
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2020FIN0062-001975
Nov. 30, 2020

Ministry of Finance

B.C. launches Land Owner Transparency Registry

VICTORIA – Registered owners of real estate in B.C. must now register and provide information about their interest holders with the Land Owner Transparency Registry, to help expose and stop illegal funds in B.C.’s housing market.

“British Columbians expect that when they buy a home, they are entering a housing market based on fairness. But for decades, that didn’t happen when they were in competition with fraudsters flush with illicit cash,” said Selina Robinson, Minister of Finance. “This first-of-its-kind registry will help return transparency and moderation to housing markets throughout B.C.”

The registry is the first in the world to require land ownership disclosure of all land types and applies to land owned by corporations, partners and trustees (unless specifically excluded by the legislation). In its report, the Expert Panel on Real Estate said the disclosure of beneficial ownership is the “single most important measure” that can be taken to address money laundering.

As of Nov. 30, when corporations, trustees or partners purchase land in B.C., they will be required to disclose the interest holders of that land. Within a year (Nov. 30, 2021), all reporting bodies that are corporations, trustees or partners – and that have an interest in land as of Nov. 30, 2020 – will be required to disclose their interest holders as well. Going forward, the B.C. government will review the effectiveness of the registry and if required, will make improvements.

The information provided will help improve transparency in B.C.’s housing market. It may also be used by tax and law authorities to investigate and crack down on illegal activity. This will help prevent money laundering and bolster confidence in the housing sector.

“B.C. is taking the necessary steps to prevent money laundering, including our panel’s key recommendation to implement a publicly assessable Land Owner Transparency Registry,” said Maureen Maloney, chair, Expert Panel on Combatting Money Laundering in Real Estate. “These measures mean that B.C. homebuyers and investors can continue to trust the housing sector, which is an important pillar towards a stable economy.”

The Land Owner Transparency Registry is a critical measure in Homes For B.C.: A 30-Point Plan for Housing Affordability in British Columbia and is designed to crack down on tax fraud and close loopholes. The 30-point plan also includes the Condo and Strata Assignment Integrity Register, strengthening audit and enforcement powers and working with the federal government.

Quick Facts:

- The Expert Panel on Money Laundering in B.C. Real Estate released its Combatting Money Laundering report in May 2019.
- The panel's report estimated that \$7.4 billion was laundered through B.C. in 2018, \$5 billion of which is estimated to have been laundered through real estate.

Learn More:

Read the Expert Panel on Combatting Money Laundering in Real Estate's full report:

https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Combatting_Money_Laundering_Report.pdf

For more information about the Land Owner Transparency Act, visit:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2019FIN0037-000545>

Read Homes for B.C.: A 30-Point Plan for Housing Affordability here:

https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2018/homesbc/2018_homes_for_bc.pdf

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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B.C.'s Land Owner Transparency Registry

Who will have to register?

Any corporation, trustee or partnership (unless specifically excluded under the legislation) that is the registered landowner and holds the interest in land for another interest holder will have to register with the Land Owner Transparency Registry.

When will they have to register?

Effective Nov. 30, 2020, all registered landowners who purchase an interest in land for another interest holder must submit a transparency report at the time of transfer. Registered landowners must also submit a transparency report when there is a change in interest holders, even when that change does not result in a transfer of title.

All current registered landowners in B.C. who hold interest in land for another interest holder must register by Nov. 30, 2021.

What information will they be required to provide?

Registered owners will be required to provide information about interest holders, including date of birth and current address, as well as tax and social insurance numbers, if applicable. This is similar to the information collected for property transfer tax.

What information will be made public, and when can the public search the registry?

Names of all corporate interest holders, beneficial owners or partnership interest holders, as well as other limited information such as citizenship, will be publicly accessible. It is anticipated the registry will be searchable on April 30, 2021.

What are the costs of the registry, registering and searching the database?

It will cost \$5 to file a transparency declaration, \$35 to file a transparency report and \$5 to search the database. The transparency register will be funded through fees in line with similar cost-recovery fees currently in place with similar databases including land titles.

What if reporting bodies fail to register?

The enforcement officer can impose the greater of \$50,000 for a contravention by a corporation and \$25,000 for an individual or 5% of the assessed property value.

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