

For Immediate Release

It's Time for Canada's Leaders to Look at Housing Policy with a Climate Change Lens

Vancouver, BC – September 15, 2021. As Canadians get ready to elect a new federal government next week, two issues are top of mind according to several public opinion polls: housing affordability and climate change. And it's no surprise these two areas are prominent; housing and the changing climate are inextricably linked to the quality of life of Canadians. As a result, the BC Real Estate Association (BCREA) calls on our future elected officials to begin to seriously look at housing policy with a climate change lens.

"This summer British Columbia experienced the worst heat wave in our recorded history and what could end up being the most devastating wildfire season ever," says BCREA Chief Executive Officer Darlene Hyde. "If there were any doubts about the very real impacts of climate change, they should be erased. Canadians want to see real action on climate change, and they want to see it now."

Historically, housing affordability and climate change may have been seen by the public and government as separate issues, with different policy levers needed to address them. It would be easy for Canada's leaders – our new elected officials of all political stripes – to continue this way of thinking, but it's time the two issues are looked at together.

The latter half of the COVID-19 pandemic has seen housing prices spike to unprecedented levels, fuelled by low interest rates, pent up demand, the desire by people to re-make their living spaces and by extremely low levels of available supply. Many Canadians are very concerned that their dream of home ownership may never be fulfilled if current market conditions continue.

Alongside market conditions, the current landscape of housing is not helping the climate crisis. Single-family dwellings generally consume more energy and emit more greenhouse gases per square foot of livable area than townhouses or apartment units built under the same building code. It's also generally true that most single-family homes are built in areas that are further from employment centres and are not within easy walking distance from commonly used retail and service outlets, recreation or entertainment amenities. The result is an increased reliance on cars for transportation, again resulting in more greenhouse gases.

"It would be irresponsible to look at solutions to Canada's housing supply crisis without looking at how these fixes affect the climate," Hyde adds. "In fact, by looking at the two together, we are more likely to explore creative solutions that will make the long-lasting change that is needed in both areas."

BCREA recommends the creation of more "missing middle housing" through gentle densification. By transforming our close-in single family zoned neighbourhoods, we can provide new, energy-efficient housing, right-sized for young families (many of whom will be first-time homebuyers) and empty nesters who would like housing options within their historic home neighbourhoods. By making better use of an extremely highly priced asset (residentially zoned land within proximity to existing retail/service outlets, community amenities

and transit) and replacing the single-family home model with three, four or five units on the same plot of land, we can address many of our most pressing issues in one fell swoop.

To accomplish this, however, we need leadership from our elected officials from all levels, starting with our new federal government. If housing policy is developed with the changing climate in mind, we will not only be creating better and more housing options for those who need it, but we will be doing so sustainably.

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About BCREA

[BCREA](#) is the professional association for more than 23,000 REALTORS® in BC, focusing on provincial issues that impact real estate. Working with the province's [ten real estate boards](#), BCREA provides continuing professional education, advocacy, economic research and standard forms to help REALTORS® provide value for their clients.

To demonstrate the profession's commitment to improving Quality of Life in BC communities, BCREA supports policies that help ensure economic vitality, provide housing opportunities, preserve the environment, protect property owners and build better communities with good schools and safe neighbourhoods.