

Housing Obstruction Undermines Young Families



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Statistics Canada reports Canada's birth rate is dropping to historic lows.

They report 351,679 births in 2022 which is the lowest number since 345,044 recorded in 2005.

British Columbia has one of the lowest fertility rates in Canada and the highest average housing prices. Statistics Canada reports there is a connection.

They say, "In 2022, 38% of young adults (aged 20 to 29) did not believe they could afford to have a child in the next three years, while 32% did not believe they would have access to suitable housing to start a family...financial capacity and adequate housing would act as barriers to them having a child...studies show high housing prices and rents significantly contribute to the problem."

High housing costs make it difficult for young people to move forward in their lives. A supply of new missing middle housing (townhomes) is needed for young families.

However, zero missing middle housing was built in six CRD municipalities last year. They are Central Saanich, Saanich, Oak Bay, North Saanich, Metchosin, and Highlands. There were only 6 new units built in View Royal. New missing middle housing is down 33% year-to-date this year.

A big part of the problem was highlighted in Housing Needs Reports required by the province every five years.

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 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."

The province recently established long overdue housing targets for Oak Bay, Saanich and Victoria. These targets are a work-around of a larger issue.

BC's policy of municipal self-determination, lacking responsible regional planning for housing, encouraged the nimbyism that failed an entire generation of millennials trying to start families.

Housing targets are a start, but the long-term solution is mandatory regional planning and prioritizing housing over municipal autonomy.

Municipal obstruction of new housing is not just local. Statistics Canada shows it has national consequences



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