
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2023HOUS0058-001472
Sept. 18, 2023

Office of the Premier
Ministry of Housing
Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

B.C. moves to increase housing supply, deliver more homes faster

VANCOUVER – New measures are coming to B.C. that will help create more housing as the Province speeds up permitting and helps build more secondary suites for rent.

“People in our province deserve a decent place to live they can actually afford to rent or buy, but a chronic housing shortage and long permit approval times are frustrating that achievable goal,” said Premier David Eby. “Our government is taking action. We’re making it easier and faster to get provincial permits to build new homes, and offering financial support for people who could build a suite they can rent out at more affordable rates. We’ve got lots to do, which is why we’re focusing on initiatives like these that make a real and tangible difference for thousands of families.”

The first action focuses on speeding up the permitting process through the launch of a one-stop shop that eliminates the need for multiple permitting applications across different ministries. The Single Housing Application Service (SHAS) will help deliver more homes faster by creating a simpler permitting application for homebuilders. The service will help clear permitting backlogs, while maintaining environmental standards. With the introduction of SHAS, the Province expects permit timelines to be reduced by two months.

“Our government is laser-focused on taking action on housing,” said Nathan Cullen, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship. “One way we’re doing this is by eliminating the current permitting backlog and speeding up homebuilding project approvals with the launch of a user-friendly tool that connects people to project experts. These expert ‘navigators’ will guide homebuilders through the provincial permitting process and provide a personal, one-stop shop that will streamline the process.”

The SHAS connects homebuilders to “navigators,” dedicated staff in the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, who guide applicants through all stages of permit applications, act as the single, dedicated point of contact for all information related to homebuilding permits and co-ordinate permitting decisions across ministries.

The second initiative centres on secondary suites and comes ahead of planned legislation this fall to make secondary suites legal throughout the province, and a pilot incentive program to help homeowners build secondary suites.

To help homeowners navigate this process, the Province has launched a new comprehensive guide, titled Home Suite Home. The guide provides people with the information to prepare to build and manage a rental suite in British Columbia. This follows recent steps to make improvements at B.C.’s Residential Tenancy Branch, including more timely dispute resolutions.

The guide can be used as a resource for people preparing to access the Secondary Suite Incentive Program (SSIP). The pilot program, set to launch in early spring 2024, will provide approximately 3,000 homeowners with forgivable loans of up to \$40,000 to create a new secondary suite or accessory dwelling unit on their property. The loans will only go to properties that will be rented below market rates. Additional eligibility requirements of the program have been made available so people interested can prepare ahead of the launch.

“We’ve heard from a lot of homeowners that they would love to create a rental suite on their property, but find the process to build and manage one confusing and time-consuming,” said Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing. “Our new Home Suite Home guide and secondary suite pilot program will clearly and concisely provide homeowners with the information they need to make an informed choice on whether adding a rental unit is right for them.”

These initiatives are part of the Province’s Homes for People action plan. Announced in spring 2023, the plan builds on record investments in housing since 2017, and sets out several actions to deliver the homes people need in a shorter timeframe, while creating more vibrant communities throughout B.C.

Quotes:

George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy –

“To build the homes people need, we need to ensure land is safe from contamination. With the ministry’s new user-friendly web app, people can now easily submit and track the status of their contaminated-sites applications. This means much-needed housing projects can begin sooner.”

Rob Fleming, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure –

“Housing development goes hand in hand with nearby, safe and efficient transportation corridors, and we are working to speed up approvals for housing developments that are planned near travel corridors. This new service will improve the experience for applicants and help streamline transportation-related approvals.”

Spencer Chandra Herbert, Premier's liaison for renters, and MLA for Vancouver-West End –

“The Secondary Suite Incentive Program will help create much-needed rental homes and give renters a wider range of affordable rentals to choose from. We've heard from homeowners who want to make more rental homes available for fellow British Columbians, but they don't know where to start. This program is the next step.”

Neil Moody, chief executive officer, Canadian Home Builders’ Association British Columbia –

“CHBA BC is pleased to see the strides the provincial government is making to reduce the long-standing challenges and delays homebuilders face when navigating multiple ministries for permits. We are hopeful that the Single Housing Application Service will urgently facilitate more homes coming to market much faster, and our members look forward to continuing to work to with the B.C. government's dedicated navigators to achieve that common goal.”

Kush Panatch, president, Panatch Group –

“We were the beneficiaries of this application service and, as a result, we now have 220 very happy families who will be moving into their new homes at Phase 2 of 50 Electronic Ave. in Port Moody in the next two weeks. I look forward to this program being expanded to include more services and greatly support this endeavour by the government to streamline the approval process.”

