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Municipal Progress Reporting: Accountability for Modern Local Government

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Abstract: Municipal performance reporting is a relatively new field that has emerged in the past decade as municipalities face increasing demands to be more transparent and deliver more and better services.

The *Community Charter* came into effect on January 1, 2004, establishing the foundation for a new legislative framework for BC municipalities. The broad capacities of municipalities are balanced by measures to encourage appropriate mechanisms for citizen participation and ultimately public accountability. Under the *Community Charter*, municipal councils are required to prepare an annual progress report to their citizens outlining their community objectives, measures and accomplishments. BC's progress reporting requirements promote a strategic approach to municipal planning and decision-making, and encourage democratic accountability through open and transparent local governance.

BC has adopted a unique strategy of municipal performance reporting that is distinct from other jurisdictions. The *Community Charter* progress reporting requirements are unique in that the legislation does not establish how municipal objectives are to be developed or how the attainment of those objectives must be measured and reported on. Progress reporting allows for a great deal of municipal discretion on objective setting, so that municipal councils can focus on meeting the needs of their individual communities.

At the implementation level, the province of BC took a collaborative approach. The province has succeeded in engaging with its local government partners, the Union of BC Municipalities and the Local Government Management Association, early on in the process in order to facilitate the implementation of progress reporting. Early implementation has mainly focused on providing targeted support and engaging in capacity-building for local governments.

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