



December 13, 2022

Honourable Ranj Pillai
Minister of Economic Development, Minister of Tourism and Culture
Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation
Minister responsible for Yukon Liquor Corporation and
Minister responsible for Yukon Lottery Commission
Government of Yukon
Whitehorse, Yukon

Send via E-mail: Ranj.Pillai@yukon.ca

Re: Safe at Home Society 10 Calls to Action

Honourable Minister Pillai,

The Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce (WCC) *Housing, Lodging and Lot Development Committee* would like to provide public comment on a range of housing proposals that have been put before our Territorial and Municipal governments.

We acknowledge that solving housing affordability is a first-order priority for all sectors in the Territory, though especially more so in the private sector, due to the critical impact it has on starting, growing, and operating small businesses in the Territory.

The private sector employs 45.7% of the Territory's workforce, and due to the varied industries in the sector, many are lower-income wage earners, and thus it will bear the greatest impact of any new government regulations on rental housing.

The Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and its members are concerned by some of the policy proposals that the Safe at Home Society has put forward and insist that private sector consultation be held with all levels of government on the matter.

As guiding principles, we believe that governments should focus their efforts to:

- 1) Increase the supply of government social housing for those who need support; and
- 2) Create an environment where investments in market housing are an attractive and accessible option for the private sector as well as for all citizens.

By creating prohibitive regulations in market housing, governments risk impairing the private sector workforce, and discouraging private sector investments that are very much required to increase our local housing supply.

The WCC would like to share its concerns on Safe at Home Society's Calls to Action 1 and 6, which we believe have the greatest potential to negatively impact private sector interests.

1. Prohibit no-cause evictions under the Yukon's Residential Landlord and Tenant Act

The WCC does not support this Call to Action.



Evictions, while rare, are a tool for landlords to manage the risk they carry when renting out their property. With less ability to manage risk post-occupancy, we are concerned that landlords will adapt by taking less risk pre-occupancy, primarily by increasing their scrutiny of tenants' employment history.

In an environment where landlords cannot take as much risk, Yukoners will be less able to find housing when they are self-employed, start new businesses, or accept jobs at existing small businesses. This could discourage entrepreneurship and private sector employment for citizens, and negatively impact the owners and customers of existing businesses.

6. Regulate short-term and vacation rentals across the City of Whitehorse

The WCC does not support this Call to Action.

As of late, the downtown Whitehorse hotel room supply has decreased, leading to increased costs due to the demand, and with an only minimal foreseeable increase in new hotel investments, it is making business travel expensive for local stakeholders, and out-of-territory contractors. With fewer, more expensive, and less flexible housing and lodging options, all businesses suffer – especially those who employ a seasonal workforce.

Short-term and vacation rentals are an important component of the housing stock that serves countless community stakeholders, with the private sector in particular. For the business community, short-term rentals serve as a flexible and affordable lodging solution that many rely on for employee relocations, intermittent staff housing, and visitation for potential staff.

Short-term and vacation rentals are good for consumers and good for the economy, and we believe that new and additional regulations put those services at risk by making compliance onerous and complicated for operators and creating significant new costs for taxpayers.

We call on the Territorial and Municipal governments to consider and confer these important issues with the WCC's *Housing, Lodging, and Lot Development Committee*.

We always look forward to hearing from you and together develop actionable items in resolving these important issues.

Sincerely,

Allison Camenzuli
Chair, Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce

Ben Pereira
Chair, Housing, Lodging and Lot Development Committee
Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Hon. Sandy Silver, Premier of the Yukon & MLA, Klondike

Laura Cabott, Mayor of Whitehorse

Curry Dixon, Leader of the Opposition and Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts