



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA



Sonia Furstenau
Leader, BC Green Party

June 13, 2022

Honourable Bruce Ralston
Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation

Dear Minister Ralston,

In recent weeks, my office has received correspondence from many Cowichan Valley constituents expressing concern about the lack of accessibility and affordability of low carbon heating and cooling alternatives, such as heat pumps.

Constituents have expressed a desire to have heat pumps installed for many reasons, including lower monthly costs, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and cheaper, lifesaving cooling in summer months.

The BC Coroners Service has identified that 619 people lost their lives last summer due to heat, with the majority of those occurring due to the deadly heat dome event. According to the Coroners' Report, over two-thirds of heat related deaths were among people 70 years and older; the majority were in low-income areas, people living alone, and in areas with minimal green space. The large majority of deaths on Vancouver Island occurred indoors. Efficient and accessible home cooling is an important tool in preventing heat-related deaths in the future.

While the existing heat pump rebate program is a step in the right direction, my constituents have reported a number of barriers in qualifying for rebates. They have expressed concerns around the inequity of the rebate program, stating that the qualifications are discriminatory to renters and folks with fixed incomes (such as seniors and people with disabilities).

At present, the rebate programs through CleanBC and the federal government primarily benefit homeowners. People with low- and fixed-incomes – who are more likely to be renters - are unable to install heat pumps due to the lack of affordability and accessibility.

Governments have a duty of care to citizens, and when it comes to life-saving heat pumps or air conditioners, the government needs to find a way to ensure that people – especially the most vulnerable – have these when they need them. What is your Ministry doing to make access to essential home retrofits, including installation of heat pumps, accessible and equitable?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SF', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sonia Furstenau
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MLA for Cowichan Valley

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