

# BC Assessment

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## Property Photo Update Initiative -- West Vancouver and North Vancouver districts

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Q. Why is it necessary for BC Assessment to take photos of properties?**

BC Assessment's mandate is to ensure that all properties in British Columbia are accurately, fairly and equitably assessed. To keep our information up to date, we periodically take front perspective and aerial photographs, visit property owners and conduct residential questionnaire campaigns in which owners complete a form that asks a number of questions about their property, such as number of bedrooms and bathrooms and building dimensions.

#### **Q. What's so different about this photo update initiative?**

Instead of appraisers walking from house to house to inspect properties and take photos, we have contracted a private company, Yotta MVS, Inc., to update property assessment-related information using digital camera equipment mounted inside a van.

#### **Q. What's the purpose of this initiative?**

BC Assessment is testing this method as a possible way to more efficiently and cost effectively update our ever-increasing inventory of properties (BC Assessment currently values almost two million properties throughout the province). This property photo update initiative is a test of how well and how quickly we can update our residential inventory.

#### **Q. How many properties in the West and North Vancouver districts are involved in this project?**

About 32,000 homes—all residences inside the geographic limits of West Vancouver and North Vancouver district.

#### **Q. Why did you choose West and North Vancouver districts for this project?**

- These communities contain a wide range of different kinds of homes, which will enable BC Assessment to accurately determine the length of time it takes to photograph every kind of residential property.
- The area to be covered---about 32,000 homes—is a manageable size to photograph within our mid-November to mid-December timeframe.
- These communities have produced their own digital property parcel maps and property sketches which they are sharing with BC Assessment to facilitate more efficient and cost-effective comparison with our aerial photographs.
- The homes in these communities have not been recently comprehensively reassessed.

**Q: Why didn't you include the City of North Vancouver?**

BC Assessment has only recently obtained the City of North Vancouver's assessment fabric (i.e., property parcel maps and property sketches) and would not be able to prepare it in time to meet our schedule.

**Q: How often will BC Assessment do this in my neighbourhood?**

This is the only residential property photo update initiative currently planned for West and North Vancouver districts.

**Q: Will BC Assessment expand this initiative to other areas of the province?**

We will need to examine our results of this project and a related pilot project conducted in Nanaimo this past summer before deciding whether to expand this method of updating our property photos elsewhere in the province.

**Q: How are the pictures taken?**

A white van containing state-of-the-art digital camera equipment will stop in front of every home in West and North Vancouver districts and take a photo of each residence. Photos will only be taken from the street.

**Q: Will the mobile photo van be marked with any kind of identifying signage?**

Magnetic signs on both sides of the van will read: BC Assessment, Property Photo Update Initiative, 604-739-8588.

**Q. How will you ensure that the pictures don't include any information unrelated to the property?**

BC Assessment's contractor, Yotta MVS, Inc., is under a contractual obligation not to photograph any personal information related to:

- Images of people on the property, including partial images comprised of parts of faces and/or bodies.
- Visible signage on a residence (excluding civic number), including political signage, business signs, signs with the names of the people living at that property, plaques and any other type of signage that may relate to the identity of a person.
- Views of the interior of the residential improvements which are normally enclosed (eg., images that show the inside of a home via a window or open doorway, or the interior of an enclosed vehicle shelter such as a garage)

**Q. What do you do with the pictures?**

The pictures will be used by BC Assessment to provide more accurate residential property assessments. As well, property owners who appeal their assessment can request information on comparable sales which would include the new pictures. Comparable sales information has always included photos.

**Q. Will my property taxes change as a result of this initiative?**

Not necessarily. The West and North Vancouver districts (which are your taxation jurisdictions) set the property tax rates, not BC Assessment. BC Assessment determines the market value of properties and it is these assessments that then form the basis of an equitable tax distribution amongst properties.

**Q. Will I face repercussions from the West Vancouver/North Vancouver district if I have made changes to my home without a permit and you record it in a photograph?**

BC Assessment has no information about actions that these jurisdictions may take, but please be assured that the image in the photograph is taken from the public street. If the changes to your home are visible from the street, the district may already be aware of them. If the changes are not visible from the street, then the photograph will not show the changes.