

# AFFORDABLE VANCOUVER?

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING BACKGROUNDER

A poll of Vancouverites from earlier this year indicated that 40% of respondents consider affordable housing the biggest issue facing the city. Indeed, the crisis of housing affordability in Vancouver is well-known: Vancouver's housing price-to-income ratio is exceptionally high, and its rental vacancy rates are among the lowest in Canada. The 2014 housing affordability survey by Demographia ranked Vancouver the second most unaffordable city in the world for the sixth straight year.

This crisis is the result of many complex factors: a rise in housing costs, a lack of appropriate government policy, too few new low-income rental units, low rental vacancy rates, high inflows of capital, urban population growth, and income growth that has lagged behind the cost of living. The solutions for this problem will be equally complex, and will require strong leadership and informed policy-making at the municipal level. Some key questions will have to be addressed by candidates seeking the support of Vancouver residents on this important issue:

- What do you consider the primary root causes of housing unaffordability in Vancouver? In what ways will your party tackle these root causes?
- The March 2014 homeless count revealed that the number of people sleeping on the street increased to 536, up from 154 in 2011. How will your party combat street homelessness?
- Studies suggest that Vancouver lags behind other major housing markets in providing social and non-market rental housing units. Some developments have resulted in fewer of these units than originally planned. What steps can be taken to ensure that there is adequate housing to meet the needs of low- to moderate-income households?
- Vancouver is a city that takes pride in its diversity. What do you view to be the unique barriers to accessible housing faced by recent immigrants, visible minorities, indigenous peoples, women, and LGBT people? How can equitable access to housing be achieved?
- The price-to-income ratio for housing in Vancouver is one of the worst in the world. Can housing affordability be achieved without increasing income? How will your party accomplish this?
- What type of policies would your party pursue to develop an adequate supply of affordable housing? How would they balance affordability with for-profit development?

