



Report

To: Mayor and Councillors
From: Councillor Fred Haynes
Date: July 9, 2015
Subject: Support for Co-op Housing

On behalf of concerns expressed by its residents for affordable housing, Saanich Council has a track record of raising its voice to other levels of government. This is seen in our recent resolutions on Affordable Housing for Seniors, the Down-Loading of National Building Codes, a call for Renovation Tax Credits and requesting a review of the Provincial Property Transfer Tax. I am pleased to ask my colleagues to consider raising our voice in support of sustaining rent supplements for Co-op Housing in Saanich, our region and across B.C. and Canada.

On Monday July 6, 2015 Council received the delegation on Co-op housing presented by Ms. Patty Shaw, the president of Co-operative Housing Federation of BC (CHF BC). A Saanich resident, we heard Ms. Shaw's call for help with the biggest challenge facing co-op housing, namely, the expiry of the federal co-op operating agreements that provide rent support for thousands of low-income households across Canada. These agreements have already started to expire, and expirations will peak in 2017. Specifically Ms. Shaw requests that all municipalities consider a resolution in support of the CHF BC's "You Hold the Key campaign" (copy attached).

Our Saanich Official Community Plan says: *"Housing supply and price can affect the Municipality's ability to attract and retain young families and the necessary workforce. An insufficient amount and range of housing throughout the region forces people to commute long distances to find suitable and/or affordable housing thus increasing the cost of travel and its carbon footprint."* Given this, I believe we could agree that it is the 'range of housing' options we need to think more about, and this includes opportunities to retain and to add to our rental housing stock including private, non-profit and co-operative rental housing.

Within the CRD, we have 34 housing co-ops, with some 1,172 homes. These co-ops are found between Sooke and Sidney. They provide diversity in size, building form, population use and a critical supply of affordable rental housing. Loss of rental support has already happened to a few co-ops in the CRD and this situation will peak in 2017. I understand our CRD Board Chair will be speaking to the Minister Responsible at the UBCM conference in September on issues around the cancellation of housing subsidies, including those for existing co-ops. The District of Saanich hosts roughly one-third of these housing co-ops. Specifically 12 housing co-op sites and 376 co-op homes.

Co-ops and their members are a valuable part of our community. They provide homes to a wide range of people, representing every family type, income and background. You also find people in co-ops that are under-represented in the rental or ownership markets. For example:

- 58% are women;

- 50% are single-parent led households;
- 20% are new Canadians;
- 12% are people with disabilities; and
- 35% pay rent based on their income.

At the 2015 annual meeting of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), delegates approved the resolution from the Standing Committee on Social-Economic Development: "That FCM urge all governments to work together to fix Canada's housing crunch, increase housing affordability and strengthen Canada's housing system".

The National Forum on Housing and the Economy wrote on April 1, 2015 to The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada to draw attention to the important linkages between housing affordability and Canada's economic prosperity (copy attached). For our experienced Members of Council supported housing is not a new topic and, on Monday night, I'm hoping to combine our efforts to support a call for other discussions at both regional and provincial levels that could support new forms of housing.

Given the above, I kindly ask my fellow Councillors to consider that we commit to continue working with CHF BC, CHF Canada, our municipal partners and other housing allies to achieve these goals, and that we support the following:

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council support the following resolution and send letters to the Government of Canada, local MP's, the Premier of BC and to the Ministers responsible for Housing, Health and Finance and to our local MLAs, outlining these same concerns.

Support for Co-op Housing

District of Saanich

WHEREAS a significant challenge to the supply of affordable housing exists in the expiry of the federal co-op operating agreements that provide rent support for thousands of low-income households across BC and Canada, including some 1,172 here in the Capital Region;

AND WHEREAS maintaining support for co-op housing is a key component of providing affordable housing for our residents, as well as our municipal economic vibrancy and sustainability;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Saanich urges the Governments of British Columbia and of Canada to work both jointly and separately on mechanisms to maintain a rent supplement program for more than 20,000 low-income members in housing co-ops and that we call on the federal government to commit now to reinvest the savings from expiring federal housing agreements to share the costs of funding this program.



Councillor Fred Haynes



File: 1410-04

July 24, 2015

Capital Regional District
PO Box 1000
Victoria BC V8W 2S6

Dear Chair Jensen and Directors,

Support for Co-operative Housing

This letter is to confirm that on July 13, 2015 Saanich Council considered the attached July 9, 2015 report from Councillor Fred Haynes regarding the support of Co-operative Housing in B.C., and resolved as follows:

"That Council support the following resolution, and:

- 1. Send letters to the Government of Canada, local MP's, the Premier of BC and to the Ministers responsible for Housing, Health and Finance and to our local MLA's, outlining these same concerns; and*
- 2. Refer the resolution to the Capital Regional District (CRD) to be included in discussions in relation to Affordable Housing.*

WHEREAS a significant challenge to the supply of affordable housing exists in the expiry of the federal co-op operating agreements that provide rent support for thousands of low-income households across BC and Canada, including some 1,172 here in the Capital Region;

AND WHEREAS maintaining support for co-op housing is a key component of providing affordable housing for our residents, as well as our municipal economic vibrancy and sustainability:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Saanich urges the Governments of British Columbia and of Canada to work both jointly and separately on mechanisms to maintain a rent supplement program for more than 20,000 low-income members in housing co-ops and that we call on the Federal Government to commit now to reinvest the savings from expiring federal housing agreements to share the costs of funding this program."

Council thanks you for your consideration and looks forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donna Dupas", is written over a horizontal line.

Donna Dupas,
Legislative Manager

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Attachment

cc: Mayor and Council
Councillor Fred Haynes