

Donna Stewart

A Place To Call Home

Realtors and other North Shore residents met for breakfast March 4 at Cindy's Restaurant in West Vancouver to learn more about the new initiative for housing called A Place To Call Home.

They included Ken Sherk, President of The Society of Notaries Public of BC; Robert Fawcett, Executive Officer of the Real Estate Council; Barry Brown-John, Chair of the Real Estate Foundation; and Deborah Spicer of the North Shore Branch of the Greater Vancouver Real Estate Board.

The Realtor who sponsored the breakfast noted that because local accommodation is so expensive, Realtors are concerned about the stress that puts on young families in the community and the difficulty employers are having in attracting workers to their businesses. It's time to give back.

A Place To Call Home, a registered Canadian charity, makes it easy for donors to help by giving their property, money, and/or equities

toward below-market housing for people who live and work on the North Shore. It's a model we hope other communities will emulate. We are seeing people—including doctors, nurses, and RCMP members—refusing jobs in our community because of the cost of housing. When I do workshops for seniors on financial matters, at least one person always says, "I don't have heirs. What should I do with my condo?"

The existing rental housing supply is shrinking as a result of demolitions and redevelopment for condos. A variety of market factors and government tax policies have made it uneconomic to develop purpose-built rental housing in Metro Vancouver. At the time of the 2001 census, there were almost 300,000 renters—20,000 on the North Shore.

Montreal and Toronto face the same shortage of worker housing, partly because in those areas, the cost of home ownership has been rising much faster than the incomes of people who earn below the median.

"Charity alone won't solve the problem," says Greg Shea, President of A Place To Call Home Housing Society,



"but one condo would help one family. If we were given a luxury condo, we could sell it to buy several lower-priced places. If we were given several, we could buy a small apartment building and preserve it from demolition. Operating on a nonprofit basis, the units could be affordable." ▲

A Place To Call Home operates from North Shore Community Resources, another nonprofit society.

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Donna Stewart is the founder of A Place To Call Home.



John Neuls, Executive Director, Kiwanis Seniors' Housing, with Ken Sherk, President of The Society of Notaries Public of BC



Greg Shea, President of A Place To Call Home Housing Society, with Li Boesen, Executive Director



Robert Fawcett, Executive Officer of the Real Estate Council, with Nancy Hollstedt, Housing Manager, A Place To Call Home



Barry Brown-John, Chair of the Real Estate Foundation, with Judi Whyte, North Shore Realtor