

**MINISTRY OF ATTORNEY GENERAL
HOUSING POLICY BRANCH
INFORMATION BRIEFING NOTE**

PURPOSE: For INFORMATION for David Eby, QC
Attorney General and
Minister Responsible for Housing

ISSUE: Assessment of Seniors Housing Gaps by the Office of the Seniors' Advocate's
2021 Monitoring Seniors Services Report

SUMMARY:

- The report identifies that the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) rent supplement has not kept pace with inflation, and that in 2020/21 SAFER issued \$2 million less in subsidies than in the previous year.
- The report also states that the availability of seniors subsidized housing has decreased despite the growing senior population and wait times have increased by 19 per cent in 2020/21 from the previous year.
- Office of Housing and Construction Standards (OHCS) staff will work to verify whether the figures in the report are accurate or whether more recent data would confirm the continuation of these trends.

BACKGROUND:

- On February 16, 2022, British Columbia Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie released the 2021 update of the Monitoring Seniors Services Report (the Report).
- The Office of the Seniors' Advocate releases a yearly assessment of services available to BC seniors, highlighting the performance of services and measures over time to identify gaps.
- The Report provides brief assessments of rent assistance, subsidized housing, property tax deferment, and home adaptations.
- Mackenzie is quoted in the report's news release as saying that challenges remain for low-income seniors who rent and that the SAFER subsidy and seniors subsidized housing has not kept pace with inflation and the growing senior's population.
- The SAFER program provides direct cash assistance to low-income seniors (age 60 or over) to assist them in meeting their monthly rent payment in the private market. Assistance is available to anyone who qualifies.
- The report notes that while the SAFER rent ceiling was increased in 2014 and 2018, no changes occurred in 2020 despite the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment increasing by 6 per cent (depending on geographic region).
- In 2020/21, according to the latest BC Housing figures the Province spent \$63.5 million on SAFER to help over 25,189 senior households.
- The report also states that the number of seniors subsidized housing (SSH) units per 1,000 people over age 55 has decreased 14 per cent over the last 5 years.
- According to the report, in 2020/21, the median wait time for SSH units was two years, an increase of 19 per cent from the previous year; all regions in BC had a

median wait time over a year, with Vancouver Coastal Health's wait time being 2.5 years.

- The report additionally notes that compared to five years ago, 52 per cent more homeowners aged 55 and older were deferring their property taxes under the BC Property Tax Deferment program.

DISCUSSION:

- In Budget 2018, the Province expanded the eligibility requirements and enhanced the benefits under SAFER, including increasing the maximum rent ceilings.
- The average monthly SAFER payment increased by approximately \$78, or 42 per cent, from \$187 to \$265.
- BC Housing is currently conducting an internal review into SAFER and the Rental Assistance Program (RAP). The review is expected to be completed and presented to Treasury Board by May 31, 2022.
- It is important to note that the last two years have been exceptional, with temporary federal and provincial benefit programs (including BC's Temporary Rent Supplement program), a rent freeze, an evictions moratorium and deferred rent repayment plans.
- In 2021, Cabinet provided separate direction to the Housing Policy Branch (HPB) to initiate a phased review of all existing provincial rent supplement programs, including SAFER. Planning for this review is underway.
- According to the Seniors Advocate report, the average SAFER subsidy has reportedly dropped by 4 per cent in the last year, for reasons that are unclear. SAFER recipients' average rent was 2 per cent more than in the previous year.
- Rent ceilings are not automatically adjusted for inflation so may become increasingly out-of-date each year they are not increased. In 2020, the report shows a difference of \$612 between the average 1-bedroom rent in Vancouver and the SAFER maximum rent in Zone 1; this difference was \$377 in Kelowna (Zone 2) and +\$14 in Port Alberni (Zone 3). More detail on SAFER's zones and rent ceilings is included in Appendix A.
- As SAFER is a yearly entitlement program where spending is adjusted based on the number of applicants, a reduction in total dollars spent on SAFER in any given year may reflect undersubscription. Advertising has been undertaken at times in the past to increase program awareness and participation.
- While the report notes that the number of SAFER recipients increased in each of the last five years, BC Housing has flagged that the growth in SAFER clients has been less than the growth in the senior's population as one issue to identify in the review of rent supplements.
- The report also indicates that the number of SSH units has increased for the second year in a row, with a 1 per cent increase in the last year but still 1 per cent fewer than five years ago.
- While the number of SSH units has decreased since 2016/17, the number of applications has risen consistently. In 2020/21, only 8 per cent of applicants received units.
- As of March 2021, according to the report 8,706 applicants were waiting for units, an 8 per cent increase over the previous year and a 45 per cent increase from five years prior.

