

EDITORIAL: Skin in the game

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It used to be a popular PR stunt among politicians to attempt living a week on a “welfare diet,” which was usually just a few dollars a day, to highlight the inadequacy of social assistance.

Today we’d propose a new challenge for our council members, MLAs and MPs: Let’s see a middle-class house hunt.

The average household income in the City of North Vancouver, for example, is \$44,306. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. recommends that no one spend more than one-third of their income on shelter, which almost half of the city’s renters are doing.

Our politicians can join in the lineups of people filling out applications for basement studios or Diefenbaker-era apartments. Or they can join the quarter of our residents who are paying more than 50 per cent of their income to have something nicer.

Lots of luck if you’ve got kids! A little skin in the game might give them invaluable perspective.

To their credit, our municipalities on the North Shore are actively working towards adding more affordable housing to the local supply but we’re talking about a few units here, a dozen units there – a drop in the bucket compared to the societal problem we now find ourselves in.

This is a crisis that demands federal and provincial intervention. But we’ve yet to see any of our councils show much interest in the role foreign capital is playing in local housing costs, perhaps because the boom in land values has rewarded some with more equity than they ever dreamed of. But is it having a knock-on effect in the rest of the market?

After years of denying there was a link let alone a problem, the province admitted this week that they’ve quietly begun their own study. It’s about time.

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.

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