



BRITISH COLUMBIA
REAL ESTATE
ASSOCIATION

the bulletin

Time to Expand Housing Options



The British Columbia Real Estate Association

(BCREA) believes housing is the foundation of an individual's quality of life—everyone needs and deserves affordable, safe, appropriate housing, whether they own or rent.

“Access to affordable market housing and rental accommodation help people to get ahead and communities to grow,” explains BCREA President Dave Barclay. “When that happens, the province as a whole prospers.”

Although every region of the country is experiencing erosion in affordability, the RBC's Affordability Index concludes deterioration is greatest in BC. Rapidly changing market forces, including increases in interest rates and demand, continue to put pressure on the ability of individuals and families to purchase property.

For example, in Greater Vancouver one in three residents now spends more than 30 per cent of their income on shelter, a general indicator of affordability issues according to BC Stats. Assistance to people in need of affordable rental options, including seniors, students and workers in resort communities, is also needed.

Through its announced intention to introduce a housing strategy to help

address needs, the provincial government has signaled that affordability issues are important, demand attention and require resources.

“The government deserves credit for taking a strategic approach to housing,” observes Barclay. “One of the benefits of having a strategy is that it will engage people who are impacted by housing issues and can suggest ways to resolve those issues.”

This month, BCREA is taking three key recommendations to the provincial government to address housing needs.

Consult With Stakeholders

BCREA recommends the provincial government introduce a public consultation process to identify ways to expand housing options throughout BC.

In a presentation at the Real Estate Institute of BC Conference in 2005, Paul Rollo estimated 155,500 households are unable to find decent, affordable housing. The provincial housing strategy would be enhanced through the input and creative expertise of local governments, community advocates, private sector organizations and individuals.

Models for such consultation already exist, including the 2006 provincial pre-budget public consultation, which gathered oral presentations, written submissions and feedback through an online questionnaire.

An effective public consultation process must be based on goals and processes that support the government's strategy.

While stakeholders from all regions of the province could provide input to shape the strategy, final decisions should rest with the government.

Adjust the Property Transfer Tax (PTT)

BCREA supports the elimination or, at the very least, reduction of the PTT. Provincial budget forecasts and the Ministry of Community Services tax tables suggest the overall tax burden on property owners will exceed \$6.1 billion this year.

Since 2001, PTT revenues have helped the government balance four successive provincial budgets and contributed substantially to the pool of revenues supporting numerous public priorities, including health care and transportation.

But PTT revenues generated over the past two years have exceeded expectations. The government's projections suggest the tax could generate \$800 million in revenues for 2005/06,

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President's Report

Quality of Life Works

It's been nearly two years since the BCREA Directors adopted the Quality of Life philosophy. At that time, we knew it would take some time to integrate the five principles of the philosophy—ensuring economic vitality, providing housing opportunities, preserving our environment, protecting property owners and building better communities—into all BCREA programs. And now we're starting to see the results.

Beginning last June, the BCREA Government Relations Committee started using a Quality of Life lens to decide what issues to take action on and what actions to take. What does that mean? There are three components:

1. All issues on which the Association takes positions must be related to at least one Quality of Life principle.
2. Positions are taken based on solid research, either work done by other organizations or original research done by BCREA.
3. Opportunities for alliances are sought to lend weight to positions taken by BCREA.

The Quality of Life filter helps ensure our advocacy efforts take into account the needs of all British Columbians. After all, what's good for the province is good for real estate.

What successes have we seen?

Briefly, this renewed emphasis on government relations has sparked greater interest and activity among several member boards. Almost all are interested in implementing the Quality of Life philosophy in their own areas, and several have established or revived their government relations committees. The Vancouver Island Real Estate Board is the latest to hire dedicated staff to this program area, joining the Fraser Valley, Vancouver and Victoria boards.

We've also begun using partnerships to advance our positions, as you'll see with our next major submission to the government on preserving the integrity of the Torrens System of Land Registration.

The philosophy is used to introduce the real estate profession to the govern-



President *Dave Barclay*

ment, which resonates even more when we frame our positions in those terms, in meetings, letters and submissions to the government. Now, the keen interest we as REALTORS® have always taken in our communities is starting to define the way we're perceived.

Our credibility will increase as we reinforce Quality of Life messages, and that will benefit us and our clients.

Dave Barclay
President

For more information about the Quality of Life philosophy, visit www.qualityoflife.bcrea.bc.ca.

