highway is set to expire at the end of June, which means approximately 40 people will no longer have a place to sleep. BC Housing has been looking for an alternate location for quite sometime but cannot guarantee a suitable place will be secured before the shelter closes.

Homelessness is an issue that is impacting many communities across the Province including Maple Ridge. In the 2017 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, 124 individuals were counted as experiencing homelessness in Maple Ridge.

4. **The Burnett Street development is a shelter**

The Burnett Street development will be home to 51 individuals who are living on the streets and/or shelters in Maple Ridge. Unlike shelters, individuals will pay a shelter rental rate of $375 at the Burnett Street building and will be connected to support services to rebuild their lives. Also, unlike shelters that are open for specific time periods throughout the day, the Burnett Street development will have staff onsite 24/7.

Supportive housing is based on an evidence-based and internationally-demonstrated Housing First approach: to provide stable housing, and then work with a resident to promote recovery and well-being.

5. **The Burnett project will bring crime and increased visible drug use to the neighbourhood**

It is important not to categorize all the individuals at the Burnett site as being associated with crime and drug addiction issues. There will be a mix of tenants with a wide-range of needs that require tailored supports. Staff from Coast Mental Health and Fraser Health will work with each tenant as they transition into their new home and life.

Many of our non-profit housing operators report that when homeless people are housed, they will no longer use substances in public areas. Residents of the Burnett Street development who are active substance users will be permitted to use drugs inside the residence where there are safe disposal methods for needles. This is the Housing First model that is employed by the health authorities and internationally recognized to help those with addictions.

We encourage nearby residents and community members to take an active role in the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) that will allow members to bring forward and discuss matters pertaining to the Burnett Street development. This committee is comprised of community members, and representation from BC Housing, local authorities, Fraser Health, and service providers.

**Study:** BC Housing has conducted a case study on five existing supportive housing buildings in B.C. and found that service calls to police from each of the neighbourhoods began to decrease after the six-month mark from when the housing opened.

6. **Homeless people are migrating to Maple Ridge**

The 2017 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count (pg. 44) identified that 82 per cent of Ridge Meadows respondents experiencing homelessness have lived in the community for a year or more.
Coast Mental Health confirms that every tenant currently residing at the Royal Crescent supportive housing building are long term residents from Maple Ridge. Approximately 50 per cent of the people who moved into Royal Crescent came directly from the Anita Place camp. The remaining residents of Royal Crescent modular were previously staying at the Salvation Army shelter or were street homeless in Maple Ridge.

7. **BC Housing only wants to help the homeless and doesn’t care about seniors, families, the working poor etc.**

BC Housing is committed to providing a spectrum of housing for all groups of people in Maple Ridge who are living on a low or middle income.

The Province is moving forward with 94-units of affordable rental housing at 11907 228th St in Maple Ridge for low-income seniors and families. We are also developing 21 new homes for women and their children who are at-risk of violence.

In addition, we are currently providing the following in Maple Ridge:
- 293 low-income units for seniors and families
- 574 rent subsidies in the private market for low-income seniors and families
- 238 supported and assisted living units for low-income seniors, those with special needs and women and children fleeing violence

BC Housing is also committed to working with the City and Mayor to create a unique made-in Maple Ridge supportive housing plan.

8. **People who are homeless don’t want to be helped**

There are approximately 100 people already staying at Maple Ridge shelters on a nightly basis. The fact that these people are seeking shelter, and many have reached out to staff for additional support services means that they want to be offered more housing options.

Many of the people who will call Burnett Street home have been living on the street for a year or more. During this time, individuals have formed their own community and friendships which they may find difficult to separate from. We know that many of these individuals have mental health issues, addiction issues and/or have experienced trauma. Outreach workers and Fraser Health will work together to assist with each individual’s transition into supportive housing.