

## B.C.'s affordable housing pledge falls short, advocate says

Justin Beddall / North Shore News

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The City of North Vancouver is developing a housing action plan that may include new protections to help renters evicted by redevelopment. file photo Mike Wakefield

**Housing advocate Don Peters** fields several calls daily from North Shore residents desperately in need of affordable accommodation.

Peters, Community Housing Action Committee chairman, says the callers range from seniors and young adults to single parents and those living on disability pensions.

"They live on the North Shore - that's the one thing they have in common."

So, when Peters got a call on Friday about the B.C. government's pledge to invest \$355 million to add 2,000 new affordable housing units over the next five years he was excited, but wary. Where will the units be? At what rent?

"The devil's always in the details," he said.

According to BC Housing, proposals will be considered for innovative housing projects for those in need from municipalities, non-profit societies and other community groups from across B.C. The province's new investment in affordable housing program is focused on providing low to moderate income earners more affordable housing options, a release said.

"Thirty to fifty thousand (dollars) is the low to moderate income group - that's the group that's most in danger. So if the government's money is going to be for units aimed at that target then hooray," said Peters.

Peters noted that even shared accommodations on the North Shore rent from \$700 to \$900 per month, while a **one-bedroom rental apartment in a brand-new building runs around \$2,000.**

There are even fewer options for those with kids. Peters recently spoke with a young born-and-raised North Van

teacher who was forced to uproot his family to move to Vancouver Island in search of affordable housing.

"If you haven't got a place to live with something left over to make ends meet, you get pretty desperate, you get pretty frightened," Peters said.

While Peters describes the current affordable housing situation on the North Shore as "grim," he's buoyed by the recent initiatives undertaken by the City and District of North Vancouver.

"They are in deep discussions about how they are going to provide extra housing at rents that can be paid by low and middle income earners."

Peters says all three levels of government need to work to deliver adequate levels of affordable housing.

"I think the municipalities are doing everything they can do with the pools that they've got but they can't be the only player in the game."

City of North Vancouver Mayor Darrell Mussat to said affordable housing is a critical issue for the both the city and the region.

"The city's been very proactive in this area, leading the way with our Housing Action Plan," he said in a statement. "We look forward to our provincial and federal partners providing funding for affordable housing in our community, and we're looking forward to getting more information on how much financial support will be coming to us from the province."

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