

**ADDRESS OF THE MINISTER OF STATE
FOR COMMUNITY CHARTER
TO THE 2002 ANNUAL CONVENTION
HONOURABLE TED NEBBELING**

Good morning. First of all of course, welcome to my hometown. I have been really overwhelmed by the comments that I have received from so many of you about this place. I can hardly walk ten feet without one of the UBCM members stopping and saying; "Wow Ted, what a place, I had no idea. This is fantastic." Then the following question is: "How did you guys do this?" That's what I want to talk about. I want to use Whistler as an example of what a community, a small community with the Charter, what we called at the time, the Resort Municipality of Whistler Act, but it was a Charter. What a small community of 250 people who had employment four months of the year and the other times they were on UI, can do if they dare to dream.

When I came here in 1976 on a holiday, I lived in Austria; I came here, as I had always been a lover of the mountains. I heard about this place called Whistler and what they wanted to do and I said I'm going to have a look there. That was my intention, just to have a look. I arrived here, I hiked up to mid-station on the Creek Side with my partner and I said, "Isn't this an unbelievable place?" Wouldn't it be something to be part of what these people are talking about?" We went back to Austria, we arrived Sunday morning, Sunday afternoon I sent a telex to my employer in South Carolina and then on Monday I went to the Canadian Embassy to apply for landed immigrant status. So, I did burn my bridge before I actually took the next step. I always advise people not to burn any bridges until you know you are on the other side. However, I was so convinced I was going to be here, so in 1977, I arrived and became part of that dream. The only reason that I think today, twenty years later, because it really didn't start to develop until 1980, the only reason it happened is that Whistler under the Resort Municipality Act was given the tools to do things that in other communities could not happen. It was at that time, when I became a local elected official that many colleagues in local government were telling me, Ted you guys get all these breaks and why don't we get it?

The concept of a Charter for local government has always been at the forefront of my mind. I know from experience that this community knows from experience, where people dare to think, here is an opportunity to benefit not only our community, it will benefit the corridor, it will benefit the province, it can happen, given the tools. Some of the tools we have are the tools that are incorporated in our Community Charter. The hurdles that local governments have to overcome when they deal with major development projects, the red tape we face, the over regulation that we face, the duplication that we face. We got rid of this in Whistler. We sat down with the provincial government and we said okay, this is what we want to do. We looked at the landmass. And this landmass, by the way, was owned by the provincial government, the village today. Where the hotel is, where we have many of our meetings was actually the sanitary landfill of Whistler. In the winter it was the milling area where the snow bus came to take skiers back to the Creek Side.

So, we got together with the provincial government and we agreed up front, once we start developing these are the criteria we will use, density, mixed uses and everything, landscape, financial participation by the players. So, when Whistler did the first call out of land available for development, developers knew that they didn't have to go through a whole series of red tape and over-regulated obstructions. Developers got into town, looked at the project, made a bid, bought the land and within a very short period of time could begin construction. This was a sure incentive for developers to get involved.

The other thing, of course, that we realized was that we needed something to promote our ideas. Something to tell the world what we're doing here. We created the Whistler Resort Association and the Whistler Resort Association was given the powers over the new buildings that were built here in the Village. The businesses bring the Resort Association millions of dollars in tax revenue that is used for promotion. Having a Charter made all the difference to build what we have here today.

Why am I telling you this? When I travel the province and I do it a lot, as you know in my job, and I get to certain areas. When I am in the Kootenays I look at it and I think man this looks like Switzerland, only bigger and you have much better snow. What an opportunity because this is what the Europeans are looking for, this is what the Asians are looking for, so why should communities like Fernie, like Panorama, like Kicking Horse the new development there; why should they not have the opportunities to develop to their full potential? Why should we not have new Whistlers created, if indeed this is what some of these communities want? I know when they talk about their development, they talk about what Whistler has done and what they think they can do to re-create that. So, the Community Charter is actually a tool for local governments, small ones in the rural areas and the urban areas to tap into new opportunities that were not there in the past. That's why I'm such a strong believer in the Charter. I keep emphasizing, let's focus on the positive elements that can come of this government's action. So that is some of the background, some of the reasons why I'm so committed to bring this Charter to British Columbia.

Now, as you know, on May 28th we introduced the draft and the draft was widely distributed and I asked for comments, input. June came and went by, July came and went by and only towards the end of August did I begin to get some feedback and then in September, it was a massive amount of submissions. From local governments, from the business sector, from all sectors and all stakeholders. So here we are with about 1,000 submissions and I went to the Premier and said what am I going to do? There is no way to create a Bill and at the same time take real consideration of what these submissions represent. So, I asked him, can we delay this and he agreed. He said the opposite of not taking notice of what is put in the submissions is unacceptable. So that is what we decided two weeks ago, to delay the introduction of the Bill until March. It will give us, as a government, the opportunity and the staff the opportunity to go through the submissions, find some common lines in there where people have either concerns or see great opportunities. At the end of the day, these ideas have to be incorporated into the Bill that we will be delivering in the spring session of 2003.

So, we have the opportunity that hasn't existed for 151 years. We have lived with rules that were created 151 years ago and today in the year 2002 I really think we really have to tap into the new opportunities. I hope that when you get your Charter and when you look at your areas that you see the opportunities.

I'm always pleased when Bill Belsey from Prince Rupert, every caucus meeting stands up and talks about Prince Rupert and the whole area there and the opportunities that Prince Rupert has. This guy is so tenacious, I don't know if it's his red hair but he is tenacious. Guess what, because of his tenaciousness, he got funding for a cruise ship terminal, he got funding for a container terminal that will make access from the Asian countries to British Columbia thirty-six hours shorter. It is the MLA's that drive much of representing your ideas, and I'm asking you today with the Charter, to start dreaming. Don't sit back and wait for things to happen. You are going to have the tools that will give you the opportunity to do things that we have done here in Whistler. Maybe not to the same size, but certainly opportunities that today may now be considered.

When I'm in the Kootenays, I'm going to promote with Bill Bennett and Wendy Mahon the Kootenays to be opened up so that the Europeans can fly directly to the Kootenays and ski that incredible powder snow that we don't have in this part of British Columbia. Europeans love powder. That is my message. Whistler had to create a tool to promote through WRA. I think we are in the very fortunate position because of the potential linkage to highlight all these parts of the province where opportunities are galore and use the Olympics as that tool. Use the next eight years tied to the Olympics to showcase British Columbia and its opportunities because the press will be here, the global press will be mesmerized by this province because of the opportunities. The Charter is a way for local governments to work themselves into that opportunity, a new way of thinking.

I really appreciate that I can not only welcome you to my hometown but I can also appreciate the opportunity to show what we have done with the Charter and what I believe many other communities can do with it.

Thank you for being here and I hope this UBCM is one of the very best you remember.