



An update from CHBA BC's Government Relations Committee

February 2017 | Issue 10

News from the Provincial Legislature

New BC H.O.M.E Partnership for first-time buyers

In December, Premier Christy Clark announced a new program for first-time buyers, where the B.C. government will match the applicant's down payment savings up to \$37,500 with a twenty-five-year loan. The loan is interest-free for the first five years. Buyers must also meet important criteria, including a shared income of less than \$150,000 and purchase property of less than \$750,000. Since the program launch on Jan. 16, it [was reported](#) that \$1.1 million in loans has been conditionally approved for more than 250 applicants.



Photo: Minister Responsible for Housing Rich Coleman speaks at the program launch media event on January 16, 2017. (Photo by Province of BC)

View the new program and criteria [with this link](#). CHBA BC supported the announcement as it benefits first-time buyers, a key group in the housing continuum, in achieving home ownership. View the news release from December [using this link](#).

\$217 million dollars in funding for Surrey schools

In high-growth areas such as Surrey, overcrowding at schools is a big issue. At the same time, new developments are key to increasing the supply of housing for families, and should not be stopped because of a lack of capacity for new students. The Surrey Schools Coalition – made up of parents, business community leaders, and development representatives from GVHBA and the Urban Development Institute (UDI) – formed last summer to tackle this issue together and come up with a collaborative solution. The coalition approached local MLAs on both sides of the Legislature, the Minister of Education Mike Bernier, the Surrey School Board and the City of Surrey with an ask of \$175 million to ease the overcrowding in Surrey.



Photo: Members of the Surrey School Coalition, including Mark Sakai and Bob de Wit from GVHBA, with Surrey MLAs at the funding announcement on January 26, 2017.

The result of their hard work? An additional [\\$217 million in funding](#) for schools and a new project team in Surrey that will identify new schools or expansions as quickly as possible.

Changes to the PTT for foreign buyers

In the summer of 2016, an additional 15 per cent property transfer tax (PTT) for foreign nationals was announced for all purchases in Metro Vancouver, excluding Tsawwassen First Nation. After the tax was first announced, CHBA BC CEO Neil Moody co-signed [a letter](#) to Premier Christy Clark with other construction industry associations to express concerns that buyers with existing contracts were not grandfathered into the tax and unfairly penalized.

Premier Clark recently announced at the end of January that the tax will be lifted for all buyers who hold a work permit and pay taxes in the province. Minister of Finance Michael de Jong has also indicated that the government is looking at ways to refund buyers who have work permits and already paid the tax, which is a positive step.

National Issues

Updates on the Drywall Tariff

On January 19, the Canadian International Trade Tribunal released its detailed report to government on duties on U.S. drywall being imported into Western Canada. The recommendations are in line with CHBA recommendations presented last year at the Tribunal hearings. It is now up to the Minister of Finance to render a final decision on implementation. This decision will be a precedent-setting announcement for future trade disputes, so it may take some time to have a final decision. Until a decision is released, the final duty levels [laid out by CBSA](#) on December 5 still stand. CHBA has followed up with the Federal Minister of Finance and encouraged that this process move as quickly as possible to ensure restoration of drywall supply certainty, as well as reasonable and predictable prices. To learn more about the issue, [click here](#).

Key Upcoming Dates

February 21, 2017 – BC Budget 2017

May 9, 2017 – BC Election





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Government Meetings and Events

CEO Neil Moody and members of the Coalition of BC Businesses met with MLA Shane Simpson (Opposition Labour Critic) on January 18, 2017. The meeting focused on labour policy changes proposed by the New Democratic Party, including raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour.

CEO Neil Moody and members of the Coalition of BC Businesses met with Minister Shirley Bond, Minister of Jobs, Tourism, and Skills Training, and Minister Responsible for Labour, on January 26, 2017. The meeting focused on labour policy action by the current government, including the BC Jobs Plan.

The Canadian Society for Association Executives (CSAE) held an MLA Panel on January 30, 2017 to discuss "Building Communities." The Panelists were Government MLA Dr. Darryl Plecas, NDP MLAs David Eby and Spencer Chandra Herbert, and Green Party MLA Dr. Andrew Weaver. CHBA BC had the opportunity to connect with all of the panelists during the luncheon event.

CEO Neil Moody and members of the Coalition of BC Businesses with Minister Shirley Bond on January 26, 2017.



Advocacy Highlights from 2016

CHBA BC advocates on behalf of members on many key issues related to housing affordability. While there were many successes in 2016, here are two key highlights:

Changes to the property transfer tax in BC Budget 2016

Effective February 17, 2016, the purchase of a qualifying new housing unit valued at up to \$750,000 is fully exempt from the provincial property transfer tax, saving the purchaser up to \$13,000.

Federal Government orders Trade Tribunal to analyze impacts of drywall tariff

After a tariff is announced, the injury analysis by government normally takes place in the months and years after the tariff is formally applied. In October 2016, in an unprecedented move, the Federal Cabinet ordered that the Canadian International Trade Tribunal report back to cabinet by January 4, 2017 on the injury related to the drywall duties, the same day the final determination takes place. This expedited the process by several months and was the result of coordinated CHBA advocacy efforts at all levels of the association.

To learn more about CHBA BC's current advocacy efforts and key issues, [click here](#).

Other Association News

Builders' Super Week is taking place March 8-10 in Vancouver. As this year's Keynote Speaker, award-winning journalist and current *Vancouver Sun* political columnist [Vaughn Palmer](#) will be speaking on March 10. As a journalist, Vaughn has covered nine B.C. premiers — and counting. This will be one exciting presentation that you won't want to miss!

[Click here](#) to learn more about the event and register today!

