

# STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

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**DATE:** November 29, 2022

**TO:** MAYOR AND COUNCIL

**NAME AND TITLE:** Walter Babicz, City Manager

**SUBJECT:** Provincial Announcements and Local Government Implications

**ATTACHMENT(S):** City of Prince George Housing Needs Report, December 2021

**REFERENCE LINK(S):** Province of BC – [“Premier Eby takes action to keep people, communities safe”](#), November 20, 2022  
UBCM News Release – [“Province introduces Safer Communities Action Plan”](#), November 23, 2022  
Report: [“A Rapid Investigation into Repeat Offending and Random Stranger Violence in British Columbia”](#), September 2022.  
Province of BC News Release – [“New premier delivers action to expand housing supply within first days”](#), November 21, 2022  
UBCM News Release – [“New legislation would allow Province to set municipal housing targets”](#), November 21, 2022

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated November 29, 2022 from the City Manager, titled “Provincial Announcements and Local Government Implications”.

**PURPOSE:**

During the month of November 2022, Premier Eby made two announcements that have local government implications. The first relates to new measures aimed at increasing enforcement provisions related to repeat offenders and improving services to address mental health and addictions issues in communities. The second, relates to the introduction of legislation that would allow the Province to set housing targets for municipalities and take a variety of actions to ensure compliance. This report summarizes the announcements, overviews the reaction of the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), and outlines strategic considerations for the City of Prince George.

**BACKGROUND:**

On November 20, 2022, the Province announced implementation of its Safer Communities Action Plan in response to a rise in repeat violent offending linked to impacts of federal law changes and increased mental health and addiction challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the toxic drug crisis. The Plan includes measures to improve coordination and collaboration between involved parties in two tracks: enforcement, and intervention services. Several specific measures that align with recommendations in the attached “A Rapid investigation into Repeat Offending and

Random Stranger Violence” and other complementary reports will be implemented. Two noteworthy measures include launching new repeat violent offender coordinated response teams comprised of police, prosecutors, and probation officers, and expanding the use of mental health crisis response teams to alleviate the burden on police and improve response to those in crisis.

The Province of BC also introduced new laws to “deliver more homes for British Columbians, faster”. The first piece of legislation, the *Housing Supply Act*, is intended to speed up housing development and increase supply by giving the Province the power to set housing targets in municipalities with the greatest need and highest projected growth. These targets will be based on information provided by, and in consultation, with municipalities. Municipalities are required by legislation to complete housing needs reports for their communities every five years. These reports are intended to identify current and projected housing needs. The City of Prince George Housing Needs Report, completed in December of 2021 is attached to this report and will inform the City’s negotiations with the Province of BC. In addition, the Province is making amendments to the *Strata Property Act* to end all strata rental restriction bylaws and to limit age restriction bylaws (except for the “55 and over” rule in strata housing).

UBCM welcomed the Safer Communities Action Plan announcement noting its members have long advocated new crime prevention solutions to address repeat offenders and additional support to address complex social issues. In relation to new housing laws, UBCM has indicated that while local governments share the Province’s aim of increasing access to housing, the legislation provides a framework in which many critical elements still require further definition. In particular, there is a lack of clarity with respect to how housing targets will be defined, delivery timeframes, and the relation of targets to current OCPs, and other related plans. UBCM has also noted that the legislation may lead to unintended consequences with significant implications for community livability, safety, and local government decision-making.

#### **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:**

The 2022-2024 Strategic Plan includes Social Health and Well-being goals that align with the Province’s goals of creating housing to serve the diversity of need and implementing initiatives that enhance community safety. As such, and given the recently completed Housing Needs Report and the upcoming information to Council regarding the police services review, there may be an opportunity for the City to work with the Province (perhaps as a pilot community) to implement both the housing legislation and Safer Communities Action Plan in Prince George.

Council’s ongoing advocacy work with the Province, its work with the Interior Universities Research Coalition (IURC) to conduct targeted research to meet current and future needs in relation to homelessness, and the special regional leadership role it plays as a “service hub” would position the City well to serve as a pilot community.

#### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:**

During the month of November 2022 Premier Eby made two announcements that have local government implications. The first relates to new measures aimed at increasing enforcement provisions related to repeat offenders and improving services to address mental health and addictions issues in communities. The second, relates to the introduction of legislation that would allow the Province to set housing targets for municipalities and take a variety of actions to ensure compliance.

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**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:**

Walter Babicz, City Manager

PREPARED BY: Chris Bone, Senior Manager – Civic Initiatives & Partnerships

**APPROVED:**

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting Date: 2022/12/05