



STAFF REPORT TO COMMITTEE

DATE OF REPORT September 29, 2023
MEETING TYPE & DATE Electoral Area Services Committee of October 18, 2023
FROM: Inspection & Enforcement Division
Land Use Services Department
SUBJECT: Building Inspection 2023 Third Quarter Report

PURPOSE/INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to inform the Electoral Area Services Committee of the Inspection & Enforcement Division's Building Inspection activity for the third quarter of 2023.

RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION

For information.

BACKGROUND

At the end of each quarter, the Electoral Area Services Committee is provided with an update on the Inspection & Enforcement Division's Building Official activities and undertakings.

ANALYSIS

Building Permits

The primary function and responsibility of the Division is to administer and enforce the *BC Building Code* and CVRD Building Bylaw No. 3422. The Building Inspection Division is also responsible for issuing all building permits and conducting all required building inspections. In the third quarter of 2023, the Division issued 92 building permits, including 24 permits for new dwellings (including secondary suites). The total value for all permits in the third quarter amounted to \$19,999,134. In total for 2023; staff have issued 284 building permits - 82 for new dwellings – for a total value of \$47,221,724.

Customer Service

Aside from processing permits and performing inspections, the Division is also committed to maintaining a high customer service level. This includes assisting realtors, appraisers, contractors and home owners seeking both permit and non-permit related information. In the third quarter staff assisted with 140 realtor related property inquiries, for a yearly total of 374 inquiries.

Inspections

All building permit applications are followed up by a site inspection prior to the issuance of the permit. Once approved, additional inspections are then required with the actual number of inspections varying depending on the type of the project. A new single-family dwelling may require as many as 10 inspections or more.

For the third quarter of 2023, the Division has conducted 544 site inspections and has travelled 14,566 km, not including an additional 2 round trips to Thetis Island. In total for 2023; staff have performed 1,712 inspections and have travelled 39,431 km – which is slightly less than the total length of all paved roads in British Columbia.

Future Outlook

Staff continue to process Building Permits and perform inspections at a consistent rate, however; a downturn in permit applications was experienced in the latter half of the summer which appeared to coincide with the Bank of Canada raising interest rates on June 7, 2023, and again on July 12, 2023, after holding steady in March and April. These trends were reinforced during conversations with local builders and developers. An uptick in applications was experienced when interest rates held steady at 5% on September 6, 2023. Conversations with Building Officials serving North Cowichan, Lake Cowichan and Ladysmith indicated similar trends were experienced in the membered municipalities.

A new Building Bylaw is complete and will be part of a report from the Chief Building Official requesting consideration for three readings and adoption. This new Building Bylaw was built using a Regional District template provided by the Municipal Insurance Association of BC, it has been vetted by CVRD legal counsel and has completed a review from the General Manager. Key changes include modernized but still affordable fees, more comprehensive regulations respecting retaining walls, clarification of when a permit is required or not required as well as a broader scope of overall provisions to empower Building Officials where necessary. Minor housekeeping amendments respecting the Unsightly Premises Bylaw and Municipal Ticket Information Bylaw will be coming as to align with updates to the Building Bylaw.

The Province has indicated that a new edition of the *BC Building Code* will be introduced in December; *BC Building Code 2023*. Some of the anticipated changes include:

- **Improved Accessibility Requirements for all Buildings**

In 2019, the *Accessible Canada Act* came into effect with the objective to ensure a barrier-free Canada by 2040. Afterwards, the *Accessible British Columbia Act* came into effect in 2021, providing a provincial framework to identify, remove, and prevent accessibility barriers.

- **Phase One of Mandatory Zero Carbon Stepped Requirements; “Moderate”**

As presented at a previous Committee meeting; Step One of the *Zero Carbon Step Code* is intended to limit the use of fossil fuels for primary heating equipment.

- **Mandatory Cooling and Air-conditioning**

In 2021, over a period of six days, 619 heat-related deaths occurred during a heat wave in British Columbia, which saw record temperatures reaching over 40°C. The British Columbia Coroners Service reported that 91% of the deaths occurred in various types of housing (39% in multi-unit buildings; 34% in detached buildings; 10% in social housing; and 7% in senior or long-term care homes) and that most occurred in homes without adequate cooling such as air conditioners or fans.

- **Mandatory Radon Mitigation Rough-ins for all Dwellings**

Radon is an invisible, odorless gas that exists in various levels in the ground and is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers in Canada. Where radon enters a building and exposes occupants, it presents health risks. With no safe levels of radon exposure, Health Canada has recommended radon mitigation actions for occupants based on the levels of radon measured.

New data shows that radon exists in many areas of British Columbia where it was not previously known to result in elevated indoor levels. There is no longer reliable evidence to justify exempting certain areas from the radon rough-in requirement. *The National Building Code (NBC 2020)*, upon which the *BC Building Code* is based, requires a radon rough-in be installed in all small residential buildings.

- **More Comprehensive Seismic Design Parameters**

British Columbia will be adopting the updated seismic hazard data in the *NBC 2020* so that seismic risks and loads on buildings can be appropriately designed for. However, a consequence of doing so is that many buildings in many locations throughout British Columbia will exceed the parameters of structural design within Part 9 of the *NBC 2020*. The result limits design to being done only by registered professionals and only to Part 4.

A proposal has been developed for additional design methodologies within Part 9 to address buildings in locations with high seismic values. British Columbia can offer design flexibility and help manage costs by adopting proposed changes in advance of their inclusion in the *NBC 2025*.

The seismic provisions will also include a suggestion made by CVRD Building Staff as it pertains to the re-use of diagonal lumber for seismic framing purposes. A large volume of local contractors wish to re-use the material after using it for concrete form work as they were prevented from doing so under previous guidelines.

Attachment A contains the Building Report for the month of September that also includes statistics from the previous 5 years.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

N/A

COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS

N/A

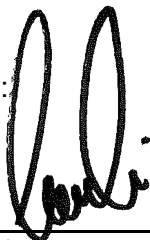
STRATEGIC/BUSINESS PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

N/A

Referred to (upon completion):

- ☐ Community Services *(Cowichan Community Centre, Cowichan Lake Recreation, South Cowichan Recreation, Arts & Culture, Facilities & Transit)*
- ☐ Corporate Services *(Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Legislative Services)*
- ☐ Operations *(Utilities, Parks & Trails, Recycling & Waste Management)*
- ☐ Land Use Services *(Community Planning, Strategic Initiatives, Development Services, Building Inspection & Bylaw Enforcement)*
- ☐ Strategic Services *(Communications & Engagement, Economic Development, Emergency Management, Environmental Services)*

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Reviewed for form and content and approved for submission to the Committee:

Resolution:

☒ Corporate Officer

Financial Considerations:

☒ Chief Financial Officer

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – September 2023 Building Stats