

Pretty vacant

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We are in a full-blown rental housing crisis.

Thanks to the feds abandoning purpose-built rental housing in the early '80s, vacancy is almost non-existent and rents are swallowing up untenable amounts of people's paycheques. It's happening all over but particularly in North Vancouver.

The fact is, if we want to solve this problem, we need more purpose-built rental apartments and we need a lot of them.

No doubt, this assertion will unsettle the stomachs of the sizable contingent of North Shore residents who are adamant we've already had enough development.

This is an opinion commonly held by people who do not have to choose between substandard housing and back-breaking rent, which is really no choice at all.

And it's crystal clear we need the feds back in the housing game. We know now what the alternative is. So do the families, young people, service workers and seniors who are being pushed out of our community.

We got into this mess by leaving it to the free market to decide what gets built.

We'd also ask the province for more aggressive rent controls on existing buildings to prevent gouging.

If the current trends continue unabated, we're looking at a very bleak future.

How will people transition to ownership when they can't save for a down payment? How will small businesses survive when there's no disposable income? How will people live in their senior years with no savings and no equity?

More than putting renters into misery, these are serious threats to the economy.

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