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Obstructive Municipalities Contribute to Canada's Declining Population

British Columbia has the lowest fertility rate and the highest housing prices in Canada. Apparently, they may be linked.

Statistics Canada has been monitoring declining fertility rates for 13 years. In the early 1990s, BC's fertility rate was higher than Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Quebec.

However, BC's rate started falling in the 2000's, dropping to last place in 2015. In 2020, BC's rate was lowest at 1.17 children with Nova Scotia next at 1.24.

While there may be several factors, studies show high housing prices and rents significantly contribute to the problem.

High housing costs make it difficult for young people, such as millennials, to move forward in their lives and start families.

To improve affordability, there must be adequate housing supply, however this has been obstructed by municipalities, amply demonstrated in the mandated Housing Needs Reports:

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."

And "Energy Step Code requirements adopted by Central and North Saanich were also reported to increase cost and create additional challenges to building more affordable housing."

Small multi-family homes such as townhomes and duplexes (also called missing-middle housing) are more affordable and designed for young families. However, the costs of rezoning require much higher density projects such as condominiums.

As a result, from January to July this year there has been zero missing-middle homes constructed in Saanich, Oak Bay, Central Saanich, Highlands, Metchosin, North Saanich.

One can reasonably conclude that BC's policy of municipal self-determination, creating this obstruction, has failed an entire generation of millennials trying to purchase a home...and start families.

The solution is mandatory regional planning and prioritizing housing over municipal autonomy.

We can have either more housing affordability for young families or municipal self-determination, but it's very clear we can't have both.

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