

AFFORDABILITY

Social housing sites proposed

Vancouver identifies locations where 3,500 units could be built

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VANCOUVER SUN

By proposing up to 23 sites for new social housing, the City of Vancouver is looking to take advantage of any federal and provincial infrastructure money that may become available, the head of the province's main umbrella group for non-profit housing said Tuesday.

Tony Roy, chief executive of the B.C. Non-Profit Housing Association, said Vancouver has consulted with his organization and similar social housing groups in B.C. about selecting potential non-profit housing sites in the city.

This week, Vancouver offered \$250 million in city land if Ottawa agrees to spend \$500 million over five years to build affordable housing.

The city has identified 20 sites, plus three optional locations, where an estimated 3,500 social housing units could be built. The city did not provide addresses, but indicated on a map that the locations were centred in the Downtown Eastside, around False Creek and in the southeast corner of the city.

The plan would build a mix of welfare rate, social, and market housing.

Roy said the city's announcement covers more sites and more money than he had expected. He said the behind-the-scenes planning indicates that Vancouver is ahead of other municipalities in the region.

"There are huge challenges in housing affordability in Burnaby, Coquitlam, New Westminster and some areas of Surrey



ARLEN REDEKOP/PNG FILES

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and Richmond," he said. "If all of a sudden there is a federal program around affordable housing, or a provincial program around affordable housing, and they have shovel-ready projects with a strong municipal partner ready to go in Vancouver, that is the stuff that will be built."

An official from the City of Vancouver could not be reached for comment.

"I would say the City of Vancouver has laid down the gauntlet to other cities in British Columbia who want to start solving these problems," he said. "They will be first in line for those federal and provincial dollars because they've been ambitious about a plan."

The pitch to the federal government from the city also focuses on the number of jobs that could be created by building social housing. Over five years, the

new construction could create up to 9,000 jobs, including up to 3,000 within the first two years.

Roy said the city's plan isn't enough for all of B.C.

"What we need (is for) there to be land and money identified so other communities can build housing," he said. "If we continue to ignore people living on the street, we will pay for that in many other ways."

Roy also made a plea for the city to work with TransLink to identify land along rapid transit lines.

He said what is happening in the region is that people who are renting and living in social housing need access to transit, but are increasingly the ones who can least afford to live along transit routes where land is appreciating in value.

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