

Condos 'structurally unsafe'

Engineers' report says 236 units should not be occupied

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Residents of a Kelowna condominium complex have been urged to evacuate their homes after the three-year-old buildings were deemed "structurally unsafe" by a structural engineer.

"We can't force anyone out, but it certainly isn't safe to stay," said Coun. Carol Gran.

A report released Friday by David C. Woodall Structural Engineering concluded "the wood-framed buildings at Discovery Bay are structurally unsafe and should not be occupied until they have been reinforced and [made] in compliance with the British Columbia Building Code in all respects."

The firm was hired to conduct a secondary review of the complex after deficiencies were discovered in its ground-level parking garage.

"When cars came in, it seemed a little too bouncy," said Discovery Bay strata council president Bill Butterworth.

"A review found problems with the garage, so the developer hired another engineer to inspect the top of the building."

As a result, Discovery Bay's 236 units have been deemed "structurally unsafe."

Since seeing the review, Butterworth has been living in a hotel.

"I simply read what the engineering report said. I don't have any qualifications, so who am I to say it's safe? If the engineer says I shouldn't be living in the building, I don't want to take the risk," he said.

But resident Rena Nathanail had a different view.

"My unit seems pretty solid," she said. "I'm staying."

Nathanail isn't alone.

Carol Evans, who rents one of the units, said she's having a hard time deciding what to do.

"For now, I'm going to sit tight," she said. "It's not easy to find a new place. If I was forced to go, I don't know where I'd turn."



CREDIT: Lori-Anne Charleton, for the Province

Discovery Bay strata-council president Bill Butterworth, who has been living at a hotel since seeing an engineers' report, stands in the now-closed underground parking area, which shows extensive use of wooden support beams.

Coun. Michele Rule said it's up to each resident to decide whether to stay or go.

"We can't force an evacuation. Some of [the residents] have put their life savings into their retirement homes and they can't afford to live in a hotel or pay rent somewhere else. It's a really unfortunate situation."

Gran said the city has become involved in the situation as an advocate for the residents.

"This is really between the strata council and the developer. The engineer and the architect are the ones responsible for not designing the building properly," she said.

Wilf Palaniuk, who owns two suites in Discovery Bay, said he's been forced to rent them out at a reduced rate.

"I rent them out long term, so I had to tell the renters the situation and let them know that I won't assume liability if something happens," he said.

Palaniuk said he bought the units as an investment and he's now "taking a hit."

"I can hold out, but I don't know if others are going to be able to do the same," he said. "It's a tough time for all of us."

The strata council and the Calgary developer, Pointe of View Developments, are meeting tomorrow to come up with a plan to fix the complex, which is still under warranty.

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