

## BRIEFING NOTE – TEMPORARY HOUSING FOR SEASONAL TOURISM WORKERS

### **BACKGROUND**

To address the housing shortage in communities across the province, particularly for seasonal tourism employees that work as ski instructors or fishing guides in resort communities by way of example, temporary housing, such as trailers or modified shipping containers, is a solution that could be utilized for as much as six months of the year to accommodate these workers.

In the absence of temporary housing options, employees are often travelling long distances from existing accommodation to their place of work, or conversely sharing inadequate and illegal accommodation with multiple tenants to save costs and remain employed.

### **CORE ISSUE**

On top of the need for affordable housing options lies an equally critical issue requiring a solution from government: the need also for adequate, attainable housing options. The lack of permanent, long-term housing (in particular, rental housing) stock is exacerbating a housing shortage that continues to drive rental prices higher. Temporary seasonal workers, such as those in the tourism industry, often end up short-changed given the seasonal nature of their work. While permanent housing solutions should be the long-term goal, there is a need across the province for temporary options that provide adequate, attainable, and affordable housing close to where people work which, in turn, supports tourism businesses as they continue to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The problem is that temporary housing, such as trailers or modified shipping containers, is not explicitly permitted in many communities in British Columbia and if it is, only for temporary social housing needs. For example, the City of Vancouver only permits temporary modular housing to address the city's social housing needs.<sup>1</sup> In the Resort Municipality of Whistler, shipping containers are not permitted in residential zones, multiple residential zones, etc.<sup>2</sup> Whistler cites concerns over noise, cost or lack of utilities and other issues as reasons to prevent willing businesses from setting up temporary housing for workers on vacant properties or municipal land that is not being used during certain months of the year (e.g. golf course parking lot in winter).

While most municipalities don't have explicit bylaws that allow for the use of the temporary modular housing for seasonal workers, several municipalities have utilized the Temporary Use Permits (TUPs) process as permitted under section 493 of the Local Government Act.<sup>3</sup> A leading example of this policy solution is from the City of Revelstoke that used its TUP process to consider temporary employee housing for Revelstoke

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<sup>1</sup> [Zoning and Development By-law: Section 11 \(vancouver.ca\)](#), see section 11.3.4.

<sup>2</sup> [Shipping Containers | Resort Municipality of Whistler](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Local Government Act](#), section 493

Mountain Resort.<sup>456</sup> Another municipal leader, when it comes to using TUPs for housing, is the District of Ucluelet. Working with their local chamber of commerce, the district implemented a pilot project to streamline their Temporary Use Permit (TUP) intake and review process for temporary seasonal workers to be housed in RVs.<sup>7</sup>

The use of TUPs hasn't been without its difficulty. Given the TUP process requires a public hearing process, the use of temporary permits can be politically challenging for local councils if their community opposes an application regardless of how challenged businesses might be to house their employees.

In other instances, a municipality can look supportive of temporary housing solutions but effectively limit their use by adding infrastructure costs to the project that businesses are unlikely to afford. For example, the Village of Pemberton extended permission for a local hotelier to install temporary housing units onsite for their employees. However, the municipality's demands for extensive and cost-prohibitive beautification of the site vis-a-vis landscaping and other amenities amounted to several hundred thousand dollars, and made this form of housing solution cost prohibitive for the hotel operator.

The Province of BC clearly understands the challenges facing businesses and residents when it comes to ensuring people have adequate, attainable, and affordable housing close to where they work. On top of the billions of dollars invested in increasing housing supply, the province is also looking to streamline their permit process along with a commitment to work with municipalities to simplify their approval process through the Development Approvals Process Review (DAPR). There is an opportunity through this review to incorporate a holistic policy approach that encourage municipalities to utilize temporary measures to get workers housed while also ensuring permit approval creates long-term housing solutions for all British Columbians.

Therefore, the Tourism Industry Association of BC offers the following:

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To advance a solution that includes temporary housing, the Province of British Columbia may wish to:

1. Influence municipalities to relax bylaws and/or policies that restrict temporary housing as part of the Development Approvals Process Review (DAPR) initiated by the Province.
2. Influence municipalities to utilize Temporary Use Permits (TUP) as allowed in the Local Government Act as another tool that can provide temporary housing options where seasonal tourism workers are struggling to find adequate housing options.
3. Provide incentives to municipalities and/or business owners to install temporary housing, in particular where it supports accommodation for seasonal workers.
4. Create a dedicated infrastructure fund that business owners can access to support the installation of utilities such as hydro, water and sewer connections to accommodate temporary housing.