- New affordable rental housing under Building BC is available to help seniors stay in their communities. The Community Housing Fund alone will inject over 14,000 new affordable rental homes into the market for people in BC.
- The report also identifies that the new BC Rebate for Accessible Home Adaptations program does not necessarily cover the full cost of work and has a lifetime maximum funding available of \$17,500.
- The program provides financial assistance for low-to-moderate income households to pay for home adaptations that enable them to continue living independently.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CONSIDERATIONS:

- The Seniors Advocate Report focuses broadly on issues impacting seniors throughout British Columbia. There are no specific implications to Indigenous peoples.
- Indigenous peoples are disproportionately represented in subsidized housing programs such as SAFER given the ongoing effects of colonialism.

GBA+ OR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS:

- Persons from equity-seeking communities are disproportionately represented in subsidized housing programs such as SAFER given intersecting barriers to stable housing.

OTHER MINISTRIES IMPACTED/CONSULTED:

- The Ministries of Finance - Crown Agencies Secretariat (CAS) and Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR) have been notified of the upcoming Housing Policy Branch SAFER review. HPB staff will continue working with CAS and SDPR to coordinate as needed.

Prepared by:

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Approved by:

Teri Collins
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Appendix A: SAFER Rent Ceilings and Zones

Appendix A: SAFER Rent Ceilings and Zones

Rent ceilings reflect rental market differences across the province.

- **Zone 1**

- Singles - \$803
- Couples - \$866

Aldergrove, Anmore, Belcarra, Bowen Island, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Delta, Langley, Lions Bay, North Vancouver, Maple Ridge, Milner, New Westminster, Pitt Meadows, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Richmond, Surrey, Tsawwassen, Vancouver, West Vancouver and White Rock

- **Zone 2**

- Singles - \$767
- Couples - \$836

Abbotsford, Agassiz, Central Saanich, Chase, Colwood, Dawson Creek, Esquimalt, Fort St. John, Highlands, Kamloops, Kelowna, Lake Country, Langford, Lantzville, Logan Lake, Metchosin, Mission, Nanaimo, New Songhees, North Saanich, Oak Bay, Peachland, Penticton, Prince George, Saanich, Saanichton, Sidney, Sooke, Squamish, Terrace, Union Bay, Victoria, View Royal and West Kelowna

- **Zone 3**

- Singles - \$734
- Couples - \$800

All Other Areas of the Province

**MINISTRY OF ATTORNEY GENERAL
MULTICULTURALISM & ANTI-RACISM
DECISION BRIEFING NOTE**

PURPOSE: For DECISION of Rachna Singh
Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives

ISSUE:
2021/22 Multiculturalism Grants Assessment Recommendations

DECISION REQUIRED/ RECOMMENDATION:
Approve Ministry to notify Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Grant applicants of the results of their applications, ^{s.13; s.17}
^{s.13; s.17}

SUMMARY:

- The Ministry has finished assessing 176 applications it received for the annual Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Grants Program for community projects that align with priorities of promoting intercultural interaction to build trust and understanding between British Columbians, responding to incidents of racism and hate as well as reducing systemic barriers to participation by under-represented, racialized groups.
- At least 60 projects can be funded with current annual budget of \$300,000 that will support activities in all regions of the province.
- If additional end of year contingency funding is available from other parts of government, MAG has identified additional proposals that could be supported.

