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Please don't freeze subsidized housing

Re: "Subsidized housing freeze plan draws fire; Debate rages over neighbourhood moratoriums," the Journal, Oct. 23.

After two public hearings, city council votes this week on a moratorium on non-market or subsidized housing in several Edmonton neighbourhoods.

To move forward with such a freeze will impair building a city in which all communities are part of ensuring safe, affordable homes are available for everyone.

Groups pushing for a moratorium say their communities are unsafe because of too much subsidized housing and such developments should be spread around more equally. Everyone deserves to live in safe communities, and it is fair to expect every part of the city to welcome people from various economic statuses.

But a moratorium on certain types of development in some neighbourhoods is a negative approach that might only guarantee that more neighbourhoods make the same demands, setting in motion a series of "not in my backyard" actions.

A moratorium also ignores slum landlords who contribute more to problems than do well-designed and well-run subsidized projects by community-based housing providers.

Most important, the moratorium misses the key issue. Stresses in neighbourhoods more likely reflect deep poverty than subsidized housing. Good subsidized housing helps reduce the negative effects of poverty and helps people improve their lives.

Edmonton needs a strong plan to eliminate poverty to ensure all communities are good places to live. The focus of attention should be on this, not on an action that will be nearly impossible to enforce and will not achieve the desired result.

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