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# Eby Proposes Action on Housing

David Eby, BC's past Housing Minister and now NDP leadership hopeful, has announced plans to boost housing supply. His proposal includes:

- Reforms to municipal approvals;
- Minimum standards for municipal Housing Needs Plans;
- Homebuilders will be allowed to replace a single-family home with up to 3 units;
- Secondary suites will be legal in every region.

This is welcome relief from decades of BC's failed municipal self-determination policy creating some of the most obstructive and costly housing in Canada.

The need for this initiative is readily apparent. There has been zero, new, missing-middle housing constructed in almost 50% of CRD municipalities this year.

Undoubtedly, Eby has been reading Housing Needs Reports, required from each municipality, which say:

*Saanich: "...high development costs and policy changes do not encourage developers to build in the community."*

*Oak Bay: "...development approvals are slow and uncertain... Stakeholders involved in non-profit housing report that organizations have avoided working in Oak Bay in the past due to the contentious public engagement environment & difficulty receiving project approvals."*

*Central Saanich/Peninsula: "It was noted that it is challenging for developers to navigate three different sets of policies and regulations from the three municipalities on the Peninsula, which, combined with long processing times, make it challenging to develop financially feasible housing projects."*

Earlier this year, Eby made points similar to those of a study called, *The Effect of New Market-Rate Housing Construction on the Low-Income Housing Market* by economist Evan Mast.

First, Eby says government can't tackle housing affordability "on its own." Eby's government is already spending \$7 billion on subsidized housing and it's not enough.

Second, Eby understands housing is an ecosystem of migration chains. Municipal obstruction of new developments forces families to stay in rental housing.

When new market housing is delayed or blocked, Eby said, "They don't move into a home they own. They don't free up that unit for someone else to move in."

Mast's study of 12 cities validates Eby's remarks. Mast found that for every two market-rate homes, approximately one affordable home is created to reduce the displacement of low-income people.

This ecosystem of migration chains is rarely understood by municipal councils. They often choke new developments with delays and high fees, while expecting government-subsidized housing to address the issue of affordability.

We said in our past column, "Now that BC's Housing Minister has accurately articulated the problem and solution, his government must act to ensure municipalities encourage supply through efficient rezonings and permit approvals."

To Eby's credit, he is now proposing that much needed action.

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