

Donna Stewart

A Place To Call Home: Dedicated to Seniors



// I want to leave my condo to someone who needs it," said the client.

"You know, you're the second person who has said that to me," replied the Notary. Then the Notary asked the client why she didn't leave her condo to the shelter society. "They'd probably sell it, but put the money to good use."

"No," said the client, "I'd like my home to go to someone who needs it."

The conversation wandered on, but the truth was, as the Notary confessed to me afterward, "I didn't know how to do it, so we didn't do it."

Now a North Shore society has made it easy. They've set up a nonprofit society specifically to receive gifts of property, although they'll accept cash, too, of course.

"A Place To Call Home" was established at the instigation of the Community Housing Action Committee on Vancouver's North Shore, an interagency advocacy group that operates under the umbrella of North Shore Community Resources. They know that affordable housing is the top need of low-income people in their community.

They got the idea for setting up a society dedicated to that need because one of their members ran workshops with seniors who were thinking about making Wills.

More than one person said, "I don't have any heirs."

Homelessness was just coming on the horizon, after the federal government dropped out of new housing construction.

The facilitator started thinking about those condos. "What happens to them?" she asked. It turned out that

- some go to BC's Public Guardian and Trustee. The income from the sale of those condos helps fund the Office of the Public Trustee; and
- some are left to various charities, who usually sell them and invest the profits in their foundations or their programs.

"The apartments are still used for housing, of course, but not for the people most in need," says Li Boesen, Executive Director of the new society. "We wanted a society that would guarantee to keep those condos affordable for people who need shelter."

Of course not all properties are suitable. Some will be far from bus routes or expensive to heat.

The constitution of the new society requires that if the property is sold, the proceeds will be used to buy a more suitable condo, to be dedicated to below-market housing.

"The Realtors on our Board have offered to do the conveyancing *gratis*. There's no property transfer tax when a property is donated to a charity, so it's a really good deal for the donor," says Boesen. "They, or their estate, get a charitable receipt for the full value of the gift."



Executive Director Li Boesen with her little Gracee

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A Place To Call Home
benefitted from a gift
of property.**

A Place To Call Home Board has agreed to fundraise its own operating expenses, so the entire gift is dedicated to its intended charitable purpose—housing those in need.

“We like it because, with a suite here and a house there, there’s no whiff of ‘ghetto.’ The neighbours may never know that a family on income assistance lives there.”

Before it ever existed, A Place To Call Home benefitted from a gift of property. North Shore Community Resources, the nonprofit agency that gave A Place To Call Home its start, operates from pleasant offices in Capilano Mall—offices made possible, in part, by an unexpected legacy from one of their clients who had lived in a car. When he died, his Will directed that a piece of property he owned in Maple Ridge should be given to the society that had helped him through a rough patch during his life.

“Back then, we didn’t even think of building affordable housing on that land,” says Boesen, “Today, that’s the first thing we’d think of, because the need for affordable rental housing is so huge. We are realistic that this charitable approach won’t solve the problem entirely, but it’s a good first step.” ▲

For more information, please contact Li Boesen at A Place To Call Home Housing Society.

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