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<sup>4</sup> [Revelstoke City Council approves Temporary Use Permits - Revelstoke Review](#)

<sup>5</sup> City of Revelstoke, Public Engagement for Temporary Employee Housing for Revelstoke Mountain Resort - [FAQs • Revelstoke, BC • CivicEngage](#)

<sup>6</sup> [City council approves permit for worker camp in Johnson Heights - Revelstoke Review](#)

<sup>7</sup> Pilot Project to house seasonal workers in RVs ([Worker Housing Project \(Pilot\) \(ucluelet.ca\)](#))

5. Ensure infrastructure of temporary housing sites being used for pipeline workers is transitioned for permanent campgrounds.
6. Consider expanding the use of MRDT collected via online accommodation platforms (e.g. Air BnB) specifically designated for affordable housing, to fund bylaw enforcement to ensure short-term rentals comply with local bylaws and regulations.
7. Consider extending the duration of temporary housing approvals for a minimum of 5 years to avoid the need for an annual application and approval process.

## SCHEDULE A: LOCAL COMPARISON OF TEMPORARY HOUSING

### LOWER MAINLAND/SEA-TO-SKY

#### 1. Vancouver:

- Only allows temporary modular housing for social housing ([Zoning and Development By-law: Section 11 \(vancouver.ca\)](#))

#### 2. Richmond:

- TUP for modular supportive housing
- BC HOUSING has applied to the City of Richmond for a Temporary Use Permit to allow a three-storey temporary modular housing development with 40 residential units and vehicle access from Smith Street at 2520, 2540, 2560, 2580, 2600, 2640 Smith Street and 9031 Bridgeport Road - (2020 918062 000 00 TUP Approved)

#### 3. Whistler:

- Use of shipping containers is prohibited other than for storage on construction sites ([Shipping Containers | Resort Municipality of Whistler](#))
- Zoning Bylaws recognize employee housing needs, but not temporary modular options; trailers are only permitted for tourist accommodation ([Zoning and Parking Bylaw No. 303, 2015 \(whistler.ca\)](#))

### ISLAND

#### 4. Tofino:

- Bylaws don't allow temporary employee housing, but various zones (i.e. C5/Tourist Commercial District, DC5/Downtown Core 5 Comprehensive Development Zone, etc.<sup>8</sup>) permit staff accommodations for seasonal employees to be built.
- Tofino does have temporary housing (i.e. trailers) via their Temporary Use Permit (TUP) process.

#### 5. Ucluelet

- Pilot Project to implement a streamlined Temporary Use Permit (TUP) intake and review process for temporary seasonal worker housing in RVs - [Worker Housing Project \(Pilot\) \(ucluelet.ca\)](#)

#### 6. Qualicum Beach

- TUP – yes but not used for seasonal workers.

### KOOTENAYS

#### 7. Revelstoke:

- Bylaws don't allow temporary employee housing, but in zone Comprehensive Development Zone 08 (CD08), the city does legislate when resort employee housing must be built.<sup>9</sup>
- Revelstoke has allowed temporary housing via their Temporary Use Permit (TUP) process.
- Revelstoke Mountain Resort has used the TUP process for employee housing ([FAQs • Revelstoke, BC • CivicEngage](#))

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<sup>8</sup> District of Tofino, Zoning Bylaw, <https://tofino.civicweb.net/document/1425/>

<sup>9</sup> City of Revelstoke, [Zoning Bylaw](#)

**8. Fernie:**

- City of Fernie Housing Needs Report recognizes lack of housing for seasonal workers is an issue ([09c1c74d89978e64e28328d06fcb585e\\_2020\\_City\\_of\\_Fernie\\_Housing\\_Needs\\_Report.pdf \(ehq-production-canada.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com\)](#))
- Bylaws don't allow for temporary housing, but City of Fernie has a Temporary Use Permit process ([City of Fernie | Temporary Use Permit](#))

**INTERIOR**

**9. Kelowna**

- Temporary Farm Worker Housing is permitted (see Permitted Use section 10.3 in Zoning Bylaw #12375)

**10. Sun Peaks**

- Temporary Use Permit process – yes
- Looking at specific employee housing bylaw ([Tourism, resort communities share housing solutions at Revelstoke summit - Revelstoke Mountaineer](#))