

July 19th 2019

Honourable John Horgan
Premier
Province of British Columbia
West Annex, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

By email to: Premier@gov.bc.ca

Dear Premier Horgan,

On behalf of business stakeholder groups from across British Columbia, we are writing to request your assistance to advance the property tax assessment policy that was recently proposed by Metro Vancouver municipalities. We believe this change will help offer relief to small businesses across BC.

As you know, the issue of property taxes rising at unsustainable rates has been affecting small businesses in communities throughout BC. We, as business associations representing commercial owners and small business tenants, have been trying to put forward innovative solutions that will help businesses thrive while promoting a fair and more reasonable distribution of property taxes.

As Vancouver Mayor Kennedy Stewart recently wrote to you, “the viability of independent small businesses, and the art, culture and non-profit sectors in Metro Vancouver is under threat, particularly for those in neighbourhoods that are experiencing a fast pace of change and dramatic increase in market valuation.”

The creation of a new commercial property ‘subclass’ would allow our municipal governments to tax the unbuilt development potential in the air at a rate lower than the current commercial rate. This optional tool would benefit municipalities to use at their discretion in the best way for their area.

The Metro Vancouver/Provincial intergovernmental working group strongly supports creating a commercial subclass to capture the development potential value and it is our understanding that senior financial staff of large B.C. municipalities are ready to proceed with this change.

As business associations, we have been trying to find a solution that works best for our members and for all stakeholders. We agree, in principle, that a new ‘subclass’ would allow municipalities to offer some relief for those small businesses which we are all trying to help.

Many cities are struggling with this issue. While the details have yet to be finalized, we feel that this made-in-B.C. solution is supportable. We urge the Province to look at what it can do to offer the flexibility being requested through this proposed regulatory change in time for the 2020 tax year.

We would be pleased to work with staff to provide more details.

Sincerely,



Patricia Barnes
The Vancouver Business Improvement Area Partnership



David Crawford, Interim CEO
Greater Vancouver Board of Trade



Val Litwin, President & CEO
British Columbia Chamber of Commerce



Aaron Aerts, Western Canada Economist
Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses



Anne McMullin, President & CEO
Urban Development Institute Pacific Region



Beth Berry, President
National Association for Industrial and Office Parks Vancouver



Damian Stathonikos, President
Building Owners and Managers Association of British Columbia

cc: Honourable Selina Robinson - Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Province of BC