Board of Directors 2005-2006

Long-Range Plan Principles

1. Demonstrating leadership through effective communication with member boards, REALTORS® and the public
2. Demonstrating the professionalism of REALTORS®
3. Strengthening membership relations
4. Providing service and support options for member boards
5. Building on the role and recognition of BCREA in the development and delivery of excellent education products and services
6. Leading provincial advocacy efforts and providing valued advice on behalf of the profession
7. Demonstrating public interest by integrating the Quality of Life philosophy in BCREA programs
8. Building and strengthening relationships with external stakeholders

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New Agreement With BCA by Kim Spencer



For more than 20 years, REALTORS® and their clients have benefitted from BCREA's strong relationship with BC Assessment (BCA). The two organizations have negotiated a new, long-term data exchange agreement, with even more information.

The new contract contains revised guidelines facilitating the boards' compliance with security protocols, as well as more than a dozen new fields of property information, including number of stories, bedrooms, bathrooms, garages and information about the foundation and when improvements were made.

BCA and BCREA have maintained their relationship over the past three years through a series of short extensions of the prior agreement. The new agreement is for five years and includes an option to renew for a further five years. Both BCREA and BCA benefit: BC REALTORS® continue to have access to BCA's valuable data, and BCA gets timely access to MLS® data from around the province.

This agreement is the result of considerable effort made by both organizations over several years. Valuable contributions to the successful outcome have been made by many members of

the real estate community, including: successive BCREA task forces, chaired by Dennis Wilson and Glenn Terrell; Doug Rundell, Bruce Turner and Peter Barber of BCA; Dr. Stan Hamilton; the Honourable George Abbott, Minister of Sustainable Resource Management; and David Loukidelis, BC Information and Privacy Commissioner.

In mid-April, Kim will join the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver in the position of Manager, Professional Standards. BCREA wishes Kim great success in his new position!

Government Relations

Time to Expand Housing Options ...continued from cover

eclipsing the 2004/05 record by almost 33 per cent and sharing prominence with revenues from forestry (\$1.25 billion) and natural gas (\$2.25 billion). "With multiple-year surpluses and huge amounts of unexpected PTT revenue rolling in, the government could reduce the tax burden," says Barclay.

Specifically, BCREA recommends the provincial government use the PTT to expand housing options by:

- allocating a portion of unanticipated PTT revenue to help people in need find affordable, appropriate

housing options, and

- raising exemption thresholds annually to enable most first-time buyers to qualify.

Pursue Federal Affordability Promises

BCREA recommends the provincial government, in cooperation with other organizations, lobby the federal government to keep its campaign promise and create incentives for private sector investors to help stimulate the construction of new rental accommodation. Campaign promises included:

- Working with the provinces and municipalities to develop tax incentives for private sector builders.
- Allowing capital gains rollover provisions for small-scale investors.
- Reducing the Goods and Services Tax to six per cent.

Clearly, the government shares BCREA's commitment to ensuring economic vitality, building better communities and providing housing opportunities. Together, the public and private sectors can make this vision a reality.

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Real Estate Sector

Profession Provides Expertise

Everyone knows the real estate sector contributes enormously to the province's economic success. And policy makers recognize sales statistics don't reveal everything they need to know about the impact of government policy on citizens, communities and quality of life. That's why the real estate profession continues to build expertise and strengthen its capacity to share information and ideas with elected officials.

"Four of our 12 member boards have full-time staff dedicated to government relations and working with elected officials," explains BCREA President Dave Barclay. "This is grassroots expertise an elected person can tap into any time."

Jim Bennett knows all about timing and how it figures in policy decisions. Before joining the Victoria Real Estate Board (VREB) as Government Relations Coordinator, Bennett spent over 30 years working in and around the BC legislature. Now, he provides officials from the seven provincial ridings within VREB's area with opportunities to engage the real estate community and explore issues that impact their communities.

"During the last provincial and federal elections, our board hosted special panel discussions on housing issues," notes Bennett. "Those efforts were very successful because they provided an opportunity for elected people to build profile and share their ideas publicly. Since then, we've been working with our MLAs to address crystal meth concerns and improve housing affordability."

It's a similar story in the province's fastest growing region. "We build better communities when we take the time to learn about challenges facing



our elected officials and by sharing our concerns," says Debbie Jay, who coordinates government relations at the Fraser Valley Real Estate Board (FVREB) in Surrey.

With 14 provincial ridings in its backyard, FVREB is a catalyst, inspiring ideas and sharing responsibilities with others to probe issues and present practical solutions. FVREB is aware that REALTOR® knowledge and input are invaluable to officials. "We strive to be well informed, approachable and helpful to MLAs," says Jay.

