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‘Incredibly stressful time’: Rents continue to rise in Greater Victoria, with low vacancy rates

Mary Griffin || January 31, 2024

Anyone who rents a home in Greater Victoria already knows that it’s an expensive place to live.

It’s a fact confirmed in a new report from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) released Wednesday.

Braden Batch, senior economist with the CMHC, said more supply of rental units is needed.

“In Greater Victoria, the demand side of the equation grew fairly significantly in 2023, and that outpaced the supply growth in the market,” he said.

According to the report, the vacancy rate in Victoria is still one of the tightest in the country at 1.6 per cent.

The average two-bedroom rents for more than \$1,800, up 7.9 per cent compared to the year before.

The CMHC’s average rent price looks at both vacant and occupied units, and the report notes that the average rental price for unoccupied units is higher than for occupied units.

Emma White, vacancy control campaigner with Together Against Poverty said there are few protections for tenants.

“It’s an incredibly stressful time to be a tenant with such an [unaffordable] housing market with very few protections to ensure stability for tenants,” she said Wednesday.

White said a big part of the problem is the lack of restrictions on how much a landlord can raise the rent between tenants.

“The findings are concerning, although not surprisingly, most notably the turnover rate,” said White. “Units that have since had new tenants move in, and old tenants move out, because we don’t have vacancy controls. Any limit, the landlord can increase the rent when that happens.”

The report does point to Esquimalt and Langford as two areas moving in the right direction, increasing their rental stocks with new construction over the next 24 months.

As a result, rents there are increasing at a slower rate.

And there's hope that with an overall increase in supply, combined with plateauing home prices, there could eventually be some relief for all Greater Victoria renters down the road.