BACKGROUND:

- The Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Grants program supports projects that align with the Ministry's strategic priorities of promoting intercultural interaction to build trust and understanding between British Columbians, responding to incidents of racism and hate as well as reducing systemic barriers to participation by under-represented, racialized groups.
- The program operates with an annual budget of \$300,000 and provides grants of up to \$5,000 to successful applicants.
- The Ministry ran an application period for the program from December 3rd to December 20th, 2021.
- Funding will be distributed in March 2022 for projects or events occurring between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2023.

DISCUSSION:

- The Ministry received 176 applications from all regions of the province ^{s.12; s.17}
^{s.12; s.17}

- Each application was scored out of 100 points by a team of two assessors based on pre-established criteria that evaluated the goals, quality and merit of the proposed activities, organizational capacity, partnerships, and collaborations. Additional considerations were made to ensure rural coverage. (See Appendix 1 for scores)
- Applications have been ranked and the Ministry can fund the top 60 projects at their full budget requests of up to \$5,000 each within the existing \$300,000 budget.
 - These proposals scored 76.5 points or higher.
 - The top scoring 60 projects are geographically dispersed throughout all regions of the province and roughly match the regional submission rate.
 - 38% of the recommended projects are in rural regions of the province.
 - 35% of the recommended projects are run by BIPOC-led organizations

s.13

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- A draft letter the Parliamentary Secretary can send to the successful applicants is attached in Appendix 2, while a letter Ministry staff can send to unsuccessful applicants is attached in Appendix 3.
- Once approved, GCPE will develop a plan to publicly announce the results.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CONSIDERATIONS:

- Numerous recommended projects include Indigenous partners and address anti-indigenous racism.

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OTHER MINISTRIES IMPACTED/CONSULTED:

- The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport and Ministry of Municipal Affairs all helped to promote the grant opportunity to their partners and stakeholders.

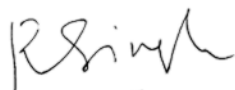


Shannon Salter
Deputy Attorney General and
Deputy Minister Responsible for Housing

DATE:

Feb 24, 2022

OPTION 1 APPROVED



Rachna Singh
Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives

DATE:

March 9, 2022

Prepared by:

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Approved by:

Angela Cooke
Associate Deputy Minister
Housing, Construction Standards, and
Multiculturalism
236-478-3768

Attachments:

Appendix 1: Multiculturalism Grants Recommendations
Appendix 2: PSS Notification Letter to Successful Applicants
Appendix 3: Ministry Notification Letter to Unsuccessful Applicants

Dear Community Partner:

Congratulations! I am very pleased to inform you that your organization is receiving a 2021/2022 British Columbia Multiculturalism Grant.

This year, the Ministry of Attorney General & Minister Responsible for Housing received a high volume of applications for projects that strongly address issues of systemic racism, hate incidents and building capacity in racialized communities. Yours was among the top scoring applications this year.

I appreciate the valuable leadership that your organization and so many others in B.C. are demonstrating in eliminating racism and discrimination of all forms, as well as in promoting cross-cultural understanding and trust between British Columbians.

The Ministry's Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Division will be in contact with you shortly with additional details about your grant.

Once more, congratulations on your successful grant application. I look forward to seeing the results of your project.

Sincerely,

Rachna Singh
Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives

Dear Community Partner:

We regret to inform you that your organization's application for a B.C. Multiculturalism Grant was not successful.

This year the B.C. Government received many high-quality applications, and we regret that we were unable to support all applications within the funds available.

We would be pleased to provide you with feedback and answer any questions you may have concerning your application. Please email requests for feedback to multiculturalism@gov.bc.ca by Tuesday, April 12th, 2022. A Ministry staff person will follow up with you as soon as possible.

