



**MLA Todd Stone introduces bill to reduce small business tax burden related to unused airspace**

VICTORIA (October 23, 2019) – Todd Stone, MLA for Kamloops-South Thompson and Opposition Critic for Municipal Affairs and Housing will introduce a bill in the legislature today that, in response to requests made by a broad coalition of stakeholders, will enable local governments to reduce property taxes on unused airspace above current small businesses through a new commercial property sub-class.

“Many small businesses, arts groups, and non-profits—most notably in the Lower Mainland—are facing huge tax spikes on the air above their heads,” says Stone. “In some cases, organizations have seen 200 to 300 per cent increases in property tax bills because they’re assessed at the highest and best use related to the undeveloped airspace above them. Despite urgent calls from local governments and stakeholders, the current government is not acting fast enough as small businesses struggle to survive and neighbourhoods are hollowed out.”

The Assessment (Split Assessment Classification) Amendment Act, 2019, will create a new commercial property sub-class that local governments can use to provide property tax relief for organizations facing massive property tax increases based on the development potential of the airspace above their heads.

“This legislation will significantly lower property tax bills for small businesses, keeping B.C. a competitive place for entrepreneurs to thrive and innovation to grow,” says Coralee Oakes, Cariboo-North MLA and Critic for Small Business. “More than 98 per cent of businesses in B.C. are small businesses and it is critical that we provide them with the supports they need to succeed. Once these small and legacy businesses are lost, the identity of neighbourhoods and communities will be changed forever.”

“Simply put, this bill is good public policy and has wide stakeholder support. The current ‘tax on air’ is making it more difficult than ever for B.C. businesses to make ends meet. Unless we make a concerted effort to help local shops and cultural spaces that play vital roles in their communities, they will continue to be forced to close their doors,” said Aaron Aerts, Western Economist for the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses.

“Nearly one-third of B.C. businesses are advising against starting a small business in their community because of high property taxes. It’s obvious that something needs to be done,” concludes Stone, citing a recent property tax survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. “It is crucial that we pass this legislation before the 2020 tax year so we can prevent our communities from losing small businesses, arts groups and charities that, once gone, are gone forever.”

**Contact:**

Carlie Pochynok

BC Liberal Caucus

250-634-4073

[carlie.pochynok@leg.bc.ca](mailto:carlie.pochynok@leg.bc.ca)