



Dusty Delain
President, VRBA

THANK YOU TIMES COLONIST READERS

In my final week as VRBA President, I want to thank Times Colonist readers for reading this column.

It has been another challenging year of COVID-19 and I would also like to offer congratulations to the health care professionals and front-line staff including trades and suppliers working to enhance health and safety while keeping the province moving forward.

This past year was notable because, for the first time, housing supply shortages became a major topic of discussion in the federal election and in mainstream media.

Until this year, governments claimed they could improve housing affordability by implementing more taxes, such as the Speculation Tax, Foreign Buyers Tax, etc.

This was proven false, especially in BC where housing prices continued rising and inventory reached new lows.

BC government revenue increased, municipalities posted big surpluses, while millennials starting families were pushed out of the market.

The province's report "Opening Doors" described the dysfunctional rezoning process obstructing supply, and unfair municipal cash grabs

euphemistically called "community amenity contributions" that should be discontinued.

Municipal "Housing Needs Reports" required every 5 years by the province outlined the costly obstruction to new housing in Saanich, Oak Bay, Central Saanich, North Saanich and others.

Through this column, VRBA has tried to initiate more discussion of these challenges, most of which stem from BC's policy of municipal self-determination perpetuating unaffordable housing.

Lack of regional planning also undermines infrastructure such as transportation, water and sewer. LRT construction to the West Shore should already be underway if the province is serious about GHG reduction.

However, there is light at the end of the tunnel as the pandemic declines and municipal elections are scheduled for October 2022.

We are all in this together and I look forward to a bright future for our region.

Thank you for your support! I have enjoyed my year as VRBA President and offer best wishes to my successor, Norm Verbrugge, President- Elect.



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