

To: Fraser Valley Regional District Board  
From: Katelyn Hipwell, Planner II

Date: 2021-04-22  
File No: 6840-20

**Subject: Final Housing Needs Report: Data Concerns Raised by the Electoral Area Services Committee**

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## **INTENT**

This report is intended to advise the Fraser Valley Regional District Board of information pertaining to concerns raised by EASC regarding data presented in the Final Housing Needs Report for the Electoral Areas, subsequent revisions, and ongoing review. Staff is not looking for a recommendation and has forwarded this information should members want more clarification to discuss the item further.

## **BACKGROUND**

The final Housing Needs Report for the Electoral Areas was presented to the Electoral Area Services Committee (EASC) on April 8, 2021. To meet the requirements of the *Local Government Act*, each Housing Needs Report for an Electoral Area must be accompanied by a Summary Form which summarizes key indicators and findings from the full report.

Per the funding approval agreement between the FVRD and UBCM, the final Housing Needs Report must be received by the Regional Board in a meeting that is open to the public prior to April 30, 2021.

## **DISCUSSION**

During discussion between Electoral Area Directors at EASC, concerns regarding the presentation of data in the Summary Forms were raised. In particular, how projections for changes in populations and numbers of households were presented were questioned for accuracy. Additionally, discrepancies between the Summary Forms and the main report information were noted.

Staff have worked with the consultant to clarify the way projections are presented on the Summary Form by including the 2021 projections and noting the specific range for changes in population and household numbers. Revised Summary Forms for each Electoral Area are attached for the Board's review and receipt and can be considered replacements to the Summary Forms included with the final Housing Needs Report presented to EASC on April 8, 2021.

Additionally, the updated Summary Forms have been cross-referenced with the data appendices projection tables contained within the Housing Needs Report and have been reviewed for inconsistencies due to random rounding during data processing.

It is important to note that there are a number of important considerations regarding the limitations of the data available for rural areas such as the Electoral Areas. These limitations include:

- **Census statistics in areas where the population is low or sparsely distributed will generally have less accuracy and precision and be less complete than for urban areas.** This may also increase in places where there are hidden or unregistered uses, such as secondary suites. **Issues related to data suppression may emerge where overall counts are low**, but it is not always apparent where a particular indicator is truly zero (0) or suppressed for confidentiality.
- **Rounding issues emerge for areas with smaller populations.** Because census statistics are *randomly* rounded up or down to intervals of 5 or 10, a potentially significant level of error is introduced to the dataset from the outset. In cases where indicators are broken out by tenure, as is requested in the *Housing Needs Report Requirements* guide provided by the province, the level of error is further increased by breaking out values into more categories (each of which then get individually rounded).
  - For some indicators, especially those with more categories or a low overall count (income brackets, or all measures of core housing need, in particular), randomly rounding up or down to a multiple of 5 or 10 could significantly change the interpretation of the presented data – some of these indicators have values of 0-20, resulting in a variation of 50% or more due to rounding. As this happens with every value, the cumulative effect could be even larger for some indicators. In a larger area this level of error gets absorbed, but for areas with small populations the effect is larger.
- **There are also general quality issues with the 2011 NHS**, which are particularly apparent in rural areas where there are lower populations and less likelihood of averaging out variations in the population. Here is the disclaimer provided within the Housing Needs Report:

“It is important to note the limitations associated with the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) data. Due to the voluntary nature of the NHS, there is a possibility of non-response bias if those who chose not to respond to the survey are systematically different than those who did respond. Caution must be used when comparing NHS estimates to the 2006 long form census information because it is impossible to determine with certainty whether differences are due to actual changes in the population or due to non-response bias. Trends in low income estimates from the NHS compared to estimates from previous censuses show markedly different trends than those derived from other surveys and administrative data sources. Therefore, low-income data from the NHS should be used with caution and comparisons to previous census data should not be made.”

These particular limitations have been described in detail in the Housing Needs Report, however, this additional context is missing when reviewing the Summary Forms in isolation.

Should any further amendments to the Housing Needs Report be required after the Board has received the final report, staff will provide a summary of these changes to the Committee and Board and said changes would be published on the FVRD's website.

## **COST**

All costs incurred by staff and consultants over the course of the project are funded through the grant funding received through UBCM.

## **CONCLUSION**

Staff have worked with the consultant to make changes to the Summary Form for each Electoral Area Housing Needs Report in order to more accurately present projections for numerous indicators in response to concerns raised by the Committee at the April 8, 2021 EASC meeting.

## **COMMENTS BY:**

**Graham Daneluz, Director of Planning & Development:** Reviewed and supported.

**Kelly Lownsborough, Chief Financial Officer/ Director of Finance:** Reviewed and supported.

**Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer:** Reviewed and supported.