Being well informed and approachable is a way of life at the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver (REBGV). With 29 provincial ridings and 25 local governments, the welcome mat is firmly planted outside the office of Harriet Permut, REBGV's Manager of Government Relations.

From property rights to property taxes, Permut's knowledge of public policy topics impacting real estate is vast. "I've worked for the City of Calgary, Union of BC Municipalities and in provincial government," explains Permut. "An appreciation for how issues are viewed by elected with them is productive and meaningful."

The Vancouver Island Real Estate Board (VIREB) recently committed

itself to this approach also, by appointing Drew Harris. With a background in print and broadcast media, Harris is an ideal complement to the policy expertise VIREB already has in

place. "Our board area spans a vast geographic region and includes six MLAs from both major parties. We work closely with officials and use an assortment of tools to assist them."

Connecting

Learn how these professionals can help you by contacting them directly. If your board isn't represented, contact Steve Olmstead at BCREA, 604.742.2793 or solmstead@bcrea.bc.ca.

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Harriet Permut
REBGV Manager of Government Relations

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Jim Bennett
VREB Government Relations Coordinator

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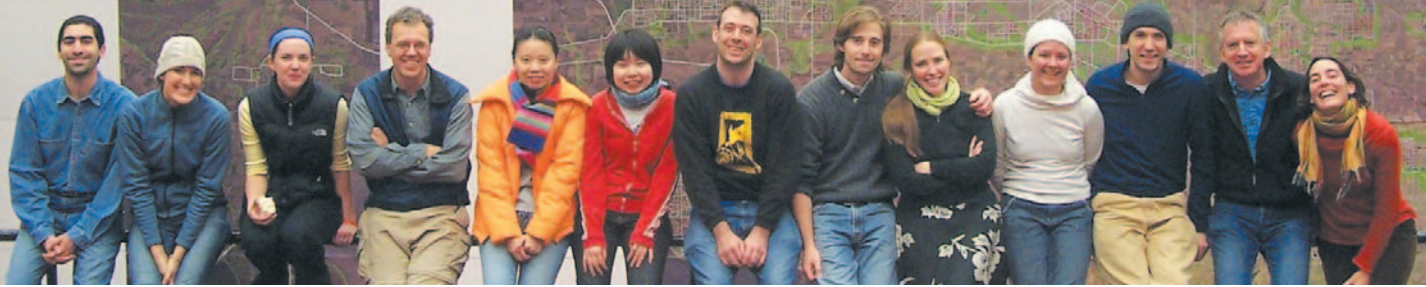
Drew Harris
VIREB Coordinator, Communications & Government Relations

250.390.4212; dharris@vireb.com

At the end of March, VIREB and REBGV received The Canadian Real Estate Association's PAC Team Awards for excellence in their federal political actions. Congratulations!

Celebrate Sustainability

UBC students unveil phase one of SxD project, December 2005



Source: Design Centre for Sustainability, UBC

As rapid growth continues throughout the province, the issue of sustainable development remains a top priority. The February issue of *The Bulletin* discussed the history of sustainability in BC and the partnerships that have evolved among the real estate profession's major players.

This issue highlights recent initiatives in sustainable design and development, and looks ahead to upcoming events. As part of its commitment to improving Quality of Life, BCREA supports livable, sustainable community options throughout BC.

30 Days of Sustainability

www.30daysofsustainability.com

Vancouver hosted this event for the first time from March 2 to 31, 2006, in conjunction with the awards celebration for the \$1 million Alcan Prize for Sustainability and the Globe Foundation Conference on Business and the Environment.

With the goal of establishing Vancouver as the sustainability capital of the world, *30 Days of Sustainability* featured a media awareness campaign, exhibitions, eco-design displays and numerous business speakers, as well as "Sustainability and You," a consumer marketplace showcasing various options to assist in a more sustainable lifestyle. The event's website also featured a blog section and an area for consumers to post their own questions about sustainability.

Globe 2006

www.globe2006.com

Held March 29-31, 2006 in Vancouver, Globe 2006 is a biennial trade fair and conference on business and the environment. The event, which hosted more than 2,000 environmental leaders from 75 countries, included presentations on green technologies, products and services, innovative transportation and construction initiatives, corporate sustainability, the transition to a sustainable economy and the role of sustainable development in shaping urban centres.

Sustainability by Design

www.landfood.ubc.ca/sxd

Greater Vancouver's population of two million is expected to increase to three million by 2025, and double to four million by 2050. To visualize how that growth will be accommodated, the Design Centre for Sustainability at UBC has launched the *Sustainability by Design* (SxD) project. SxD will examine how housing, land use, jobs and transport could be designed, delivered and distributed in the decades ahead, while ensuring more livable and sustainable communities.

