

'Catastrophic' housing changes on agenda for municipal leaders

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As each individual becomes faced with this, it's a crisis for them »

— Thom Armstrong,
Co-operative Housing
Federation of BC

Thousands of people face the loss of their homes in the next three years as rent subsidies are set to expire. Now B.C. municipalities are debating whether to add their voices to the debate on who should foot the bill for co-operative housing.

At a Union of B.C. Municipalities convention later this month, municipal politicians will vote on a resolution that would urge federal and provincial governments to enact long-term, cost-shared rental assistance programs as federal co-op housing agreements expire.

If passed, the resolution — proposed by Metro Vancouver — would mean huge support for an ongoing campaign to keep low-income residents in their homes, said Thom Armstrong, executive director of the Co-operative Housing Federation of BC. “People who can now afford the place they live, as each day goes by, are becoming more and more anxious about the future of their homes,” said Armstrong. “The prospect of having to move because

they can't afford to stay there is really terrifying for them because they don't have any other options.”

A series of federal co-op housing subsidies established in the 1990s are set to expire within the next 20 years, affecting some 3,000 homes in B.C.

The expirations have already begun, with 1,500 rent subsidies expected to end by 2017.

With no federal plans to establish new agreements, the push is on for new provincial programs to pick up the slack. An initial \$2.5-million commitment in next year's budget would meet current demand, said Armstrong. The support of B.C.'s municipalities would be a significant boon to the campaign.

“Now the request isn't just coming from us, it's coming from a level of government that understands how catastrophic the impact will be if something's not done,” said Armstrong.

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