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September 1, 2021

The Honourable Erin O'Toole, P.C., C.D., M.P., Leader of the Official Opposition  
Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada  
1720 - 130 Albert Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5G4  
**VIA EMAIL: [info@conservative.ca](mailto:info@conservative.ca)**

Dear Mr. O'Toole:

### **Local Government Matters 2021**

On behalf of the Metro Vancouver Board of Directors, I am pleased to send you this letter which includes a series of questions we would like to discuss with the Conservative Party of Canada in advance of the September 2021 federal election.

As a federation of 21 municipalities, one electoral area, and one treaty First Nation in a geographic area that is home to over half the population of British Columbia, Metro Vancouver plays a critical role in the provision of utility services, regional parks, affordable housing, regional planning, air quality, and political leadership on important regional issues. It is vitally important that we develop and maintain an effective working partnership with the next federal government so we can collaboratively and efficiently address the complex issues facing the region.

The enclosed questions are organized into three broad categories – securing investments in critical infrastructure, expanding the supply of affordable housing, and responding to the impacts of climate change. Our objective in posing these questions to you is two-fold: to share with you the topic areas that are foremost priorities to Metro Vancouver entering the election campaign, and to better understand how you and your party would address these topics if elected on September 20, 2021. The answers provided by you and the other major political parties will be featured on a website and as part of the Metro Vancouver media campaign “Local Government Matters.”

In addition, Metro Vancouver plans to host an all-party debate on September 15, 2021, and we hope that you can participate. This will provide an opportunity to further discuss in detail the issues of critical importance to the Metro Vancouver region. Metro Vancouver staff will contact your campaign management to determine who might represent your party at this debate.

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My Metro Vancouver Board colleagues and I look forward to your responses on these important issues by September 10, 2021.

Yours sincerely,



Sav Dhaliwal  
Chair, Metro Vancouver Board

SD/HS/jl

Encl: Local Government Matters 2021 – Questions for Political Parties (Doc# 47270207)

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## Local Government Matters 2021

### QUESTIONS FOR POLITICAL PARTIES

#### 1. Investments in Critical Infrastructure

From public transit to bridges and ports, to clean water, waste management, parks and housing, infrastructure projects connect our communities, provide the foundations for a strong and resilient economy, and build the future of our country.

As we plan for the future, we must take into consideration the need for expanded core utility services and regional services to respond to new growth. Our country and region are dependent on healthy, functioning ecosystems and require actions to reduce pollutants, including greenhouse gases, to prevent waste and to conserve our natural ecosystems. We must also maintain and replace critical regional infrastructure to meet current and future service needs and to be resilient to the effects of climate change and natural disasters, including impacts from severe weather events and flooding, wildfires, power failures and seismic events.

Federal funding programs do exist and are helping local governments build, maintain and upgrade critical infrastructure. However, these programs often have inconsistent criteria and timelines, which can change dramatically whenever there is a change in government. This uncertainty undermines long-term planning and often results in delays and cost increases to essential projects. Investments in community infrastructure will create a more equitable, inclusive and prosperous Canada.

***Question A: If elected, will your party provide predictable, equitable cost-sharing on critical infrastructure projects to meet the needs of a growing population in Metro Vancouver?***

Metro Vancouver is advancing one of Canada's most dynamic and transformative urban sustainability programs – the Iona Island Wastewater Treatment Plant. This state-of-the-art wastewater treatment and resource recovery facility will respond to a federally regulated requirement for providing enhanced treatment technology. This innovative project will protect the health and well-being of people, wildlife and ecosystems while enhancing seismic and climate resiliency. The first phase of the program begins in 2021, with a budget of \$750 million over the next five years.

Metro Vancouver is engaging 14 First Nations on the new plant, working closely with the Musqueam Indian Band due to the proximity of the site to their primary reserve lands – directly across the Fraser River – and their strong connections to Iona Island.

