

Affordable Housing and Catholic Health Care in the Diocese of Victoria

March 18, 2025

Reasons:

1. In 2015, Pope Francis wrote *Laudato Si – On Care for our Common Home*, calling not only Catholics, but the world, to protect the planet and care for our brothers and sisters.
2. Canada and our community, Vancouver Island, currently has a housing crisis. Many people cannot afford suitable housing.
3. The need for long-term care facilities to meet complex medical needs is increasing. Catholic health care has a long tradition of caring for the most frail and vulnerable populations - examples on Vancouver Island include Mount St. Mary Hospital in Victoria and Providence Living at The Views in Comox. To expand this ministry, land is needed.

Affordable Housing Definitions:

1. Who are we housing: seniors on fixed incomes, young working people and families
2. Affordable housing: A mixture of market rent, rent geared to income, deeply discounted rent or subsidized rent
3. Affordability: It is affordable if it is attainable and if you are spending 30% or less of your income on housing.

The presentation “Affordable housing in the Diocese of Victoria” was made at the Clergy & Leadership General Meeting in October 2025 to sow the seeds of how we could reuse, repurpose and redevelop church lands. As well as creating attainable housing and Catholic health care facilities, this work can also sustain, retain and build congregations. For example, parishes or schools could receive a nominal lease payment or needed space for their usage.

You are not being asked to do this. You are being asked to allow it to be done. Someone else will do it.

And that someone else will be a three-way partnership including:

- the Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria – the land partner
- St. Vincent de Paul or another qualified not-for-profit housing operator partner (eg, Alberni Low Energy Housing Society)
- BC Builds – the funding partner.

Diocese of Victoria parishes and schools sit on church land owned by the Diocese of Victoria, and managed and controlled by the parish or school. If the land can be leased from the church, housing and health care facilities can be built much cheaper than if the land has to be bought by a non-profit organization. Port Alberni’s Maitland Village approved a three-way partnership, and **it’s on church land!** Let’s build more of these.

There are many good policies in place, and many funding opportunities, especially from the BC government. Please think creatively about how to take this opportunity to build affordable housing and Catholic health care facilities using parish and school land. Clergy and parish administrators with their parish pastoral councils and finance committees only have to say **YES** and other partners will do the work.

If this is something that is of interest to you and your parish or school community, please contact the Chief Financial Officer of the Diocese, Jackie Marchand, at 250-479-1331 ext 234 or jmarchand@rcdvictoria.org.

