

## EDITORIAL: Teardown and out

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Having decided they've seen too many older, affordable apartments demolished to make way for new condos, housing activists in Burnaby's Metrotown neighbourhood are now occupying buildings slated for the wrecking ball.

Similarly, our official community plans in North Vancouver have painted bull's-eyes on these old walk-ups. It's sound planning to concentrate development in urban centres, but there is a heavy price to be paid by the renters getting "demovicted."

Our local councils have tenant displacement policies in the works to assist those getting turfed, but it doesn't change the big picture problem.

With vacancy rates at less than one per cent and market rents skyrocketing, there's just nowhere for these folks to go. They're the people who cut hair, serve food, and work in IT - virtually anyone who can't afford a \$500,000 condo. And they don't deserve financial exile.

Largely forgotten in this crisis is that almost all of the old apartments we now consider affordable were built in the '60s and '70s with the aid of federal construction subsidies and tax incentives. With those programs cancelled in the 1980s, our lack of rental housing has reached a crisis point.

And every time a walk-up gets knocked down, it isn't just the homes of longtime residents that are being lost. It's also the vanishing of an investment Canadians made to ensure our communities had room for people who aren't wealthy.

The federal government has pledged to develop a national housing strategy and we urge them to move expeditiously because the people in these old walk-ups are quickly running out of time.

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