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## City council Motion calls for mayor to step down until charge is resolved

Tom Zytaruk  
[tom.zytaruk@surreynowleader.com](mailto:tom.zytaruk@surreynowleader.com)

Surrey city Coun. Brenda Locke has presented a motion challenging Mayor Doug McCallum's legitimacy to continue his duties in light of a provincial bill that will require politicians charged with a crime to take a leave of absence from the date they're charged until legal proceedings are done.

The motion will be debated and voted on at council's next meeting on May 30.

So far, Locke is McCallum's sole declared rival for the mayor's seat in the Oct. 15 civic election. She noted that provincial government Bill 20, the Municipal Statutes Amendment Act 2022, received third and final reading on May 3 and awaits Royal Assent.

*Continued on A8*



# COSTLY LIVING

A 'NOW-LEADER' SERIES

Even for a pro athlete like BC Lions offensive lineman Andrew Peirson, adjusting to life in a city cursed by some of the most expensive housing on the continent is a struggle. In fact, in what has become an "every-year problem," most of his teammates end up spending a huge chunk of their salaries on rent, even though they are here for only six months of the year.

Tom Zillich, page 9

(Photo: Tom Zillich)



## Did You Know?

Doug McCallum and his four councillors voted to freeze all new Ethics Complaints and investigations of council until after the October election. The Ethics Commissioner safeguards transparency, accountability, and integrity. Linda Annis fought against these changes. Surrey residents deserve the oversight of an independent ethics commissioner.

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Authorized by the Official Agent for Linda Annis

# FOCUS

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Costly living

## Housing is tough, even for a Lion

**FIRST IN SERIES:** Finding a place to live in Surrey is an 'every-year problem' for pro football players

Tom Zillich  
[tom.zillich@surreynowleader.com](mailto:tom.zillich@surreynowleader.com)

It's training camp time for the BC Lions, who'll soon begin another football season with several players new to Surrey, home to the club's practice facility.

For some, it's a tough task making the CFL team on Canada's West Coast, and then comes the struggle of adjusting to life in a city cursed by some of the most expensive housing on the continent.

"As a rookie, it was definitely a big shock immediately, coming from a smaller city like I did," recalled Andrew Peirson, an offensive lineman who grew up in Kingston, Ont.

"I wasn't really aware of the rent prices here to begin with, so the pricing was a shock to someone like me," added the 27-year-old Peirson, who first arrived here in 2018.

The Lions employ a football operations co-ordinator, Tyler Gammon, who helps find affordable housing for the players, and the job sure isn't easy right now, with rental costs soaring in Surrey and surrounding cities. Keep in mind, these are pro athletes who make as little as \$60,000 a season.

"The guys, most of them make modest incomes and are here for around six months of the year, and a large chunk of their income will go to rent. It's just the reality," said Gammon.

"It's an every-year problem," Gammon added. "With us, when we come back from training camp in Kamloops, there'll be 20 rookies and probably 20 veterans in our group, so that's 30 or 40 guys who aren't



BC Lions player Andrew Peirson on a Whalley Boulevard sidewalk near his highrise condo. (Photo: Tom Zillich)

from here and need places to stay for the season."

For the first few weeks of the football season, rookies stay at Surrey's Civic Hotel, where the Lions put them up while they look for a place to live.

"The veterans, as per the CBA (collective bargaining agreement), we can't pay for their housing or put them up in a hotel, because it's a violation against the (salary) cap, so they're on their own for that," Gammon explained. "They can pay to stay at the hotel, but that can add up pretty quick."

Gammon figures about 75 per cent of the Lions players live within two kilometres of the team's practice facility in Whalley. It just makes sense, given their busy workout schedule there.

Accordingly, Gammon's job involves searching Surrey for rentals, or even billets, for the players, or connecting them with a roommate or two.

"My job isn't necessarily to get housing for every single player, but I monitor it and see what's available," Gammon noted. "This is my second year doing this, and compared to last year, it just seems more expensive for a two-bedroom apartment in a building near Surrey Central, for example."

Following the 2021 CFL season, last winter Peirson went home to Ontario to visit family, and returned to Surrey in January.

"Coming back, I noticed rent was a lot more this time," he recalled. "My background is in finance, so I'm always looking at numbers and things like supply and demand. Surrey was typically more affordable to places like Burnaby and Vancouver, but now we're seeing prices drive up in Surrey. It's something that is hard to come to grips with for guys on the team, for sure. I do feel for the rookies and some of the new guys, especially the ones from the U.S. who live in smaller cities and have to make the transition to a bigger-city market."

Today, Peirson shares a condo located a couple blocks from Holland Park.

"Every year I've lived in Surrey, give or take, I have a 20-minute walk to the (Lions) facility, and as close as a 10-minute walk," he explained. "I like the location, being close to the practice facility. The area around here is growing so much, with new towers going up everywhere. It's a great location, and since 2018 the area really does look a lot different, with all the highrises around there. It's definitely cleaning up."

In professional football, players sometimes

don't know where they'll be playing from one season to the next, which triggers housing concerns. That's just the nature of the beast, Peirson said.

"Getting into long-term leases doesn't work, really," he noted. "Most guys on our team look for those eight- to 10-month leases, sometimes a year. The season starts around June and we're done by December."

"That's sometimes tricky to navigate that, saying you're a short-term leaser," Peirson acknowledged. "I'm a professional athlete, so landlords are getting guys who are goal-oriented and are solid people, we have jobs, but we might not be around for longer than six months, sometimes less than that. We're responsible people. Some guys try for the month-to-month payments or just bite the bullet and go for a year-long lease, but that's tricky."

Gammon says a lot of the new players fly here with two checked bags of luggage – "their clothes and that's about it," he said.

"So they pretty much need a furnished place, which can be a challenge, and they'll look to pay (rent) month to month, not a year-long lease like a lot of places want. Most of them will go home at the end of the season."

Some of the players haven't been to Canada before, so they need to get set up with bank accounts and deal with assorted issues.

"A lot of those things hit them right away as young men – it's a lot, in addition to training and staying on the team, playing football," Gammon said.

"Finding a two-bedroom apartment for \$2,000 a month is tough, then you add utilities and whatever on top of that. A group or two last year rented out a house, for four or five of the players in one house. In that situation it's probably cheaper per person."

Those with housing to rent to a Lions player in Surrey can contact Gammon by email, [TGammon@bclions.com](mailto:TGammon@bclions.com).

**NEXT WEEK:** *Ownership of a manufactured home got one Surrey woman into the housing market, but she's not sure where to turn if the park where she lives closes, now that it's been sold. Read Part 2 in the May 19th edition.*



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