We encourage you to monitor our website in the Fall of 2022 if you wish to apply again. We also encourage you to explore other funding opportunities, including:

- BC Community Gaming Grants: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/gambling-fundraising/gaming-grants/community-gaming-grants>
- BC Arts Council – Community Arts Festivals Grants: <https://www.bcartscouncil.ca/now-open-community-arts-festivals/>
- Destination BC – Tourism Events Programs: <https://www.destinationbc.ca/BC-Tourism-Industry/Municipal-and-Regional-District-Tax-Program/Tourism-Events-Program.aspx>
- Canadian Heritage - Community Support, Multiculturalism, and Anti-Racism Initiatives Program: <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/community-multiculturalism-anti-racism.html>
- Heritage BC - Heritage Legacy Fund: <https://heritagebc.ca/heritage-legacy-fund/>

We greatly appreciate your commitment to eliminating racism and discrimination of all forms, as well as in promoting cross-cultural understanding and trust between British Columbians. We wish you success in the next round of Multiculturalism Grant funding.

Sincerely,

Executive Director
Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Division

DECISION NOTE

Advice to Parliamentary Secretary

CLIFF#: 625929

DATE: February 10, 2022

ISSUE: Provincial Anti-Racism Data Committee - Pre-recruitment

BACKGROUND:

The Ministry of Citizens' Services (CITZ) and Ministry of Attorney General (AG) are working on anti-racism data legislation that is expected to be introduced in the House in Spring 2022. The legislation is informed by engagement with Indigenous partners, racialized communities, and other stakeholders, including BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (OHRC). The OHRC has recommended that government establish a community-led advisory group board to make collaborative decisions with government about using data for anti-racism purposes.

The proposed legislation includes the establishment of a Provincial Anti-Racism Data Committee ("The Committee") that aims to support meaningful community involvement in government's collection, use, and disclosure of demographic data to eliminate systemic racism and advance racial equity. The Committee will collaborate with government on the development of anti-racism data standards and directives and provide an ongoing advice on topics such as research priorities. The Committee is proposed to include racialized individuals and individuals with lived experience of marginalization.

Crown Agencies and Board Resourcing Office (CABRO) is providing guidance to CITZ and AG for the establishment of the Committee, including recruitment. Meanwhile, CITZ and AG are working with the Public Sector Employers' Council Secretariat (PSEC) to seek approval from the Deputy Minister Appointee Remuneration Committee for an exemption that would allow members of the Committee to be remunerated. Providing remuneration aims to eliminate financial barriers for participation particularly among marginalized individuals and ensure that recruitment efforts and long-term sustainability of the Committee are successful.

Engagement efforts to inform the development of the legislation and the implementation approach have been underway with Indigenous peoples and racialized community organizations.

DISCUSSION:

Assuming the draft legislation passes, it is expected that there will be significant expectations on Government to deliver new legislative instruments (e.g. data standards, direction on community harms) quickly; doing so will require the involvement of The Committee.

CABRO has indicated that government has the option to begin pre-recruitment for the Committee prior to enactment of the legislation. Pre-recruitment focuses on identifying individuals, especially those that are racialized and/or marginalized and that are not already working with or known to government, that are qualified and may have an interest in providing an advisory role to government on the use of data for anti-racism purposes. Pre-recruitment may allow for early self-identification of a larger and broader pool of candidates that could be considered as members of the Committee.

During pre-recruitment, CITZ and AG would not share cabinet confidential information: that is, there would be no specific reference to the proposed Provincial Anti-Racism Data Committee. Interested individuals would be informed, at a high level, about a potential opportunity to advise government. Pre-recruitment efforts will follow CABRO's best practices and will ensure that later recruitment remains fair and transparent.

The first step for pre-recruitment is to identify the necessary competencies, qualifications and skills for committee members. Following this, government could send an email to organizations and/or individuals that have been previously engaged to gauge interest in an advisory role to government without getting into specifics about the Committee. Building on engagement efforts, CITZ and AG could request contact information, in a confidential manner, from interested individuals. When reaching out, CITZ and AG could also ask those organizations and individuals whether they can suggest additional contacts to follow up with. Leveraging organizations' expertise and networks could broaden government's reach and ensure that interested parties, particularly marginalized individuals, are not missed.

