

## LETTER: Local housing troubles are bad news for the province

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**Dear Editor:**

At the Metro Vancouver Alliance event on affordable housing in North Vancouver on Feb. 8, mayors Darrell Mussatto and Richard Walton, and acting mayor Craig Cameron were asked to make commitments to champion proposals brought forward by the Alliance to support non-market affordable housing. The heart wrenching stories shared by speakers about their own struggles with homelessness were stark reminders that even in a wealthy area like the North Shore, homelessness is still a devastating problem for many.

Affordable housing, however, is not a topic whose relevance is limited to those on the precipice or within the waters of homelessness. Housing affordability is an issue that is felt by people in every income tax bracket, save those who own property as purely speculative assets.

Vacant ownership, foreign money, speculation, assignment clauses, and shadow flipping are but a few of the many influences on property prices in the Lower Mainland. Artificially high property prices drive up rent, keep property ownership out of reach for hard-working people, and cause modest home-owners to overstretch their budgets on massive mortgages and skyrocketing property taxes.

Affordability in general is becoming a hot topic in B.C. and housing appears to be at the crux of it all. Retired residents on fixed incomes are struggling to keep up with uncontrollable increases in costs of living.

Poverty continues to be a place from which there is no return with every spare penny being taken up by housing costs. Even middle-class workers with steady, good paying jobs are finding it difficult to afford necessities for their families or to save for retirement while spending far more on housing than the recommended maximum 35 per cent of net income. Housing costs are rising amidst a depressed economy and our economic centres are being hollowed out as people move towards the outskirts of the

Lower Mainland in favour of a longer commute or leave entirely. We are already experiencing a diaspora of brilliant young professionals who have left the province for greener pastures, where a \$100,000 salary can afford them more than a one-bedroom apartment.

Pay close attention to the housing issues. They are interconnected and it seems we are all being pulled towards the water.

**Bowinn Ma**  
**North Vancouver**

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