



## We Need More Equitable Access to Housing!

Municipal elections create opportunities to talk about local issues that matter. Municipal plans, policies, and programs are not neutral. They affect different people in different

**VOTE on OCTOBER 20**  
<https://www.kitimat.ca/en/municipal-hall/elections.aspx>

ways. This factsheet<sup>1</sup> is about housing, and shows how we could approach this issue in a more inclusive way in the District of Kitimat. It builds on research with 130 diverse women<sup>2</sup> in Kitimat and Haisla Nation.<sup>3</sup> The

Housing Advisory Committee for the District of Kitimat was formed in response to the community's need for more affordable and accessible housing. The committee conducted a comprehensive housing needs assessment in 2012, which identified several gaps, including the "immediate need for 217 affordable rental and/or supportive housing units in Kitimat".<sup>4</sup> The needs assessment was also used to inform the community's 2015 housing action plan.

### Why Do We Need a More Inclusive Approach to Housing?

The issue of housing is gendered. Women have limited access to high-paying industry jobs as many of these positions are male-dominated. And in general, women continue to earn less money than men.<sup>5</sup> For female-led households in particular, this makes it hard to make ends meet, and limits housing choices.<sup>6</sup> In our research, we learned about women's challenges with accessing safe housing, and their risk of sexual exploitation by landlords.<sup>7</sup> Women also reported that some rental properties are overcrowded, poorly built, and not well maintained.<sup>7</sup> Women discussed the rising costs of housing and risk of renoviction<sup>8</sup> as leading not only to the possibility of homelessness, but also to creating stress and conflict within families. Of particular concern, women face a number of housing-related barriers to leaving violent situations.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the community has "an aging housing stock with many rental units requiring major repairs".<sup>10</sup> Affordable housing reduces the number of children taken into care, and health care costs associated with homelessness.<sup>11</sup> It can also stimulate the local economy when income that was previously spent on housing is freed

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<sup>1</sup> This is one of two factsheets produced through a collaboration between the Kitimat and Haisla Community Vitality Advisory Group and Research Team. They were written and revised by J. Ramdatt, K. Guite, C. Rumley, M. Martins, and L. Slanina (Tamtik Status of Women), L. McMurtry and L. Levac (University of Guelph), and the Ending Violence Association of BC. We are grateful to the women and girls in the Haisla Nation and in Kitimat who shared their experiences, expertise, and observations with us, and to those who are working to make the District of Kitimat safer and more equitable. We acknowledge that we work on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional lands of the Haisla, Musqueam, Squamish, and Tseil-Waututh Nations, and in the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

<sup>2</sup> We have used the word 'women' to be brief, but humbly acknowledge that there is much diversity among women based on age, race, ability, Indigenous identity, and experience with poverty, among other factors.

<sup>3</sup> Kitimat and Haisla Community Vitality Advisory Group and Research Team. (2018). *The Wellbeing Experiences of Women in the Haisla Nation and the District of Kitimat*. [http://tamtik.ca/cvi\\_report\\_2018](http://tamtik.ca/cvi_report_2018)

<sup>4</sup> Terra Housing Consultants. (2012). *Comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment for the District of Kitimat*. (p.3) <https://www.kitimat.ca/en/municipal-hall/resources/Documents/Housing-Needs-Assesment.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Conference Board of Canada. (2017). *Gender Wage Gap*. <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/provincial/society/gender-gap.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>

<sup>6</sup> Halseth, G. & Morris, M. (2013). *Dialogues on Readiness Preparing for Industrial Development in Northern BC Communities: Kitimat*. (p. 20).

<sup>7</sup> Kitimat and Haisla Community Vitality Advisory Group and Research Team. (2018). *The Wellbeing Experiences of Women in the Haisla Nation and the District of Kitimat*. [http://tamtik.ca/cvi\\_report\\_2018](http://tamtik.ca/cvi_report_2018)

<sup>8</sup> Women in the sharing circles described the practice of landlords evicting tenants, ostensibly in order to undertake renovations, while substantially increasing rent prices for the units.

