



**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION
FOR THE REGULAR MEETING OF COUNCIL
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2023**

REGULAR MEETING OF COUNCIL

Agenda Item # 3

Undated letter, titled Affordable Housing Research and Solution Proposal, from Matthew DeSousa, to accompany his Delegation Request (1.1.2.1.1)

Kitimat, British Columbia, Housing Research Project

Affordable Housing Research and Solution Proposal

Affordable Housing Research:

The following presentation is about my personal experiences, conversations, and research I have done over the last month, and what I want to see happen in the future, regarding housing availability, and affordability throughout the community of Kitimat for shelter and housing. This will go over and describe the need for an affordable housing facility of some kind, how I managed to figure out that it's desperately needed and why it's important moving forward, as well as provide a solution for the most cost effective, convenient, quickest way of providing it, and how there is an opportunity that is unlike one we've ever had before. I will speak about unsafe housing that is currently being rented out in Kitimat. I will speak about how the Housing Action Plan and Needs Assessment is outdated, and I will speak about a solution that will address several problems at once, and is also an incredibly convenient solution, given the opportunities that are practically in the community's backyard.

On or around October 3rd, of 2023, I became desperately in need of a place to live, and managed to get in touch with the Community Development Center and BC Housing Society here in Kitimat, and inquired about rental assistance options, as well as what was available regarding affordable housing in Kitimat. I was referred to a few places in town, and one of the options I was given was to contact the Midtown Apartments on Kingfisher Ave. I had a phone conversation with the owner over the phone, agreed to meet with him to view a unit, as well as agreed to view some of the work he was inside the building to potentially help him with or do for him. My brother and I went and did the viewing on an upstairs unit, viewed the building's laundry facility, as well as the unit the owner was working on across the hall that he was working on. Immediately upon entry, I recognized the flooring that was starting to be removed, and had said I wanted no part in the work project at all. When I was asked why, and I responded by saying "because of the tile on the floor", the owner had said "yes, it's asbestos, but you don't have to touch that, you can just do everything else". I again refused to be a part of it, and the conversation and meeting ended more or less right away, and my brother and I left the building.

It took me a couple weeks to figure out and build up the courage to figure out and follow through with how to file a report, to the proper place, about not only work getting done that contained asbestos, without a warning, without a conversation beforehand and me being the one who had to bring it up, but also the fact that this was a building that was being offered to the public, the public being referred to contact the owner and go to this building, as well as the tenants that were living in the building not having a form of protection or warnings for themselves given the fact that there was no written notice or warning or layers of protection prior to entering the building, or the unit itself. It was not only a risk for myself I was unaware of prior to entering, but, anyone who entered in the future would be put into the same

hazardous situation, without even knowing. Potential tenants, potential workers, and the existing tenants as well. If I wasn't being told, no one was, and that was, for me, the part that was NOT ok.

On October 20th, of 2023, I went to the Kitimat Districts Office, explained the situation, and asked what options there were to be able to professionally handle it given the severity of what had happened, and will continue to happen, if it's not dealt with. I was told by the receptionist that I could file a report, and she was also going to see if the building inspector and bylaw officer were in their offices to have a conversation about it as well. I filled out the paperwork, attached 3 pages that stated a detailed description as to what had happened, and it was stamped and dated. The bylaw officer, and building inspector came out, and had a conversation with me about it as well. After explaining the situation, they both told me they were going to look into the matter and get back to me about it.

The following is a point form list of series of events and conversations that took place after the initial report. They are not in exact order, but, all the information and work I have been doing is included:

- I spoke with the bylaw officer several times via email as well as phone conversations regarding the matter and was recommended to talk to WorkSafeBC

- I spoke to WorkSafeBC over the phone about the matter and was explained that because the matter did not involve an employee and employer, that it was best to take it up with the bylaw and building inspection team

- Having more conversation with the Bylaw team, I was told that they weren't going to be entering the building due to unsafe work conditions, but that they hadn't contacted the owner regarding the matter either. I was recommended to talk to counsel about it.

- I spoke with the Kitimat Housing Society in person and informed them of what had happened and what was going on so they were aware

- I spoke to Work BC in person, and informed them of the situation and what was going on so they were aware in case there was a request for workers to be entering the specific address

- I spoke to Service BC in person at their Kitimat Office, where they informed me that the Kitimat Landfill was not a place registered to be taking hazardous waste, and they were very surprised of the matter, but gave me other contacts to connect with as well, including the Residential Tenancy Branch and the Deputy Minister of the BC Housing Ministry

- I called and left a voicemail with the Deputy Minister, did not get a call back specifically from her, but did get a call back from the Residential Tenancy Branch saying the Deputy Minister of Housing had requested they contact me. The Residential Tenancy Branch had explained to me that because I was not a Landlord or Tenant, that I was not able to file a dispute, and it was

outside of the jurisdiction they have to follow. I had a conversation with the representative about the difference between being able to help, and being willing to help, and I managed to get her on board, and she emailed me another contact to get a hold of which was the Compliance and Enforcement for the Province of British Columbia.

-I did receive a call back from the WorkSafeBC officer, who told me that he was willing to volunteer himself to do an inspection, and that he had gone to the building, as well as the unit itself, and that all the safety precautions were in place. He told me the owner was extremely knowledgeable about asbestos, but that tiles had already been removed, and concrete had already been poured over top of some of the remains. I had asked him if the building was currently occupied, and he said it was, and he said he had also tested the tiles that were being worked with, and they were in fact asbestos.