It is critical that the federal government support local governments in reaching regulatory compliance in order to maintain affordability at the household level and to ensure this critical project moves forward without delay.

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***Question B: If elected, will your party commit to cost-sharing of a third each (\$250 million) between all orders of government for Phase 1 (\$750 million) of Metro Vancouver’s Iona Island Wastewater Treatment Plant?***

## **2. Climate Resiliency**

Metro Vancouver is already experiencing the impacts of climate change. Unprecedented wildfire activity in western North America has resulted in a record-breaking number of air quality advisories over the past several years, and this year alone we have experienced extraordinarily damaging heat waves and wildfires. It is expected that these smoky skies will continue, along with drier, hotter summers and warmer, wetter winters. These seasonal changes in weather patterns will result in extended drought periods, an increase in rainfall intensity and a one-metre rise in sea level by 2100. This level of environmental change will significantly impact the quality of life in the region and have severe financial impacts for residents, businesses and governments if we don’t prepare. It is absolutely essential to ensure that Metro Vancouver’s infrastructure is resilient to the changing climate and other potential disasters.

Metro Vancouver is in the process of implementing a regional climate strategy—Climate 2050—that will guide climate change policy and action in the region for the next 30 years. Metro Vancouver’s Board also committed to being a carbon neutral region by 2050. Despite this progress, actions must be accelerated to reduce our impacts on global climate change, to protect public health and the environment and to adapt to the anticipated impacts from a changing climate.

***Question C: If elected, will your party fund green infrastructure projects that prioritize emissions reductions and resiliency to climate change?***

Protecting and enhancing natural areas and their connectivity will be essential in helping species and ecosystems adapt to climate change. Metro Vancouver is a region with a rich and diverse natural environment that provides important ecosystem services including clean air and water, pollination, flood control and cooling of urban areas. Furthermore, many aspects of the region’s ecosystems hold cultural significance to First Nations, and healthy ecosystems provide the basis for local food security and prosperity for us all. Soil, forests, wetlands, and other ecosystems also contribute to the regulation of the global climate by removing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Protecting and enhancing parks, natural spaces and ecosystems will be essential to environmental preservation and restoration, and will help communities mitigate the impacts of climate change.

***Question D: If elected, will your party expand funding for natural infrastructure to support access to nature, environmental preservation and restoration, and climate mitigation?***

## **3. Affordable Housing**

Housing affordability is an essential part of creating a more inclusive, equitable and prosperous future for the region, and for Canada. With approximately 13,000 people on the BC Housing waitlist and a growing population, Metro Vancouver estimates it will need between 7,500 and 8,500 new rental units

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every year for the next 10 years in order to meet critical demand for affordable housing across the region. This includes lower-end market housing, subsidized housing and social housing. But the region can't do it alone. Improving affordability requires actions and partnerships with all orders of government.

The National Housing Strategy has been a significant step towards addressing the housing affordability crisis felt acutely in Metro Vancouver, but more can be done to build up supply.

***Question E: If elected, will your party maintain and expand the National Housing Strategy program, and ensure greater flexibility and streamlined access to federal funding for housing?***

Metro Vancouver Housing provides safe and affordable rental homes to more than 9,400 people on 49 sites across the region. Many of these housing sites were built with the help of previous federal government funding programs.

The current Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) programming, under the National Housing Strategy, prioritizes low-interest loans over grants for affordable housing. While these loans are important for financing projects, they force housing providers to allocate revenue to repay loans instead of investing in new affordable housing.

Grants would reduce the risk taken on by housing providers and would let them provide more affordable housing at a much faster pace—something desperately needed in the Metro Vancouver region if we are to address housing affordability.

Without an expedited building of affordable units in Metro Vancouver the prosperity, economy and livability will be severely impacted.

***Question F: If elected, will your party increase the size and availability of the CMHC's grant programs in order to support major sustainability upgrades in existing and new housing, as well as the development and preservation of affordable rental housing?***