Once the Committee is established on enactment of the legislation, CITZ and AG would contact individuals who responded during pre-recruitment, make them aware of the opportunity to participate in the Committee and provide them with the information relevant to the public CABRO posting. CITZ and AG would host information sessions on the Committee to further help with recruitment. This will require a thoughtful approach from the Province to ensure that marginalized individuals are not experiencing additional barriers to participating on a government committee.

If government proceeds with pre-recruitment, there is a need to align this work with AG engagement activities. This is critical for consistency in messaging, avoiding stakeholder fatigue, and integrating any lessons learned from engagement to date.

This approach to completing pre-recruitment before formally establishing the Committee is informed by lessons learned from similar committees, including the Provincial Accessibility Committee (PAC). Formal planning of the PAC through engagement with CABRO and PSEC did not begin until the second reading of the Accessible British Columbia bill, which significantly delayed recruitment efforts. As a result, the PAC committee has yet to convene despite the legislation passing in June 2021.

OPTIONS:

Option 1: Initiate pre-recruitment with organizations and/or individuals before the legislation passing.

Implications:

- Requires close alignment with existing engagement to ensure consistency and avoid duplication.
- Advanced planning and consideration sets the Committee up for success by ensuring more qualified individuals are identified earlier.
- Increases likelihood that anti-racism data standards and directives will be developed and published on schedule.
- Pre-recruitment needs to be framed as potential future opportunity rather than specific opportunity to avoid breaching cabinet confidence.
- Pre-recruitment efforts may not be fruitful due to the inability to speak transparently about the Committee.
- Careful consideration will be required to ensure that marginalized individuals aren't experiencing additional barriers (such as multiple requests for documentation) to participating on a government committee.

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Shannon Salter
Deputy Attorney General and
Deputy Minister Responsible for Housing

DATE:

February 24, 2022

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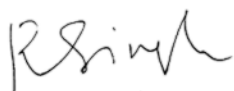
APPROVED

NOT APPROVED

OPTION 1

DATE:

February 28, 2022



Rachna Singh
Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives

Prepared by:

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Approved by:

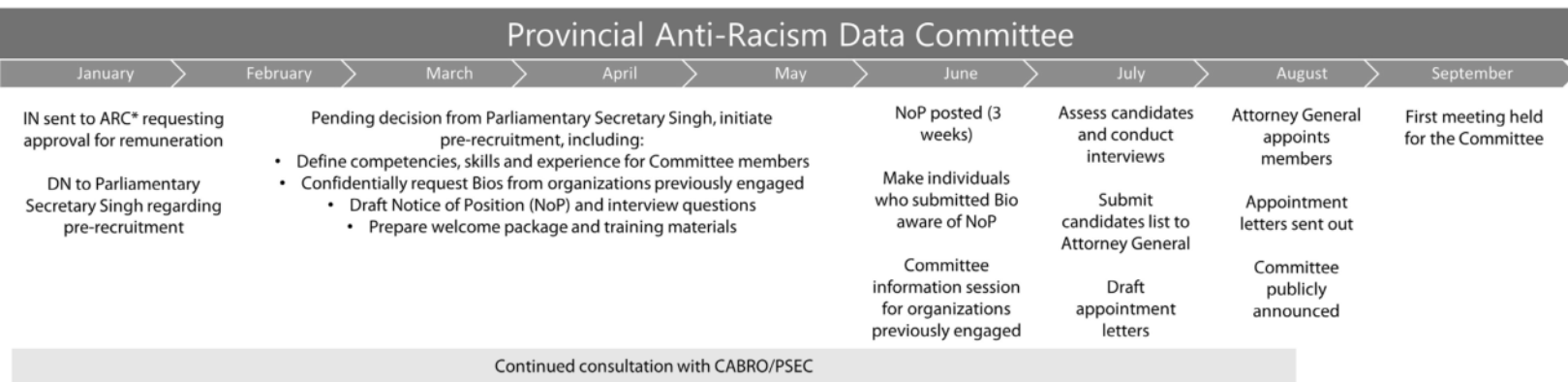
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Attachment(s)

- Provincial Anti-Racism Data Committee Timeline

Provincial Anti-Racism Data Committee Timeline



*ARC: Appointment Remuneration Committee