-I spoke with a Provincial Representative about the matter, they were very impressed and interested in hearing more, and I am supposed to be doing follow up with them as well.

By this time, I was starting to have a pretty good understanding of some of the issues regarding not only affordable housing, but unsafe housing, and lack of responsibility and ownership, is contributing to the issues that people with lower incomes and less options are experiencing in our community. This was the most affordable option I could find at the time, and was in between 1100 and 1400 a month, without utilities. There are people in our community that are up against a brick wall, with no help, and even spending everyday working on matters like this, it just leads to more problems, and more people who aren't helping, and are passing off the responsibility to someone else. It was not that much before going to Ellis Ross's office that I realized, instead of continuing to resolve that one matter, it was time to find a solution that would offer the public and people in need of assistance, a shelter that was affordable, upkeep, clean, and safe. I do understand not everybody is going to be able to have a nice home, for a low cost, but, it was when I found out that people were being referred to a place that was hazardous, by a government funded organization, I knew there was a serious problem that I couldn't walk away from.

I started doing research into the housing industry's history in Kitimat, and used the Housing Action Plan and Needs Assessment to do so. It was informational for some things, but I found that more of it was outdated than anything else. I did learn about the difference between Core Housing Needs and Extreme Core Housing Needs, which I think that's something that everyone listening should read about. It talks about the severity of being in a situation where half or more of your income is going to shelter costs, which is defined as rent, or mortgage amount, AS WELL AS utilities costs and property tax cost. The only reason I bring up the Housing Action Plan and Needs Assessment, is because when people refer to the website, for informational purposes, whether it be a citizen, or, someone from another town, they're getting false information that's completely out of date. There's more predictions in that document that didn't happen, then there are facts. This is when I started a similar research project myself.

The important things for discussion, among many, were that since 2018 the rent price of most available units or homes has more than doubled, the vacancy rate has gone from approximately 35% down to a fraction of that, and this has caused a severe housing affordability issue in our town. Supply and demand is in a worst case scenario for people with lower incomes, and best case scenario for people who already own homes and are looking to capitalize, even to the point where I hear stories of tenants being asked to move out, in order for renovations to happen, so landlords can double their rent. It's one thing to try and capitalize off of your own work, but, when it's causing an issue as big as it is, more options need to be available to people.

After doing my own assessment of what is available on the market, someone needs to be making an income of at least 28 per hour, in order to live on their own, and JUST at that mark of spending half their income on shelter.

- 1 Bedroom rental shelter options are averaging @ \$1633 per month and approx. \$29 per hour, full time is required to spend less than 50% of their income on shelter costs
- 2 Bedroom rental shelter options are averaging @ over \$2300 per month and approx. \$44 per hour, full time is required to spend less than 50% of their income on shelter costs
- 3 Bedroom plus rental options are averaging over \$3000 per month and approx. \$62 per hour, full time is required to spend less than 50% of their income on shelter costs

Not only are people who are working in the service industry unable to afford to the current rent prices, but as I've spent week paying close attention to this matter, alot of community members are renting bedrooms to help each other, skipping meals in order to afford rent, choosing to move back in with their parents, or staying at their parents much into adulthood because they don't have a choice, but people who have low incomes are stuck, and the help that is there, even if they ask for it, is not enough. We need housing in our community that offers rental shelter, that's affordable for EVERYONE, and not JUST the high income earners, and people who purchased their homes YEARS ago. It's unfair, and it's sad.

I have come up with, along with help from many members of the community, a solution, where not only will it resolve this problem, but will actually create an opportunity for growth, and provide MANY people who live here that are looking for help, with relief.

Solution Proposal:

I want to make it a priority, to put together a team of people, who can begin a plan and negotiate with Shell and LNG Canada, for them to rather then ship ALL of the workers camp back out of town, for us to instead receive a portion of it from them, to build a facility, where not only will it be the most affordable way of building a rental housing facility, but, will also be their most affordable way to remove that portion of the workers camp rather then ship it out again. This will provide affordable rental units for not only low income earners, but just as importantly, people with accessibility challenges, and disabilities.

-This will give us prefabbed units that only require slight modifications in order for them to become housing units, and drastically cuts down the cost of labour.

-They are new units, so this will also drastically prolong the amount of future work needing to be done for maintenance.

-Because Shell LNG Canada is planning on taking down the workers camp and shipping the units out, this creates an incentive for them to save money on the tear down process by leaving some of it behind.

-This will create local jobs temporarily, and keep local trades and builders busy, rather than having to leave town to find work.

-It will also create long term employment opportunities to run the facility.

-It will create local revenue that doesn't already exist because of people living in bedrooms and basements.

-With how cost effective a project like this could be if done right, the rental prices of the units would be low enough to allow people to prioritize things like education and servicing the community.

-The facility could be done in a way where the ground floor units are offered and prioritized to people with accessibility issues and disabilities.

This one solution makes sense to everyone I've spoken to, including community members, District Employees, and even Provincial Government representatives and workers. It would actually solve several problems our community needs to address all at once; affordable rental shelters that are new, SAFE, clean and up to date, would accommodate people with disabilities and accessibility challenges, the elderly, and would apply to several groups of the community who don't just want this help, but NEED it, and they are all excited when we talk about it. It's not a matter of can we make this happen, as much as it's a matter of;

WHOS WILLING AND WANTING TO HELP?

Thankyou,

Matthew Orland DeSousa
Community Member Of Kitimat