

# PREMIER SMITH ON REAL ESTATE



*Premier Danielle Smith presented to hundreds of city builders at MacEwan University in May of 2024.*

By Jason Syvixay

**“Real estate is at** the heart of our vision,” Premier Danielle Smith proudly stated to hundreds of city builders at MacEwan University in May of 2024. “You are ensuring that people who move here have a place to live.”

Hosted by BILD Edmonton Metro (formerly UDI - Edmonton Metro and CHBA - Edmonton Region) and supported by associations like NAIOP Edmonton, BOMA Edmonton, Infill Development in Edmonton Association, and the Edmonton Construction Association (ECA), more than 450 developers, consultants, homebuilders, constructors, and property owners and managers came to hear the premier share her government’s vision on housing affordability, downtown

revitalization, and economic investment.

During her opening remarks, the premier highlighted how her government has cut red tape by one-third since 2019, specifically saving \$2.7 billion in compliance costs; updated the Municipal Government Act to improve subdivision timelines; and improved permitting timelines through a more streamlined Service Alberta.

“Simply put, our government wants to remove any roadblocks from investment attraction and development.”

The premier punctuated how our collective goal should be to increase housing supply, which will in turn support housing affordability. She said her government is committed to growing the amount of affordable housing units

across the province, especially in major cities by 40 per cent, and is eager to incentivize new affordable housing developments.

When asked about labour, Premier Smith noted how her government has increased apprenticeship by 50 per cent, which she believes is critical in being able to deliver on housing construction. She cites the Temporary Foreign Worker Program as one of the key levers in welcoming new immigrants to Alberta with employment.

“Our government is constantly looking to create new opportunities for people to find meaningful jobs and a place here.”

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*With 23 per cent of skilled labour ready to retire, the premier said there is an urgency to register 60,000 apprentices, investing in 11 post-secondary educational institutions for apprenticeships, and partnering with trade unions.*

apprentices, investing in 11 post-secondary educational institutions for apprenticeships, and partnering with trade unions. Recently, her government also created the Alberta is Calling tax credit to provide up to \$10,000 for people to work and live in Alberta for a year.

After her presentation, BILD Edmonton Metro’s inaugural CEO, Kalen Anderson, led the premier through a fireside conversation.

She started with the question, “Our real estate sector is known for collaborating with all levels of government – to foster a healthy housing market, a great quality of life, and attract good paying jobs and opportunities for current and future Edmontonians. How do we remain competitive from a planning and development perspective so that we can welcome an additional one-million more people, jobs, and investment?”

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She pointed to commuter rail to the Edmonton International Airport, and in the future, to Calgary, as an example of a transformational investment. She also hinted at opportunities to fuel this system through hydrogen. The premier also spoke about how density requires that new schools are built.

“We want to provide predictable funding to municipalities to proactively address population surges that are occurring across the province.”

Anderson pivoted the conversation to the premier’s response to encampments, asking how this social issue had impacted the downtown.

“We were proud of how the chief of police in Edmonton responded to



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Above, left to right: Anand Pye, CEO, NAIOP; Dr. Annette Trimbee, president and vice-chancellor, MacEwan University; Susan Keating, BILD Edmonton Metro board member; Jason Cunha, past president, IDEA; Nicholas Rheubottom, executive director, Infill Development in Edmonton Association (IDEA); Kalen Anderson, CEO, BILD Edmonton Metro; David Johnson, president, ECA; Jen Hancock, chair, ECA; Laura Bradley, director, NAIOP; Lisa Baroldi, president and CEO, BOMA; and Myron Kehn, past chair, BOMA Canada.

Left to right: Kalen Anderson, CEO, BILD Edmonton Metro; The Honourable Danielle Smith, Premier, Government of Alberta; and Susan Keating, BILD Edmonton Metro board member.

encampments, and we were grateful to collaborate with the City of Edmonton to create a Navigation Centre.”

Premier Smith described how this intervention has connected more than 900 people with over 3,000 different social services, and how they have also created 400 shelter spaces. She also reiterated the government’s commitment to addressing social disorder in urban centres while also ensuring those facing homelessness and

those with mental health and addictions are cared for in a responsible and compassionate manner.

When asked about how to responsibly plan for our city to grow and deal with dwindling land supply, the premier said, “We are collectively interested in creating more homes and it is in the best interest of every municipality to do so when it comes to their tax base.” She reinforced that while planning is the responsibility of the municipality,

there should be a collective mindset to deliver on housing in all parts of the city without delay.

“We need to maintain our affordability in our province.”

With many attendees adorned in their Oilers paraphernalia, the premier joked, “Sure, there is a battle of Alberta when it comes to hockey, but when it comes to development, we need to work together.” ♦