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To: [External-Clerks](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter from the B.C. General Employees" Union
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[BCGEU Letter - New West .pdf](#)

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Please see the attached letter from Stephanie Smith, President B.C. General Employees' Union.

Debbie Campbell
Administrative Assistant to the President
B.C. General Employees' Union
Direct Line: 778-731-9297



Unceded Coast Salish Territory, traditional shared lands of the x̱məθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), Skxwú7mesh (Squamish) & Səl̓íl̓wəṭəʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples

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September 22, 2023

Email: clerks@newwestcity.ca

City of New Westminster
511 Royal Avenue
New Westminster, BC
V3L 1H9

Dear Mayor Patrick Johnstone and Council,

Re: Reject DVP 311 Ash Street

I write to you as President of the BC General Employees' Union (BCGEU) to oppose the Development Variance Permit (DVP) at 311 Ash Street. In addition, we oppose the broader project at Cedarvale Apartments, which will negatively impact current residents and deprive future renters of affordable, quality homes in your city.

Over 1,500 BCGEU members call New Westminster home. They care about their city and work every day to break down barriers to compassionate services so that all British Columbians can thrive. They make neighborhoods livable. In contrast, the Applicant's proposal will make New Westminster unlivable for working people. New Westminster has been a leader in protecting affordable rental housing with progressive policies and bylaws. The Cedarvale Apartments proposal is not a "solution" that will add much needed affordable housing. In fact, it will only worsen the housing crisis at a cost to the community, including our members and their neighbours.

We are asking Council to reject the DVP. It states: "The Housing Agreement would secure all existing and proposed units (34 units total) within the building as a market rental project." Right now, Cedarvale Apartments comprise a dwindling supply of affordable units (below market) and market rental units. These remaining affordable accommodations will disappear when current occupants vacate. This means more out-of-reach rents and a permanent reduction in the city's stock of affordable homes, on which present and future low-income earners depend.

Flipping below-market rentals into market rentals is not advancing affordability, and the five new proposed units at 311 Ash will only exacerbate unaffordability. According to Zumper.ca, the average rent for a 1-bedroom apartment in New Westminster has skyrocketed to \$2,220/month, while studios average \$2,071/month. These astronomical rates are predictive of how the five new units at Cedarvale

BCGEU Headquarters

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We are located on the unceded and shared traditional territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) & Səlil̓ lwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples.

Apartments would be listed when they are complete. Much like any existing units that will suffer from rent raises when current tenants leave, these new units will be unaffordable.

The housing crisis is a broadly felt issue. Workers across income brackets are feeling the squeeze and leaving the cities where they work in droves. The Applicant's proposal threatens to advance this trend. As a union, we don't want to see passionate and skilled workers forced out of your city and we don't want the ones who stay to languish as they funnel the majority of their hard-earned wages into rent. New Westminster is a vibrant community, but this will diminish as workers have less income to spend locally because of rapidly rising rents.

Vulnerable communities suffer the most as cities lose affordable rental supply. The 311 Ash Street permit poses an immediate and direct threat to the health and well-being of seniors on the side of the building where this development project will see important, mature and shade-producing trees removed. A reduction in these trees will turn units into ovens, dangerously increasing temperatures in units during the summer months. We know that the Council does not want New Westminster to be the site of any more heartbreaking climate-change-related deaths, and this is a chance for you to mitigate the risk by opposing the permit.

BCGEU is aware of the outcry from tenants who are opposed to this project and have grieved about poor building maintenance in letters to Council. At the same time, there is a growing call across BC for vacancy control. The DVP is out of tune with what people in British Columbia want and need, especially in New Westminster, which has some of the fastest growing rents in Canada, according to a June 2023 report by Rentals.ca and Urbanation. We encourage the Council to take bold steps to halt this trajectory by rejecting this proposal. Instead, as proposals come forward for new density, we encourage Council to prioritize inclusionary zoning and negotiate a 50 per cent or more affordable units for all new residential developments, where said units cost 30 per cent or less of a household's monthly pre-tax income.

Thank you for your consideration of the issues with the DVP and larger project at 311 Ash Street.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Smith
President