

DATE: May 7, 2019

FILE: 6600-01

TO: Chair and Directors
Committee of the Whole

FROM: Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

R. Dyson

RE: Regional Housing Needs Report Funding Application

Purpose

To update the board on requirements and a funding opportunity for the provincially required housing needs report. Further, to recommend that a regional housing needs assessment be prepared under the umbrella of the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) service.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the board endorse preparation of a Regional Housing Needs Report, prepared by Comox Valley Regional District staff, in partnership with the member municipalities, in order to meet the provincial housing needs report requirements;

AND THAT staff be authorized to make an application to the Union of BC Municipalities' Housing Report Grant Program for grant funding, with the Comox Valley Regional District serving as the primary applicant and grant manager, to collect data, undertake public consultation and prepare a regional housing needs report;

AND FURTHER THAT subject to the approval of the housing needs grant application, the 2019 – 2023 financial plan for the Regional Growth Strategy service, function 512, be amended to include other Professional Fees of \$125,000 in 2019 to be funded by \$125,000 in Provincial Conditional Grants;

AND FINALLY THAT staff work with our municipal partners to prepare a project scope of work and report back with a scope of work for a regional housing needs report for endorsement by the Board in fall 2019.

Executive Summary

- On April 16, 2019, the province released the “Housing Needs Report Regulation” as well as a grant funding program to be administered by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM).
- Initial reports must be prepared within three years (i.e. by April 16, 2022) and every five years thereafter.
- The regulation states that housing needs reports shall be prepared for every electoral area, district and municipality within the province and encourages, through the funding program, preparation of regional reports.
- Reports must include statistical information about current population; population growth; percentage of citizens experiencing homelessness; information about significant economic sectors, housing units and overall analysis of housing needs.

- The reports are to be considered by municipal councils and regional district boards as part of any proposed amendment to a RGS or Official Community Plan (OCP).
- Staff recommends that a regional approach to the report’s preparation be pursued based on the regional nature of housing needs as well as the structure of the UBCM funding.
- The first funding application intake is May 31, 2019 and funding is to be granted on a “first come, first served” basis.
- Preparation of a housing needs report is included among the board’s strategic priorities.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

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Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

Village of Cumberland	✓
Town of Comox	✓
City of Courtenay	✓
Islands Trust (as FYI)	✓
Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness (as FYI)	✓
Comox Valley Economic Development Society (as FYI)	✓

Background/Current Situation

In 2018, the *Local Government Act* (RSBC, 2015, c. 1) (LGA) was amended to incorporate measures to address housing affordability challenges in the province. Among the amendments, is a requirement for local governments to prepare a housing needs report. On April 16, 2019, the province released the *Housing Needs Report Regulation* and companion grant funding program. The regulation requires local governments, within three years, to prepare a housing needs report that includes statistical information about:

- Current population
- Population growth
- Percentage of citizens experiencing homelessness
- Significant economic sectors
- Housing units
- Overall analysis of housing needs

In an effort to assist local governments, the province has made arrangements for access to provincial data that a local government would otherwise be challenged to obtain. The reporting requirement is timely for the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) given the 2017 board direction to report back with possible RGS amendments as well as upcoming OCP reviews (e.g. CVRD last reviewed in 2014, Courtenay scheduled to review in 2019/20). Data and analysis through this project will inform strategic planning efforts within the member municipalities and the electoral areas.

Policy Analysis

The board included a regional housing needs terms of reference on its list of strategic priorities.

Options

The board has the following options:

1. Endorse preparation of a regional housing needs report and authorize staff to make an application for grant funding; or
2. Direct staff to prepare a housing needs report for the electoral areas only and make a corresponding application for grant funding (i.e. each municipality would then need to prepare a separate report).

Staff recommends option 1.

Financial Factors

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has confirmed \$5 million in funding over three years to assist local governments to prepare housing needs reports. UBCM is administering the funding program. The following limits have been set based on planning area (i.e. the area covered by the housing needs report) with a maximum eligibility of \$150,000:

Population	Funding Maximum
Under 5000 (e.g. Cumberland)	\$15,000
5000 – 14,999 (e.g. Comox, electoral areas A, B, and C)	\$20,000
15,000 – 49,999 (e.g. Courtenay)	\$30,000
50,000 – 99,999	\$50,000
100,000 or greater	\$70,000

Based on the above, a regional application involving all three electoral areas and municipalities would make the CVRD eligible for \$125,000. Staff proposes to apply for the maximum eligible amount and scope the project such that grant funding will cover 100 per cent of the cost of report preparation, outreach and publication. In the event that grant funding does not cover 100 per cent of the cost, up to \$20,000 has been earmarked within the 2019 RGS budget for this work.

Legal Factors

Preparation of housing needs reports has been legislated by the province. Findings are required to be used in consideration of any proposed amendment to either an RGS or OCP. Initial reports must be completed by April 16, 2022.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

The LGA requires an RGS to work towards “adequate, affordable and appropriate housing” and to include proposed actions to meet the housing needs of its citizens. Staff recommends that a collaborative regional approach be taken to the preparation of the housing needs report. This will provide opportunity for information sharing and regional thinking about the housing needs of our communities. It is a strategic approach that will optimize resources and will result in a clearer picture of the overall housing profile in the CVRD. This work could feed into preparation of a regional affordable housing strategy: an action item identified in the RGS.

Intergovernmental Factors

CVRD planning staff are leading this initiative in partnership with municipal planning staff under the umbrella of the RGS. It is staff's intention that each municipal council and the Electoral Areas Services Committee (EASC) will have the opportunity to review and accept the proposed scope of work prior to the Board's consideration in fall 2019. Although not available at the time of writing this report, staff has consulted with municipal planning staff within each municipality and will confirm either at the EASC meeting or board meeting whether or not each member municipal council has endorsed, by resolution, a regional approach. For the purpose of information sharing, staff has reached out to Islands Trust planning staff regarding any plans for Denman and Hornby

Islands. Planning for the islands is the jurisdiction of the Islands Trust and the islands are exempt from RGS legislation.

Interdepartmental Involvement

Planning staff is leading this work. Assistance from finance staff will be sought regarding the grant application.

Citizen/Public Relations

Housing needs reports are to be prepared by local governments: findings from broad public engagement as well as specific community stakeholders will help to inform data collection and public use of the data. Staff suggests that key community stakeholders include the Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness and the Comox Valley Economic Development Society (i.e. current work on employee needs housing). Staff will report back with a proposed scope of work, including a public consultation plan, in fall 2019.