David Hutniak, CEO, LandlordBC –

“Secondary suites are an important source of long-term rental housing across British Columbia. This initiative by the Province will encourage homeowners with under-utilized space to create additional units of badly needed rental housing.”

Quick Facts:

- The Home Suite Home guide is available in English, French, Chinese (simplified), Chinese (traditional), Hindi and Punjabi and can be downloaded in the Learn More section.
- There are approximately 228,700 units that could be rented out as secondary suites in British Columbia, according to BC Assessment data from 2022.

Learn More:

To read the Home Suite Home guide, visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/secondary-suites>

To read the Homes for People action plan, visit: https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Homes_For_People.pdf

For information about the Secondary Suite Incentive Program and to sign up for updates, visit: www.bchousing.org/secondary-suite

Two backgrounders follow.

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BACKGROUND 1

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Secondary Suite Incentive Program eligibility criteria for homeowners

The Secondary Suite Incentive Program will provide loans to eligible homeowners for renovations to their existing primary residence for the purpose of creating a new rental suite.

- **Homeowners should meet the following criteria:**
 - They must be registered owners of the property;
 - They must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents;
 - They must be living in/on the property as their primary home;
 - They must be having a combined homeowner income not exceeding the 80th income percentile for couples with children in B.C., as determined by BC Housing. This will be set annually;
 - They must have equity in the property that can be leveraged as security for the forgivable loan as a registered mortgage;
 - They must agree to rent the secondary suite at below market rates for at least five years.

- **The property must meet the following criteria:**
 - It must be an existing single-family home, duplex, or other housing, as permitted by the BC Building Code;
 - It must be located in an eligible incorporated municipality;
 - It must have a value below the BC Home Owner Grant threshold (\$2.125 million for 2023). This will be set annually.

- **The secondary-suite project must meet the following criteria:**
 - It must have obtained all required permits;
 - It must comply with local ordinances related to secondary suites;
 - The completed suite must include self-contained kitchen and full bathroom facilities (including a shower or bath) that are not shared with other units on the property;
 - Projects to add a third suite to properties with an existing secondary suite may be eligible, provided they comply with all other program eligibility criteria;
 - The secondary suite cannot be rented out by the homeowner to an immediate family member.

- **Types of properties that are not eligible for the program:**
 - Renovations to recreational properties;
 - Renovations to create suites in properties for the purpose of creating an investment property or to augment an existing investment property are ineligible;

- For this reason, forgivable loan recipients are required to provide documentation that confirms owner-occupancy as part of the application process and annually during the forgiveness period.
- **Geographical reach of SSIP:**
 - The pilot will be available across B.C., in all 161 incorporated municipalities.
 - The list of eligible communities will be reviewed annually.

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BACKGROUND 2

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Province launches Single Housing Application Service to streamline housing approvals

The Province is taking action to address permitting backlogs and working to get more homes built sooner through the launch of the Single Housing Application Service (SHAS), which supports homebuilders applying for provincial permits.

Homebuilding in B.C. can require multiple provincial permits spanning across four natural-resource ministries — Forests, Transportation and Infrastructure, Environment and Climate Change Strategy, and Water Land and Resource Stewardship — with different processes. This includes permits related to road right-of-ways, rezoning, ground contamination, archeology and development near wetlands and rivers.

The new service identifies which permits are needed for proposed housing projects, provides status updates, and generates new location-based reports.

While the SHAS will improve this process for homebuilders, a web-application model was recently the focus for contaminated sites applications through the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. A new online tool and business process will expedite and enhance a client's experience through the Site Remediation Services web application, further supporting the work of the B.C. Housing Action Taskforce that continues to prioritize:

- Indigenous-led projects;
- projects that include multiple units; and
- social-housing projects.

The SHAS builds on efforts already underway by the Housing Action Taskforce, which has achieved:

- processing 65% of all housing-related applications received by March 31 and doing that 49 days faster;
- reduced riparian-area assessments from 12-18 months to a new service standard of 90% of applications get reviewed within 30 days of receipt;
- reduced the contaminated-sites backlog and review time from 12-18 months to an average time of nine months;
- the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure has resolved 90% of municipal housing applications in the Lower Mainland and resolved 49% of files from across the province; and
- as of the end of Aug. 31, the overall change in timelines for housing applications continues to trend downwards across the four ministries.

The focus on maintaining environmental standards while improving provincial capacity,

processes and policy has been critical in achieving these successes. The new SHAS will be available at Permit Connect BC, launched earlier this year to prioritize housing projects and reduce a backlog of outstanding applications.

To learn more, visit: <https://permitconnectbc.gov.bc.ca/>

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