

UBC students also face housing crisis

VANCOUVER (CUP) — Mayor Art Phillips has rejected a plea by University of British Columbia housing councillors to rezone the Point Grey area, near the University, to allow basement suites with kitchen facilities.

The present vacancy rate in Vancouver is less than 1/2 percent. The Housing Placement Service at UBC reports an average of 125 student inquiries daily, while they receive an average of 35 offers of housing per day.

The plea came in response to a crisis in student housing, which will result in hundreds of students living in tents on university land by the beginning of the school year.

Disclaiming any responsibility for student housing shortages,

Phillips pointed out in an interview that the university is outside city jurisdiction.

"If they (university administrators) listened to me, they would cut their enrollment by 5,000 students, but they never listen to me," he commented.

"If they cannot provide housing for their students, they should not allow them to register," he said. He did not comment on how university officials could possibly build residences with no money.

Phillips outlined his conception of what would happen if the Point Grey area was rezoned to allow kitchen facilities.

"It would not help students," he said. "Landlords want somebody to rent a place on a year-round basis, while students only rent seven months of the year.

"With the housing situation the way it is in Vancouver, the basement suites would be snapped up very quickly, and not by students," he said.

That statement "is obviously untrue", according to Stu Sevard, a housing placement worker at UBC.

He pointed to the example of the Dunbar and Kits areas, where many UBC students live. In these areas, those students who do move away for the summer usually sub-let their suites while they are away, precisely so that they do have a place to live when they return.

Lake Sagaris, also a housing placement worker, commented that "basement suite living, which could be a result of re-zoning, is only suitable for certain lifestyles.

Few families find this type of accommodation suitable, where students find it ideal."

Dave Johnson, co-ordinator of the UBC Housing Placement Service, commented on other aspects of rezoning. "If the city allowed basement suites throughout the city, it would not only help to alleviate the shortage but would provide revenue for struggling small home-owners, who have to cope with mortgage payments.

"Also it would provide work for carpenters, plumbers, electricians, etc...." he said.

He pointed out that provincial Home Conversion Mortgage Loans are available to small home owners, removing any economic barriers from home conversion.

The first annual report of the B.C. Department of Housing notes, "Many home-owners were obviously interested in converting their dwellings as the department received 1,076 enquiries about the program.

"Rigid municipal zoning and building by-laws were, however, major obstacles and only 17 applications for the loans were approved," the report says.

Shortage not short-term

OTTAWA (CUP) — Students must realize that "The housing crisis" is not a short-term problem exclusive to students. It is a complex, long-term "social disaster" which is getting worse, and which governments at all levels have failed to grapple with.

And students should devote their energy and add their numbers to the ranks of Canadians now demanding and pressuring for decent housing "so that as students they have a better chance of getting adequate housing, and so that after they leave the educational system, they will not have to struggle with a disastrous housing problem."

This was the substance of a statement released 26 August by the National Union of Students (NUS) in Ottawa.

It comes at a time when half a million post-secondary students across Canada intending to return to school are finding that there just isn't enough housing to go around.

With a federally imposed freeze on student housing funds since 1973, despite increasing enrollment, with building starts down 28 per cent over last year, which was a 20 per cent drop for the previous year, and with an average vacancy rate across the country of 1.2 per cent, the NUS release concludes that "only a general improvement

of the housing situation will mean an improvement in student's housing.

The NUS position bitterly attacks all levels of government for "inaction" in the face of increased household formations and a deteriorating housing supply, rapidly advancing rents and housing prices, and landlord resistance to protective legislation for tenants.

Municipalities and provincial governments are criticized for not legislating or enforcing adequate repairs to low-quality housing or reasonable rental rates.

"They have refused to recognize that the housing shortage gives landlords and developers a virtual monopoly" the statement reads, adding that "most of these governments still act as though tenants, even low-income tenants, can pick and choose from among the available housing stock."

The federal government is condemned for failing to create housing, and adopting a "basically stand-still position since 1973", citing the federal cut backs in CMHC funding for co-operative and low and middle income housing, as an example.

Faced with a worsening situation and what NUS sees as government

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Temporary housing sought

EDMONTON (CUP) — Financial hassles with the provincial government has forced the University of Alberta's student council to turn to that Universities Board of Governors for assistance with an emergency temporary housing scheme. "We anticipate great difficulty on the part of students returning to Edmonton to locate housing", says the council proposal.

Student Council president Graeme Leadbeater said the move was imperative as the Alberta government will not grant money directly to a student's union, thus forcing the council to place the Board of Governors as a go-between for the transfer of money.

The council has met with problems in organizing alternative solutions to the temporary housing problem in Edmonton and have had to make plans for a temporary village using construction trailers as housing units.

The units, run as a hostel would cost at least \$7,300 during September, the worst time for people to seek housing, Leadbeater said.

Leadbeater's proposal to the Board contains a budget increase for the emergency housing increase of \$7,300. The increase would be used to implement and publicize a temporary housing setup to which students (particularly foreign students) may go to live while they are searching for a permanent residence.

The most recent statistics from the Central Mortgage and Housing Commission show that the university area has a vacancy rate of 2 percent.

The Edmonton Housing Registry, which Leadbeater had earlier admitted to be a "band-aid" solution at best, is working well, but there still exists a lag between the time when a student obtains a list of available housing and the time when that student actually finds a residence, he said.

Alternate solutions to the housing problem have proven worthless. The Students Union tried asking hotel and motel operators for preferred rates to set up a temporary housing scheme, but all were unwilling to cooperate.

A college residence was viewed as a solution but it has since been closed in accordance with health and safety regulations.

but this one is for Simon Fraser students only.

Project member Denis Butler said this questionnaire should uncover little known and usually inaccessible information about contemporary student lifestyles.

Butler said it will analyse student needs and preferences for housing and seek information on difficulties encountered by such student types as single parents and married-common law students in their search for satisfactory housing.

The results, said Butler, will provide information that can be used for short term promotion of off campus student housing as well as provide information for longer term projects, such as building desirable student housing on campus.

Housing survey conducted

VANCOUVER (CUP) — The project, "Off Campus Housing Survey", funded jointly by the Department of Labour and the Simon Fraser Universities Council, is aimed at exploring the complexities of student housing and helping to alleviate an increasing shortage of housing. Four Simon Fraser students have been funded to do this.

The first of the two parts of the survey includes a questionnaire which has been sent to 60 universities across Canada in an effort to gain information about the housing situation nationally and the various ways with which universities are coping with the problem.

The second part of the survey will also include a questionnaire,

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