

Home Owner Grant Program

Home Owner Grant Act

Do you need to know if you are eligible for a home owner grant?

Do you need to know how to apply for a home owner grant?

This bulletin provides specific tax information to help individuals understand the Home Owner Grant Program requirements and application process.

For general property tax information, please visit our website at www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/individuals/Property_Taxes/property_taxes.htm

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Overview

The home owner grant is a grant to help British Columbians reduce their property taxes. There are two categories of grants.

1. The regular grant may reduce your taxes up to \$570.
2. The additional grant may reduce your taxes up to \$845.

You may qualify for either the regular grant or the additional grant but not both. To receive the grant, both the owner and the property must meet the qualification requirements.

The home owner grant does not apply to delinquent taxes or to any penalties, interest or fees. The grant is reduced by \$5 for each \$1,000 of assessed value over \$1,150,000. This means the regular grant is eliminated on homes assessed at \$1,264,000 or more. The additional grant is eliminated on homes assessed at \$1,319,000 or more.

Effective for the 2011 tax year and subsequent tax years, the Northern and Rural Area Homeowner Benefit is also available to eligible home owners. For more information, see below, Northern and Rural Area Home Owner Benefit (NRAHOB).

Qualifications

Regular Home Owner Grant

To qualify for the regular grant:

- you must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident and ordinarily reside in British Columbia,
- you must be the registered owner or eligible occupant (which includes an eligible occupant in an eligible apartment, housing unit, land cooperative or multi-dwelling lease parcel) of the home on which the grant is being claimed, and
- you must occupy the home as your principal residence.

Owner is defined as the owner of a property registered at a land title office, Manufactured Home Registry or the Integrated Land Management Bureau and includes a tenant for life under a registered life estate or a registered 99-year lease. The lessee is responsible for paying the current year's taxes under the terms of the lease.

Principal residence is the property where you live and from where you conduct your daily affairs (for example, pay your bills, file your income tax returns, receive your mail, have a telephone listing). It is the address where you reside when the grant is submitted and the property taxes are paid. A person can have only one principal residence.

If you and your spouse live apart, you cannot claim a grant on a second property you jointly or individually own unless you have a written agreement or court order recognizing your separation. A copy of the agreement or court order should accompany your grant application.

Additional Home Owner Grant

You may qualify for the additional grant if you meet the regular grant qualifications and any of the qualifications listed below.

- You are 65 or older during the calendar year. If your home is jointly owned, only one owner or occupant must be 65 to qualify for the additional grant. The qualifying owner or occupant's date of birth and signature must appear on the grant application.
- You are a veteran or a veteran's spouse or widow/widower receiving an allowance under the *War Veterans Allowance Act* (Canada) or the *Civilian War-Related Benefits Act*. Veterans must attach documentary proof (for example, a letter) from Veterans Affairs Canada to the home owner grant application. Surviving spouses who received either allowance at the time of their spouse's death also qualify for the additional grant.
- You are a person with disabilities and are receiving disability assistance, hardship assistance or a supplement under the *Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act*. You must provide the required *Consent for Release of Information* form (**FIN 81**) completed and signed by you and your Ministry of Social Development representative. Enclose a current form with your grant application **each year**. Only a registered owner or eligible occupant (which includes an eligible occupant of an eligible apartment, housing unit, land cooperative or multi-dwelling leased parcel) may qualify under this category.

- You are a person with disabilities, who does not receive disability assistance under the *Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act*, **or** you are the spouse or relative of a person with disabilities and the disabled person resides with you. You must submit a Form B - *Certificate of Physician and Property Owner* (FIN 74) completed and signed by both you and the physician. Attach the form to the home owner grant application the first year that you apply for this additional grant. This medical form must indicate that:
 - the disability is permanent and there is no remedial therapy available that would significantly reduce the disability, and the disability requires extensive physical assistance in the form of physical care in the home, costing more than \$150 per month,
 - structural modifications costing more than \$2,000 have been made to your home in order to manage daily functioning by the person with a disability,
 - you purchased your home with structural modifications completed by a previous owner, where the modifications meet the disability needs of the person with a disability and have a value exceeding \$2,000, or
 - you made changes to the design specifications of your newly constructed principal residence that meet the disability needs of the person with a disability, and the value of the changes to the structural features of the home exceed \$2,000.