Using research, case studies and charrettes (intensive, collaborative design workshops), municipal officials, citizens and local stakeholders will explore consensus-based concepts—based on sustainability principles, market conditions and city policies—

for how a sustainable region could evolve. The resulting product will be a compelling visual representation of what the Greater Vancouver region, and its neighbourhoods and communities, might look like in 2050.

World Urban Forum

www.unhabitat.org/wuf/2006

Established by the United Nations to examine rapid urbanization and its impact on communities, the third World Urban Forum (WUF) will be held June 19-23, 2006 in Vancouver, with the theme of "Our Future: Sustainable Cities—Turning Ideas into Action." The goal of WUF is to provide a common platform to discuss urban issues from a variety of perspectives.

Delegates will include representatives from various non-governmental organizations, community and professional organizations, academics and government officials. The program will include a series of roundtable and plenary sessions, plus a series of training events and hundreds of networking sessions.

Registration is free for this exceptional event, and several other satellite events are happening before, during and after.

BCREA is proud to report on these exciting initiatives, which support the establishment of a sustainable and livable environment for all British Columbians.

Education

cpe Course Schedule

PDP Professional Development Program

continuing professional education

CONDO 101: Strata Law for REALTORS® 6 PDP credits

Instructor: Adrienne Murray

- June 7, REBGV, Vancouver

CONDO 202: Advanced Strata Law for REALTORS® 6 PDP credits

Instructor: Mike Mangan

- April 20, FVREB, Surrey

Electronic Title Searching 6 PDP credits

Instructor: Catherine Greenall

- April 28, VIREB, Parksville
- May 11, FVREB, Surrey
- May 16, REBGV, Vancouver

Foreclosures and Court-Ordered Sales 6 PDP credits

Instructor: Jack Micner

- May 24, REBGV, Vancouver
- May 25, FVREB, Surrey

Legal Update 2005–2006 6 PDP credits

Instructor: Mike Mangan or Adrienne Murray

- April 21, BCNREB, Prince George
- April 26, CADREB, Chilliwack
- April 28, BCNREB, Smithers
- May 9, BCNREB, Terrace
- May 16, BCNREB, 100 Mile House
- May 31, OMREB, Vernon
- June 1, OMREB, Kelowna
- June 2, OMREB, Kelowna

The Management Course: Risk Management—Staying Out of Trouble 6 PDP credits

Instructor: Richard Collins

- April 19, REBGV, Vancouver

Professionalism—It Pays! Be Safe or Be Sued 3 PDP credits

Instructor: Mike Mangan

- May 3, VIREB, Victoria
- May 5, KREB, Fairmont Hot Springs
- May 26, REBGV, Vancouver

Selling Tenant-Occupied Properties (STOP) 6 PDP credits

Instructor: Richard Collins

- May 2, REBGV, Vancouver

What Brokerages and REALTORS® Need to Know about Agency 6 PDP credits

Instructor: Richard Collins, Harvey Exner, Jim McCaughan or Brian Taylor

- April 18, BCNREB, Williams Lake*
- April 19, BCNREB, Williams Lake
- April 27, FVREB, Surrey*
- April 27, REBGV, Vancouver
- April 28, REBGV, Vancouver*
- May 4, KADREA, Kamloops*
- May 4, REBGV, Vancouver*
- May 4, VIREB, Duncan*
- May 5, KADREA, Kamloops
- May 10, BCNREB, Fort St. John*
- May 11, BCNREB, Fort St. John
- May 17, BCNREB, Prince George*
- May 18, BCNREB, Prince George
- May 18, REBGV, Vancouver
- May 19, CADREB, Chilliwack
- May 23, FVREB, Surrey*
- May 25, REBGV, Vancouver*
- May 25, VIREB, Campbell River
- May 30, REBGV, Vancouver
- June 8, REBGV, Vancouver

*For managing brokers, associate brokers and sole proprietors only

Check with your local board office for last-minute changes. Look for more cpe courses on BCREA's REALTOR Link® homepage, under Education.

Education

Real Estate Encyclopedia—New Edition

The Real Estate Encyclopedia—Education for the Professional, Canadian Edition brings together fundamental topics that apply to the real estate profession across Canada.

This reference book is packed with detailed discussion, charts, illustrations and sample forms on every real estate-related topic from abandonment to zoning. It also comes with an

interactive CD, so a wealth of knowledge is truly at your fingertips.

The 2006 edition is available for \$99 plus GST and shipping. To order now for delivery in May, call BCREA at 604.683.7702.