

north shore news

LETTER: A cost to the life we say we want

North Shore News

March 30, 2015 09:34 AM

Dear Editor:

Re: [Plan B for Transit Needed \(http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/letters/letter-plan-b-for-transit-needed-1.1779067\)](http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/letters/letter-plan-b-for-transit-needed-1.1779067), March 1 Mailbox

In his support of the sentiments in the Jan. 28 letter Slap Developers with a Cost Charge to Help Pay for Transit, Alex Jamieson perpetuates the villainization of developers as both the source and the potential solution to most of the ills that beset us.

Jamieson, like the earlier writer Bryant, seems unaware of the number of charges already borne by developers.

These include development cost charges to upgrade and replace infrastructure arising from their new projects, off-site servicing fees to cover a host of other discretionary charges levied, along with community amenity charges designed to provide the broad resident population with amenities (community centres, daycare facilities, etc.) that would have to otherwise be carried as capital items on the property tax levy of all residents.

Ultimately, however, all of these charges become cost components of the end product of business and are reflected in the cost of housing. The potential for abuse and lack of transparency of this method of revenue generation has even caught the eye of senior government officials focused on the unaffordability of housing in Metro Vancouver.

As District of North Vancouver Coun. Robin Hicks commented at the time of a public hearing for Larco's Cap West project, with its community amenity contribution of approximately \$16 million, "What did we do before CACs?"

The answer is that the municipality borrowed the money through issuing bonds. As a strategy for alleviating existing residents from the full cost of home ownership the plan has worked wonderfully; from 2002 when developers' fees averaged three per cent of Metro Vancouver municipal revenues, these fees climbed to nine per cent by 2012, with a corresponding decrease in the property tax revenues (source: Fraser Institute).

One can fairly regard these developer fees as alleviating the tax burden for existing homeowners.

Recent financial projections from the district's finance department also reveal the critical role of development — including permit fees, levies and future tax revenues that are to be gained from development and the crucial role of development projects anticipated — and necessary — under the OCP in order to provide district residents with a future of maintained facilities and infrastructure.

Without these revenue sources, homeowners will face significant tax increases to maintain the services and support for their single family homes.

Sadly, for many, these costs will mean economic exile from the North Shore — they will simply not have the money.

Tragically, even at this date, few are aware or willing to contemplate the economic future of a low density and aging district without the socio-economic engine of the OCP.

Any who think that such a plan can be abandoned without cost and consequences need to be called upon to sign binding commitments to the lifestyle and attendant costs they want to shuck onto developers.

That idea — of someone else will have to pay for transit — is unfortunately running rife from the provincial elected officials to residents of the North Shore.

There is a cost to the life that we say that we want. It is simply uncomfortable when lunch is eaten and we see the waiter approaching with the bill.

Better to turn the conversation to gushing remarks about the plot of a new horror movie, with an evil developer who sucks the blood out of thousands of helpless victims — a tired and hackneyed story, but it always gains an audience.

Douglas Curran
North Vancouver

What are your thoughts? Send us a letter via email by clicking [here \(http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/send-us-a-letter\)](http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/send-us-a-letter), or post a comment below.

© 2015 North Shore News