

UBCM DAILY

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA MUNICIPALITIES
CONVENTION 2002
DAILY UPDATES



WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- 7:00 a.m. Forest Policy Update: Minister deJong
- 7:30 a.m. Clinics
- 8:30 a.m. Convention Opening and Annual Meeting
- 9:20 a.m. Resolutions
- 10:45 a.m. Address by FCM President
- 11:00 a.m. - BC Communities Agenda 2002
- Community Charter policy paper
- Consideration of Resolutions
- 2:00 p.m. Address by the Minister of CAWS, Hon. George Abbott
- 3:00-5:00 p.m. **Cabinet Session: A Panel with Ministers of ...**
 - Health and Social Development
 - Resources
 - Business and the Economy
 - Community and Safety

DAILY #1

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2002

Affordable housing priority with Minister

The Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, **George Abbott**, acknowledged that he is an old hand when it comes to attending UBCM conventions, having begun his political career as a local government representative over twenty years ago. He also recognized, in his address to Tuesday's Large Urban Communities, that he has a new appreciation of local government's challenges in balancing their yearly budgets with the difficult decisions he has been forced to make in his Ministry with the provincial government's mandate to balance their own budget. He commented that the upcoming Community Charter would enhance the authority of local government and provide new tools for dealing with local challenges.

He then spoke about the Canada-BC affordable housing agreement which he signed last December which brings \$90 million of federal money into BC housing programmes over the next five years. He commented that he felt the number one challenge in some localities will be in providing affordable housing. His ministry has been given \$134 million in the current budget towards housing, which will be used in partnership with the federal government, non-profit organizations, and the private sector to maximize the impact of the funding. He noted that there are presently 10,000 applications on the BC housing waiting list and as well as working on social housing there should be a focus on getting businesses excited about producing more market rental housing. Access information on the \$90 million available can be found at BC Housing website.



CAWS Minister George Abbott and Attorney General Geoff Plant address the Municipal Insurance Association annual general meeting Tuesday afternoon.

Police cost options considered

Rich Coleman, Solicitor General, addressed the Monday afternoon clinic on policing costs and stated that in pursuing a five-year strategy for policing costs, he was asking the UBCM membership to "be bold, be innovative," and to "give me every good idea you've got." "We're in this together, to build a long-term strategy for the future of policing in BC," he added.

The session was asked to consider the options provided in the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General discussion paper "Restructuring Police Financing in Municipalities under 5,000 Population and Unincorporated Areas," which was released this month. The paper outlines two options for funding police costs: 1) levying a new provincial "police services tax" on property in municipalities under 5,000 and the rural areas, and 2) using a regional district model to allocate costs and raise required revenues. Under Option 1, a levy itemized separately on property tax notices would be collected. This levy would be based on assessed property values and, on residential properties, would reflect a \$44 to \$126 impact, or a 5% to 8% increase on residential taxes. Under Option 2, the regional district would raise revenues by allocating costs to their municipalities under 5,000 population and rural

EXHIBITS OPEN IN 'CANVAS BALLROOM' 7:00 am to 5:00 pm

areas and would be reflected by a \$42 to \$153 increase on residential property taxes or a 4% to 12% increase. Under this second option, the regional districts would have the ability to increase the level of policing received provided they were prepared to pay the additional associated costs.

Inspector **Mike Morris**, of the RCMP's Peace River Detachment and Mayor **Lenore Harwood** of Hudson's Hope, outlined the northeast model in which stakeholders in the Peace River Regional District and the Northern Rockies Regional District have developed a regional policing strategy which integrates existing detachments in the regional districts and attempts to increase local input into police services. This model will reduce administrative time and costs and will translate into a 10% to 15% increase in community offices as the integration will free more officers from paperwork and put them back out into the communities.

Both the Solicitor General and Inspector Mike Morris of the RCMP argued that there is a need to regionalize thinking about policing and to break down jurisdictional boundaries. Coleman commented that crime does not respect local government boundaries and more integration and sharing of resources and information is needed. To further this objective, the Province will be funding BC Prime, a cross-referencing

continued (over)

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Local programs foster healthy communities

Rather than focusing on the shortfalls in current levels of funding for health care in local communities, the Monday morning clinic on health and local government concentrated on issues that are pivotal to fostering a healthier community that would consequently require less critical care health funding. The first speaker, Dr. **Perry Kendall**, Provincial Health Officer, Ministry of Health Planning, commented that cancer, cardiovascular disease, mental disorders, and unintentional injuries, which comprise 60% of the disabling diseases, were health issues affected by lifestyle choices. 95% of health care dollars is being spent on the physiological and pathophysiological affects of disease and very little is directed to primary prevention measures, which include, for example, income, education, social support networks, obesity, smoking and physical inactivity. He also showed that, historically, the paramount role in addressing the safety and health of the population has been played by local government.

A number of presenters all contributed information on a variety of initiatives that were being undertaken in their communities which were positively impacting the present and future health outlooks of their population. Dr. **Eugene Krupa**, Health Promotion/Prevention Specialist, Interior Health Authority, outlined the creation and organization of CATCH, Community Action Toward Children's Health, which is a coalition of interested parties and organizations united in a common mission of fostering the healthy development of young children. He stated that long-term research has shown that the early development of a child's brain, senses, body systems and communication abilities establishes future potential and that early experiences set children on a lifelong pathway which affects all aspects of life, including physical and mental health, learning, achievement, income, employment and relationships. It also influences chronic illness, likelihood of entry into crime and premature death. More information about CATCH can be found at their website: www.catch.silk.net.