You must submit the receipts with your application. An incomplete application will not be accepted. Physicians do not approve the additional grant; they provide information used to determine eligibility.

Retroactive claims are not allowed for first time applicants that are applying as a person with a disability under the Form B - *Certificate of Physician and Property Owner* (FIN 74) criteria.

Please note: Canada Pension Plan disability benefits do not necessarily qualify a home owner for the additional home owner grant.

Northern and Rural Area Home Owner Benefit (NRAHOB)

You may be eligible for the NRAHOB benefit of up to \$200 if you meet the qualifications listed below.

- You meet the requirements for the basic or additional grant.
- Your home is located within British Columbia but is outside of the Capital Regional District, the Greater Vancouver Regional District and the Fraser Valley Regional District.

For the 2011 taxation year, the basic grant with NRAHOB is eliminated on homes assessed at \$1,304,000 or more, and the additional grant with a NRAHOB is eliminated on homes assessed at \$1,359,000 or more.

Minimum Tax Requirement

You must pay at least \$350 per year in property taxes before claiming a regular home owner grant or at least \$100 before claiming an additional grant.

Low-Income Seniors and Others

Continuing from the 2007 tax year, the grant may be available to some low-income home owners or occupants who, but for the high assessed value of their home, would receive the additional home owner grant. Key eligibility criteria are that the home owner or occupant:

- would qualify for the additional home owner grant amount (seniors, certain veterans and certain persons with disabilities) except that their home is assessed above the threshold, and
- meets low-income criteria.

For program details and qualifications, please see the information sheet, [*Home Owner Grant Low-Income Grant Supplement Program*](#).

Other Circumstances

Property Damaged or Destroyed by Fire, Flood or Other Natural Disaster

Effective for the 2008 tax year, a home owner grant is provided for up to two taxation years to eligible home owners or occupants who cease to occupy their principal residence due to property damaged or destroyed by fire, flood or other natural disaster.

The eligibility criteria are as follows.

- You meet the qualifications of the regular grant.
- You occupied the property as your principal residence immediately before you ceased to occupy the residence.
- The eligible residence was assessed and taxed as an improvement in the tax year that you ceased to occupy the residence.

- The eligible residence is assessed and taxed as an improvement in the tax year that you apply for the home owner grant.
- The eligible residence is not for sale.
- The eligible residence cannot be occupied by any person during the reconstruction or repair.
- You intend to occupy the residence as your principal residence after the reconstruction or repair. You may be absent from the property while it is under reconstruction or repair for more than two taxation years; however, the grant is still only provided for two taxation years. If you do not occupy the home as your principal residence in the first taxation year after the reconstruction or repair, you will be required to repay any home owner grant that you received during your absence.

Temporary Absence

Effective for the 2008 tax year, a home owner grant is provided for up to two taxation years to eligible home owners or occupants who cease to occupy their principal residence for reasons, such as medical, travel, work or education.

The eligibility criteria are as follows.

- You meet the qualifications of the regular grant.
- You occupied the property as your principal residence immediately before you ceased to occupy the residence.
- You applied for and received the home owner grant in the tax year immediately before the tax year you ceased to occupy the residence.
- The eligible residence was assessed and taxed as an improvement in the tax year in which you ceased to occupy the residence.
- The eligible residence is assessed and taxed as an improvement in each year that you apply for the home owner grant.
- The eligible residence is not for sale.
- While you are absent, the eligible residence is either vacant or occupied by your spouse or relative who resided in the home as his or her principal residence at the time you ceased to occupy the residence.
- You intend to occupy the residence as your principal residence after your absence. You must reoccupy the residence in the taxation year following the last taxation year that you claimed a home owner grant as an absent owner or occupant. If you do not reoccupy the residence as your principal residence after your absence, you will be required to repay any home owner grant that you received during your absence.

If you cease to occupy your residence because of imprisonment, you are not eligible for the home owner grant.