<sup>9</sup> British Columbia Non-Profit Housing Association. (2010). *Surviving Not Thriving: The Systemic Barriers to Housing for Women Leaving Violent Relationships*. Available in hard copy by contacting BCNPHA.

<sup>10</sup> Terra Housing Consultants. (2012). *Comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment for the District of Kitimat*. (p.3) <https://www.kitimat.ca/en/municipal-hall/resources/Documents/Housing-Needs-Assesment.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Co-op Housing Federation of BC & BC Rental Housing Coalition. (2017). *An Affordable Housing Plan for BC*. (pp. 20-21).





up for goods and services in the community.<sup>12</sup> A strong supply of suitable, affordable housing contributes to stabilizing local populations, and helps individuals and families achieve their full potential. In short, there are not enough housing options for the range of needs and income levels of members of our community.

### How Are We Approaching Housing in the District of Kitimat?

Tamitik Status of Women (TSW) has advocated for women's housing in Kitimat for more than 25 years. They also provide transition housing and limited second-stage housing. The *District's Housing Action Plan*<sup>13</sup> recommended the development of a second-stage housing facility for women and their children, through a partnership between TSW and BC Housing.<sup>13</sup> In 2018, BC Housing committed funding for the construction and operation of more second-stage housing for women and their children, and for affordable housing. For these new affordable housing units, priority will be given to women and their children. The District has committed to gifting a portion of municipal-owned land for this housing project. The District has also introduced new housing policies such as zoning amendments, tenant relocation plans, strata conversions, and an incentive program to promote the creation of secondary suites.<sup>14</sup> A by-law requiring construction camps to contribute to an affordable housing fund was also developed.<sup>14</sup> Still, newly built housing in the District of Kitimat is primarily directed toward high income earners, so there continues to be a shortage of adequate housing for low-income families.

*"I'm living in my mama's basement because I don't have a home."*

*"So the hope is if LNG Canada goes through, they won't have anyone living in town, everyone will be in camp. So the hope is that we won't get to that zero percent vacancy rate again because it was a disaster."*

*"So the landlord can say that they're needing to do required renovations for safety...they kick you out and then they jack up the rent."*

### To Have a More Inclusive Approach to Housing, the District Could:

- ensure the Housing Advisory Committee's mandate emphasizes addressing the remaining urgent need for appropriate and affordable (below market rental price) housing for diverse women, including older women and women with disabilities.
- work on ensuring available housing for people from surrounding areas, including Kitimaat Village, who move to Kitimat seeking work and other opportunities. Affordable housing for First Nations people is a gap in the Kitimat housing market.<sup>15</sup>
- insist on sufficient on-site housing for workers in the case of a positive final investment decision.

### To Encourage More Inclusive Housing in the District of Kitimat, You Can Ask the Candidates in the Upcoming Election:

- How do you think we could make housing more equitable and inclusive for diverse women in the District of Kitimat?
- What could you do as Mayor/Councillor to address access to affordable housing for diverse women in the District of Kitimat?

<sup>12</sup> Lambert, B. & McInturff, K. (2016). *Making Women Count: The Unequal Economies of Women's Work*. (p. 13). [www.oxfam.ca/make-women-count](http://www.oxfam.ca/make-women-count)

<sup>13</sup> Northern Development Initiative Trust. (2015). *District of Kitimat Housing Action Plan*.

<https://www.kitimat.ca/en/municipal-hall/resources/Documents/Housing-Action-Plan.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Halseth, G. & Ryser, L. (2017). *It's Community That Matters! Tracking Social and Economic Transformation for Kitimat, BC, 2011 – 2016*. (p.22).

<sup>15</sup> Terra Housing Consultants. (2012). *Comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment for the District of Kitimat*. (p.3) <https://www.kitimat.ca/en/municipal-hall/resources/Documents/Housing-Needs-Assesment.pdf>