Fran Cuthbert, from the Pemberton Area Healthy Community Initiative, outlined her organization's activities and spoke of the growing awareness within communities that there should be community ownership of health issues. **Don Hunter**, General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture, City of Surrey, then outlined Surrey's Active City Initiative which as well as promoting higher sustainable activity levels for adults and children, addresses issues of access, safe indoor and outdoor facilities, and partnership funding opportunities. ■

It's another BIG one!!!

UBCM is a big week – lots of events and lots of participants. So far, those registered include:

- 719 voting delegates
 - 158 non-voting delegates
 - 467 government officials and observers
 - 387 partners and guests.
- 1,731 total attendance as of Tues.

Community initiatives create safer environments

Just as the Monday morning clinic on health issues highlighted communities who have recognized the need to take ownership of their community's health, the Tuesday morning clinic on Safer Community Strategy Program featured the Cowichan Valley Safer Futures Program which was created to address the safety of women and children in the Valley and deals with educational issues, public awareness, early intervention, prevention, crisis intervention, and governmental support and services.

Val Johnson, Senior Policy Analyst, Women's Policy Branch, Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Woman's Services, was the first presenter and commented that, although the focus is on making communities safer for women and children, when that is accomplished, the community is safer for everyone. She stressed that it is the collective responsibility of citizens to make their communities safe places. Statistically, women are the most vulnerable to crime; 51% of women over the age of 16 have been victims of either physical or sexual violence. Additionally, women do not feel safe in their communities; 42% of women feel unsafe walking alone after dark, and 37% worry about being home alone at night. There are fears surrounding public transportation and accessing parking garages as well. There is also an economic impact; according to a 1996 survey, the cost of violence against women was \$385 million in BC during a twelve month period.

Terri Dame and Jennifer Kyffin of the Cowichan Valley Safer Futures outlined the consultation process which has been undertaken in partnership with the Cowichan Valley Regional District Community Safety Advisory Committee which brings residents, businesses, schools, local government and other stakeholders together to identify issues related to safety, accessibility and quality of life. The process includes community surveys, interviews and meetings which ascertain local concerns, safety audit walks which involve members of the community in identifying safety and accessibility factors and community events that bring everyone together for education and dialogue. Once this is done the process then goes on to form recommendations, action plans and safety strategies and to develop working committees. ■

POLICE – continued from page 1

system for tracking crimes in "real time" on a provincial basis.

Delegates then had an opportunity for discussion of the options presented and were asked to fill in a workbook. Preliminary analysis of the workbooks shows that the majority of delegates did not support either option. Reasons cited included a lack of information on true costs and a reluctance to see property taxation as the basis for generating policing revenues. ■

Better financial tools needed for Canadian cities

Derek Burleton, Senior Economist with the Toronto Dominion Bank Financial Group spoke to the Urban Forum on Tuesday morning and outlined the economic challenges facing Canadian cities as identified in the report published by the Toronto Dominion Bank last April. This report, "A Choice Between Investing in Canada's Cities or Disinvesting in Canada's Future," looked at the financial tools local governments will need in the future. Although Canadian cities presently rank among the world's best as to quality of life, they are beginning to show signs of economic strain. While the share of population in urban areas grows as younger people, immigrants and new job opportunities cluster in larger population centers, revenues available to cities to maintain infrastructures and provide services are lagging behind. Social housing, water systems, sewers, roads and public transit systems all require re-investment, but cash-strapped municipalities are in no position to deliver.

The fiscal challenges facing cities are twofold. First, they must close the large infrastructure gap that has opened up in recent years, as federal and provincial governments downloaded responsibilities, without granting cities a parallel increase in their revenue-raising capabilities. Secondly, cities must secure access to stable and reliable revenue sources to fund their ongoing activities. Between 1995 and 2001, local government revenues edged up by 14%, whereas federal revenue levels gained by 39% and provincial levels gained by 30%. Federal and provincial taxes are based on consumption and income taxes, bases which grow over time, whereas local governments' tax base is property value which doesn't have the same growth factor. In a comparison with United States cities, U.S. cities are helped by access to more revenue sources. A significantly higher percentage of revenue comes to U.S. cities through user fees and other sources of income, including sales tax.

Copies of the Toronto Dominion's report are available at the Information Desk. ■

Workshop Update

The Thursday afternoon 3:15 pm workshop on Collaborative Governance will explore models of intergovernmental collaboration including inter-municipal agreements and local agreements with the federal government, provincial government and first nations. Participants in Thursday afternoon's workshop include Mayor **Barbara Sharpe**, City of North Vancouver, Mayor **Steve Wallace**, City of Quesnel, Councillor **Nichola Wade**, District of Saanich, Mayor **Colin Kinsley**, City of Prince George, the Honourable **Greg Halsey-Brandt**, Minister of State for Intergovernmental Relations, Councillor **Pat Wallace**, City of Kamloops, and other invited speakers. ■