



Housing Needs Reports – Bulletin

The *Local Government Statutes (Housing Needs Reports) Amendment Act, 2018, S.B.C. 2018, c. 20* makes amendments to the *Local Government Act* and *Vancouver Charter*.

The legislation requires local governments, at least every five years, to:

- collect information necessary to identify current and projected housing needs;
- use that information to prepare and publish online a report, known as a *housing needs report*, showing current and projected housing needs for at least the next five years;
- consider the most recently collected information and housing needs report when amending community and regional plans.

The intent of these changes is to strengthen the ability of local governments to understand what kinds of housing are most needed in their communities. They will help ensure that local policies, plans and development decisions that relate to housing are based on recent evidence and responsive to current and future needs.

The new requirements will come into force when the applicable regulations are adopted. Local governments will be notified when this occurs.

A \$5 million, three year funding program will support local government efforts to meet this new requirement. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MAH) will also provide guidance to support the implementation of the new requirements, with a particular view to helping smaller local governments.

BACKGROUND

Housing needs reports (sometimes known as housing need and demand assessments or studies), are a means for communities to better understand current and future housing needs. Such reports identify existing and projected gaps in housing supply by collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative information about local demographics, economics, housing stock, and other factors. Sometimes a report is part of a larger housing action plan or strategy.

LEGISLATION

Application

This new requirement applies to all local governments in B.C., including municipalities and regional districts. It also applies to the local trust areas of the Islands Trust.



Collecting Information

The legislation requires local governments to collect information about:

- current and projected population;
- household income;
- significant economic sectors;
- housing units - currently available or anticipated, and information about types of units.

Reporting Information

The legislation requires that reports be based on the information collected, and include:

- number of housing units required to meet current housing needs, by type of housing unit;
- number of housing units required to meet anticipated housing needs for at least the next five years, by type of housing unit.

The legislation also allows the Province, by regulation, to require that additional information be included in reports, and to prescribe the format of reports.

When a housing needs report is complete, a local government is required to:

- receive the report at a council or board meeting that is open to the public;
- publish the report on an internet site that is publicly and freely accessible.

The public reporting requirements means that the public and other stakeholders such as non-profits, First Nations, private developers, and other government agencies will have access to better information when making decisions about investments in housing.

Official Community Plans (OCPs), Development Plans (DPs), Regional Growth Strategies (RGSs)

A local government is required to consider the most recent housing needs report, and housing information on which it is based, when:

- developing an OCP/DP or RGS;
- amending an OCP /DP in relation to housing statements, map designations or policies;
- amending an RGS in relation to proposed housing actions;
- considering every five years whether an RGS must be reviewed.

This will ensure that when an OCP/DP or RGS is updated, it is informed by the latest available housing needs information. Reports can be part of a larger housing action plan or housing strategy that outlines the strategies and actions that a local government will undertake to meet the community's needs.



Timelines

The new requirements will take effect once the applicable regulations are adopted. Local governments will be notified when this occurs.

From that point, a local government will be required to receive its first housing needs report within three years. The intent is to allow local governments a reasonable amount of time to collect, analyze and report on housing needs information for the first time.

Every subsequent housing needs report will be required at intervals of no more than five years. This timeframe aligns with the availability of new Census data, and the requirement in the *Local Government Act* for OCPs to anticipate housing needs over a five-year period.

REGULATIONS

The legislation provides the Province with the authority to make regulations that could tailor information collection and reporting requirements. This includes:

- requiring local governments to collect additional information, e.g. more detailed data on current and projected demographics, economic trends, or housing supply;
- prescribing the format of housing needs reports;
- prescribing the types of housing units;
- differentiating requirements between local governments (e.g. by community size);
- exempting local governments and/or areas of local governments from the requirement (e.g. very small local governments or electoral areas with low populations).

Ministry staff will be undertaking consultation with local governments and other stakeholders in the coming months to develop requirements to be specified in the regulation.

RECENTLY COMPLETED HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

The legislation includes transitional provisions to accommodate local governments who are already working on, or who have recently completed a housing needs report, so that they will be considered to have met the legislated requirement for their first report. Ministry staff (see below) can provide more information as to whether these provisions apply to your local government.

INFORMATION SOURCES

Housing needs-related information is available through sources such as BC Stats, StatsCan, CMHC, and Multiple Listing Services (MLS). Other information may be obtained from sources such as BC Housing, the BC Non-Profit Housing Association, local non-profits and businesses, surveys and interviews.



COORDINATING HOUSING NEEDS REPORTS

Partnerships between two or more local governments to undertake this work could offer potential benefits and efficiencies. A regional district could also consider coordinating the collection and reporting of housing needs information on behalf of their members, as long as community-specific information and reporting is provided for each participating local government.

MORE INFORMATION

Guidance material will be forthcoming later in 2018, which will include key considerations for local governments that are working to meet this requirement. In the meantime, please direct any questions about the new legislation to:

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Planning and Land Use Management Branch
Telephone: 205-387-3394
Email: PLUM@gov.bc.ca

Full text of the Act: <http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/bills/billscurrent/3rd41st:gov18-3>

More information about housing: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy>