

All municipalities should pitch in on homelessness

Re: “Lack of suitable housing a problem for many,” letter, June 25.

The letter-writer says the visible homeless who arrive here from all across the country end up living in some of the best real-estate locations in town. Meanwhile, local residents, whether invisibly homeless or the working poor, cannot locate a modest affordable apartment without a long commute.

But how many of the 12 other municipalities apart from Victoria want the homeless to live in their midst? What social housing do the other municipalities plan to bring onstream this year? How many did they bring into the social housing market last year?

Given there are in Greater Victoria about 1,300 visible homeless, and at least the same amount of invisible homeless, we could get a pretty good outcome by 2020 if each municipality committed to deliver 100 modest dwelling places a year for two years, whether by billeting, new construction, converting garages or upgrading existing illegal suites at public cost.

It is time for Mayor Lisa Helps and her council to stand strong for both the homeless and the rest of us Victoria residents, and push the other mayors and municipalities to bear their fair share of cost and commitment, and be fair and responsible municipal partners.

Certainly, making the social housing case to other mayors will be of primary importance to Helps if she wishes a second term. I doubt another could match her for commitment, but if there are insufficient results, she will, regrettably, be a one-term wonder.

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Victoria