

Dr. Reiner B's article is below.

My wife and I have lived in Vancouver 40 years, and raised three children in the city. Over the last 15 years as they left home, we downsized from a 5 bedroom home in Dunbar, to a townhouse, subsequently a two-bedroom and finally a 700 sq. ft. one-bedroom condo. In the interim, we purchased a country place in Gibsons BC, and transferred equity to our children (now with their own families) to assist them in the purchase of their first house, one of which is in Vancouver.

Real estate prices being what they are, they are not able to accommodate us in their small home on overnight visits.

Four years ago, we switched the designation of what was our primary residence to Gibsons. However we continue to have many ties in Vancouver, (family, medical specialist appointments, care of an elderly infirm parent, social events, maintaining contact with important friends, church related activities and professional seminars) . We still view ourselves as active and engaged members of the Vancouver community. Two out-of-town children also use our condo when visiting, as well as other extended family.

I am now a semi-retired family physician, dedicating the last years of my professional career doing remote locum placements, i.e. filling in the needs of small, remote BC communities when they are short of medical staff. Not only BC, but also in the arctic (Nunavut and Northwest territories). This requires air travel through Vancouver, and overnighing along the way. All this accounts for housing needs in Vancouver on a regular basis, but not at the level of half-time. Our condo is occupied and used, but the current bylaw as written, places it in the category of "vacant", and subject to the new vacancy taxation bylaw. If it had remained our primary residence, it would be exempt. Hypothetically, if a single person is living in a 8 bedroom mansion in Shaughnessy as their primary residence, irrespective of the fact that they may be down in Florida for 8 months of the year, they are also exempt and have no pressure on renting their home or subletting rooms in Vancouver.

There is something inherently unfair about this. The pressing issue is affordable rental housing. Should I be forced to move out or rent out my condo furnished, when I use it regularly? If so, renting at market value does not place it into the affordable category. It would likely have to be sold outright, and I would add to the pool of people needing rental property in Vancouver proper.

There needs to be accommodation under the bylaw exemptions for people as ourselves, and a grandfathering clause exempting owners who had purchased their homes legally in good faith, prior to the enactment of this bylaw. It should not be in effect on retroactive purchases.

Reiner B (Gibsons, BC)