

A Christmas Blizzard of New Housing Policies



Here is a guide through the recent blizzard of provincial housing policies.

Housing Targets

Housing targets over five years were identified for Victoria (4,902 units), Saanich (4,610) and Oak Bay (664). This is a work-around instead of amalgamating local municipalities to create responsible regional planning for housing, transportation, and infrastructure. We still need a mandatory regional plan.

Rezoning for Small Scale Multi-Unit Housing

This policy enables much-needed, small multi-family homes to be built in single-family zones. In 2022, zero missing-middle homes (townhomes/duplexes) were built in Saanich, Oak Bay, Central Saanich, North Saanich, Metchosin and Highlands. There is a shortage of this housing for young families.

The legislation phases out public hearings for rezonings where housing projects are consistent with Official Community Plans (OCP). Projects were held up for months or longer in reviews.

Expanding DCCs and CACs

The new rezoning policy is undermined by expanding Development Cost Charges (DCCs) to include fire and police stations, solid waste facilities and highways. There is a Best Practices Guide saying DCCs must be applied with “Fairness and Equity, Accountability, and Certainty.” However, this is not enforced by the province and municipal increases have been 100% or more. The government also legalized Community Amenity Contributions for recreation centres, public art, libraries, etc.

Building Code Changes

The province increased seismic requirements just a few years ago and they are doing it again in 2025 for new housing. The government has ignored thousands of older homes on the west coast without basic seismic safety such as anchor bolts. A renovation rebate is needed to address this issue.

Another new regulation says a living space must not exceed 26 degrees centigrade. This will add thousands of dollars (mini-split air conditioning) to the cost of homes with suites, such as mortgage helpers. More cost-effective options such as portable/window air conditioners were rejected by the government because they aren't wired in. Studies show even ceiling fans can be effective cooling rooms in much hotter climates than ours. The Ministry of Housing claims to be promoting “affordable construction” while they reject options that make housing more affordable.

More regulations and costs are coming in the highest priced province in Canada. The government's claims of boosting housing supply and affordability remain to be seen.

New housing may be snowed under by a blizzard of new regulations and rising costs.



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