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Len Jao is comfortable in the manufactured home he has lived in for 31 years. He, along with other homeowners in manufactured home parks, is worried it is too easy to be evicted by landlords eager to redevelop and wants the province to protect him with tougher legislation.

TOBY GORMAN/The News Bulletin

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Nanaimo News Bulletin

## Uncertain Future

By Toby Gorman - Nanaimo News Bulletin

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Len Joa has it made.

He has a nice home in a manufactured home park, a garden and a small greenhouse where he grows fruits and vegetables. His property features a beautiful holly tree and several birdhouses perched in various spots.

“I enjoy the birds,” says the 85-year-old.

He knows and likes his neighbours, too.

Inside his double-wide, there is plenty of space for Joa to play his guitars and do other things to pass his days. His son and daughter call, though he'd like them to call more often.

His wife died 11 months ago, but Joa himself has survived cancer and his pacemaker ticks away dutifully. He's not worried about his health.

But he is worried.

“I've lived here for 31 years in this trailer park,” he said. “I live here for a reason. My doctor, my friends, the location. If I had to move now I don't know what I'd do. I'd have nowhere to go.”

Joa is concerned B.C.'s Manufactured Home Park Tenancy Act doesn't go far enough in protecting him from losing his home. He's worried the current owners of his park, who he has a strong relationship with, are getting older and may wish to sell the property to a developer some day. That situation has hit close enough to home – residents at the Ivy Green Marine trailer park in Ladysmith were recently evicted as the owner – Oak Bay Marine Group – plans to redevelop the land.

“I've got friends in that park. They've been there 10 years,” said Joa. “It's a shame.”

Ron Cantelon, Nanaimo-Parksville Liberal MLA, said the province is working on long-term solutions, in partnerships with cities, to not only keep people in affordable housing, but to create more opportunities for people to live in manufactured homes.

“We can't just pass restrictive legislation with no long-term solution,” he said. “We have a plan and we're acting on it right now to ensure that people, including people at Ivy Green, have the opportunity to own their own land where they can't be evicted from.”

Nanaimo has 21 manufactured home parks with 2,386 units. The average owner pays around \$300 a month for their pad rental and the average price of a manufactured home is about \$91,000.

Under current legislation, the owner of a park must give residents 12 months notice and free rent for that time period, which generally amounts to an average of \$3,600 if they are to be evicted due to development. It used to be a flat rate of \$10,000, which is ironic, since a report commissioned by the province recommended

compensation be more, not less.

Leonard Krog, NDP MLA for Nanaimo, said in case a home can't be moved, the current amount is not enough for a homeowner to recoup not only the loss of their home but expenses to move as well.

Joa's home is 35 years old and he recently spent thousands to upgrade it. He says it would be impossible to relocate it.

Krog said the NDP tabled a private member's bill to protect manufactured home owners, but the provincial government refused to take action.

"People who have invested in their homes shouldn't be forced to abandon them for a fraction of their market value," said Krog. "New Democrats introduced this bill to protect these homeowners, many of them seniors, from losing their homes but the Campbell government was too arrogant to take our lead."

Some B.C cities like Coquitlam, Abbotsford and Langford have created bylaws to further protect homeowners, and Krog wants similar action in Nanaimo.

"The Campbell government's failure to take action means that the City of Nanaimo needs to step in and protect homeowners."

The city visited the subject before, asking the province to amend the Act, but that hasn't happened.

In a City of Nanaimo staff report from December 2007, it says a study concluded that "local governments have a role to play in the protection of manufactured home parks through Official Community Plans and zoning bylaws. If it was not for land use regulations imposed by municipal governments the study feels the loss of manufactured home parks would proceed at a rapid pace."

Though the city has not had a proposal in 10 years to develop a manufactured home park, some owners of Nanaimo's 21 parks are getting old enough to sell their property in the near future.

Because a historical lack of pressure, the city decided in 2007 to back off proceeding with the development of a Tenant Relocation Policy that would assist people in keeping their lives intact during relocation.

Dale Lindsay of Nanaimo's community planning department said any development applications would first need council approval.

"Most of the current parks are zoned as RM-8, dedicated manufactured home parks, so there is protection in zoning," said Lindsay.

"Any redevelopment would have to go through a series of approvals. The land can't simply be sold, the residents evicted and the property developed."

Subsection 1.6.2. of Nanaimo's OCP prohibits the conversion of existing residential rental buildings to condominium status when the rental vacancy rate falls below three per cent – it's currently at about one per cent in Nanaimo.

While this policy protects renters in apartments, it does not protect residents of manufactured home parks from being displaced.

It makes Joa uneasy that his fate is still in the hands of others.

"It's a provincial responsibility and as far as I'm concerned. If it's a trailer park now it should always stay a

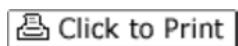
trailer park,” he said.

“People shouldn’t have to worry about having their homes taken away.”

reporter2@nanaimobulletin.com

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