



DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE

January 11, 2019

Re: Second-stage and affordable housing, District of Kitimat

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing to express, in the strongest possible terms, my support for the affordable and second-stage housing project being led by Tamitik Status of Women.

I have been working with the Kitimat and Haisla Community Vitality Advisory Group and Research Team since the fall of 2015, when we set out to better understand the wellbeing experiences of women in Kitimat and the Haisla Nation. Through conversations with 130 diverse women and young women in both Kitimat and Kitamaat Village, appropriate housing was identified over and over as one of the key factors that affects wellbeing. In follow-up conversations, many of the women with whom we spoke suggested that of all the factors that affect women's wellbeing, lack of appropriate housing and social isolation bring with them the most serious consequences.

Beyond peoples' experiences with housing challenges during the Rio Tinto modernization project, and results from a recent housing study focused on northern British Columbia that notes serious affordability issues in Kitimat, other research shows that major resource development projects have a negative effect on the availability of appropriate and affordable housing. Consequences for women and children include being forced to remain in abusive situations, and having to live with friends and extended family, creating potentially stressful and conflictual situations.

In this context, I was so pleased to learn that in 2018, the District committed land, and BC Housing committed funding, for the construction and operation of more affordable housing and second-stage housing for women and their children in Kitimat, including members of the Haisla Nation, who, as you know, also face considerable housing challenges. As one Haisla woman noted, "I'm living in my mama's basement because I don't have a home".

Housing is an excellent economic and social investment. People are more able to participate in the local economy and the life of the community when they are free from the fear of homelessness. Adequate housing also has a positive effect on peoples' health, thereby reducing healthcare costs. Of course, when housing is affordable, women are also more able to meet their other needs. For instance, one woman with whom I spoke, who struggled for

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years to find stable housing reminded me, “if it hadn’t been for the food bank and the food share in the community, it would have been harder for eating”.

Given the positive financial investment decision on the new LNG terminal, it is absolutely essential that the District of Kitimat proceed with this critical piece of social infrastructure.

Sincerely,



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PS. You can find more details about the wellbeing experiences of women in the Haisla Nation and the District of Kitimat in our full report: <http://tamitik.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FinalKitimatHaislaCVI-ReportMay-24-2018.pdf>