

First Nations Summit

STATEMENT

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BC's most vulnerable sure to pay the highest price following provincial government approval of increases to rental rates

Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver, BC — The First Nations Summit (FNS) is voicing concern regarding a recent decision by the Provincial government to approve an allowable rent increase of 4.5 per cent for 2019, the largest increase since 2004.

The FNS believes this decision is a direct contradiction to many commitments made by the NDP in the lead up to the last provincial election and in the initial days after they formed government. The decision also directly contradicts the recent report issued by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction entitled *What We Heard About Poverty in BC (2018)*.

The provincial poverty report states;

"Affordable housing was overwhelmingly the top issue that came up during the consultation. It was named the most pressing issue for people living in poverty by people and organizations throughout British Columbia" ...

... "High rents and low vacancy rates have widened and deepened poverty. Increasingly, people are spending more and more of their income to put a roof over their heads" ...

... "This has pushed more people into poverty and left a growing number of people feeling vulnerable" ...

... "People noted that annual rent increases and the abuse of loopholes, such as fixed-term leases created a real gap between incomes and rent costs in every part of the province" ...

... "In every part of the province, people spoke up about how high housing costs limit people's opportunities and forces people to cut back on food, turn down the heat, and live smaller, more isolated lives.

... "There was widespread support from participants for rent control" ...

"The move by provincial officials to approve rent increases is irresponsible and unacceptable given the current state of the housing crisis and the need to address the high poverty rates. Decisions like this cannot be made in isolation of the work being done in other ministries to address these critical issues" said Cheryl Casimer of the FNS Political Executive and a member of the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's Advisory Forum.

"Premier Horgan himself stated in April 2017 that 'British Columbia's Liberal government has ignored renters for the past 16 years and it's high time someone offered them a helping hand'. We find it hard to understand how this decision helps renters or those living in deep poverty. We encourage the provincial government to reverse this decision until a more coordinated cross-ministry approach can be undertaken to assure BC's most vulnerable citizens are not the ones that suffer the greatest impact", added Robert Phillips, also of the FNS Political Executive.

The First Nations Summit executive will be engaging the Premier and appropriate Cabinet Ministers on this important topic in the coming weeks.

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The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. The Summit is also a NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

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