Deceased Owner

You may be eligible to claim the grant to which the deceased owner or occupant would have been entitled to, providing:

- the death occurred in the current year,
- you are a relative (a spouse, child, grandchild, parent, brother or sister) of the deceased,
- you occupied the property as your principal residence on the date of that owner or occupant's death and continue to occupy the residence,
- the deceased owner or occupant would have qualified for the grant at the time of death, and
- you have not claimed a grant on any other residence in British Columbia for the current year. In the following years, claim the grant that you are entitled to.

Submitting the Application

The home owner grant application form is included with your property tax notice. Electronic applications are available through some municipal taxing authorities' websites. Alternatively, you can use the *Application for Home Owner Grant* form ([FIN 78](#)).

The *Application for Home Owner Grant* form ([FIN 78](#)) and all forms mentioned in the Qualifications section above are available from your municipal office, local [Service BC Centre](#) or on our website at www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/individuals/Property_Taxes/Home_Owner_Grant/hog.htm.

If you live in a rural area, you send your application to the Surveyor of Taxes office or to your local [Service BC Centre](#). Rural applications can be completed and submitted electronically on the Rural Property Tax website at www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/applications/rpt/EHOGForms/EHogFormV1.dll. If you live in an incorporated municipality, return the form to your municipal tax office.

To avoid a penalty charge on your home owner grant amount, your application must be received **before** the property tax due date. A person appointed in writing as your power of attorney may apply for the grant on your behalf.

You can apply for the current year's grant until December 31; however, penalty charges apply if your application is received after the property tax due date.

Further Requirements

Grant applications are reviewed to ensure that grants have been approved only for owners or occupants of eligible properties. You may need to provide documentation to support your claim, such as proof of ownership, residency or costs associated with your disability. Failure to provide the requested information may result in the denial of your grant claim.

Applications may be audited at a later date. The audit period consists of the current year plus the six preceding tax years. Grants obtained by ineligible taxpayers must be repaid with interest. Persons who commit an offence are liable for a fine of up to \$10,000.

Claiming the Grant Retroactively

You may apply for the prior year's grant if you are the home owner or eligible occupant and you met all residency qualifications up to December 31 of that year. Applications received after December 31 of the current year or after the date a property is sold cannot be considered. You must provide a written reason why you missed the previous year's December 31 deadline together with a completed *Application for Retroactive Home Owner Grant* form ([FIN 92](#)). This form is available on our website or from your municipal office, the Surveyor of Taxes, or your local [Service BC Centre](#).

Please note: Retroactive claims are not allowed for first time applicants that are applying as a person with a disability under the Form B - *Certificate of Physician and Property Owner* ([FIN 74](#)) criteria.

Appealing the Denial of a Grant Claim

If you do not agree with the denial of your grant claim, you may appeal it to the minister. An appeal to the minister must be made within 90 days of the date on the *Notice of Disentitlement*.

For more information, please see [Bulletin GEN 003](#), *Appeals of Tax Assessments, Disallowed Refunds or Other Determinations*.

Need more info?

For more information on the Home Owner Grant Program, please see your property tax notice, the insert titled *Explanatory Notes* that comes with your tax notice, or the Frequently Asked Questions on our website at www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/individuals/Property_Taxes/Home_Owner_Grant/faq.htm

Home Owner Grant Administration

Ministry of Finance

PO Box 9991 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria BC V8W 9R7

Telephone (Victoria): 250 356-8904 or 250 387-8166

Toll free in British Columbia: 1 888 355-2700

Fax (Victoria): 250 356-8994

E-mail: hogadmin@gov.bc.ca

Website: www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/individuals/Property_Taxes/Home_Owner_Grant/hog.htm

Municipal Tax Office (municipal property)

Check your property tax notice or the blue pages of your local telephone directory for the number.

Service BC Centres

Check the blue pages of your local telephone directory for the number.

Website: www.servicebc.gov.bc.ca

Surveyor of Taxes (rural property)

Telephone (Victoria): 250 387-0555

Toll free through Enquiry BC: 1 800 663-7867 (or 604 660-2421 in Vancouver) and request a transfer to 250 387-0555

The information in this bulletin is for your convenience and guidance and is not a replacement for the legislation. The *Home Owner Grant Act* and Regulations are on our website at www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/individuals/Property_Taxes/Home_Owner_Grant/legislation.htm