

BC COMMUNITIES AGENDA 2008 UBCM PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES

The collective efforts of UBCM members have built the communities British Columbians call home. They have changed for the better the social fabric of this great province and through their advocacy beneficial change will continue. Since 1905 that advocacy on common issues has been promoted through the Union of BC Municipalities.

While communities have unique character and visions, they also share common goals and objectives. The BC Communities Agenda identifies those common interests and defines how to create and govern livable, viable and sustainable communities.

The 2008 BC Communities Agenda is in two parts¹:

- a) Community building means communities that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable; that are safe and secure, connected and healthy.*
- b) Governing communities means communities that are financially sustainable, have respectful local-provincial government relationships and where there is a fair balancing of community interests.*

Sustainability is the goal and provincial and federal governments have a key role in activities in and around communities. Therefore, the 2008 BC Communities Agenda also identifies specific actions on a provincial and federal scale that are needed for communities to reach their full potential.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

1. Economically Sustainable Communities

The economic sustainability of BC is dependent on the strength, vitality and resiliency of our communities. To ensure that our communities are strong and vibrant economically there are a variety of policy initiatives that would support this goal including:

- establishing policies and programs that support community economic diversification through the promotion of tourism, arts and culture as well as the value-added and secondary manufacturing sectors.

¹ From time to time, part of the policy portion of the UBCM Convention is devoted to updating and expanding the BC Communities Agenda. These priorities are largely based on UBCM policy positions endorsed through previous policy papers or Convention resolutions.

- ensuring that all areas of the province have land resource management plans in place that are current, and reflective, of the regions goals and objectives.
- working with communities to develop transition plans and long term economic development strategies in response to the changing resource sector (i.e. pine beetle, fisheries)
- establishing a provincial resource revenue sharing program that would financially acknowledge and compensate communities for the services and costs incurred to support the natural resource sector.
- supporting community involvement in local resource management and continue to provide opportunities for promoting local government-First Nations partnerships in resource management.
- ensuring that communities are adequately consulted on any inter-provincial, national or international trade agreements that will be applied to, or have implications for local governments.
- supporting continued consultations with the MOU local government working group on offshore oil and gas development.
- ensuring that communities are consulted early, and ongoing, throughout the permitting and licensing processes for independent power projects (i.e. wind, tidal, run of river).
- supporting communities that wish to pursue energy conservation and efficiency initiatives as well as work toward developing alternative, green energy opportunities.

2. Socially Sustainable Communities

Diversity, accessibility and respect are key community social goals. Initiatives that would assist local governments in achieving these goals include:

- supporting the development of a new partnership model to implement affordable housing and homelessness initiatives.
- supporting the development of age-friendly communities and the ability of BC seniors to age in place.
- encouraging partnerships and agreements that result in effective working relationships between local governments and social service organizations, business, labour and First Nations.
- ensuring that adequate funding is provided so that all areas of the province have access to high quality education opportunities as well as worker re-training programs.
- working with other orders of government to ensure that quality, universal, accessible and affordable day care is available.
- supporting the construction, maintenance and operation of recreation, leisure and cultural facilities that offer unique and valuable programs to communities.
- supporting programs that assist new immigrants integrate into Canadian society.

- promoting best practices and success stories that will benefit all communities.

3. Environmentally Sustainable Communities

Local governments require resources, tools, and collaboration with a range of agencies in order to effectively foster the development of environmentally sustainable communities. Initiatives that would support this goal include:

- supporting timely and proper remediation of contaminated sites as well as the redevelopment of brownfield sites within communities.
- developing fully industry funded product stewardship programs that maximize waste diversion from local landfills.
- protecting the quality and quantity of community water supplies, including both surface and groundwater.
- ensuring the effective management of onsite water systems to protect public and environmental health and address longstanding local government concerns
- supporting local government climate change initiatives, including the provision of tools and resources to assist in the reduction of corporate and community wide greenhouse gas emissions.
- ensuring that environmental regulations and standards are developed in consultation with communities to avoid future implementation problems.

4. Safe and Secure Communities

Feeling safe and secure is a key value that defines a community. Community safety is a shared responsibility. Local governments are doing their part but they need assistance from both provincial and federal governments.

Initiatives that would support this goal include:

- supporting the development and implementation of crime prevention plans in local communities.
- ensuring funding and assistance is provided to expand restorative justice programs to communities across the province.
- supporting the expansion of the prolific offender program across the province.
- ensuring that local government services provided to the federal and provincial justice system (i.e. keep of prisoners) are fairly compensated.
- supporting the expansion of the community court model to communities across the province.
- supporting the negotiations related to a new RCMP contract, which addresses the financial concerns and accountability issues identified by local government.
- ensuring adequate funding and assistance is provided to address flood hazard management issues in local communities.

5. Connected Communities

BC geography dictates access between communities by road, rail, air, water and more recently via telecommunications. The infrastructure that facilitates accessibility within, and between, communities is a key element. Our immediate priorities are:

- ensuring that adequate funding is allocated for public transportation and consideration be given to implementing initiatives such as a federal tax exemption for employer-funded transit benefits.
- ensuring that provincial highways are safe and reliable and maintained to a standard that reflects the needs of the traveling public.
- ensuring that all ferry systems are deemed to be an extension of the provincial highways systems and should be funded, administered and managed as such.
- recognizing and supporting regional airports as a key component of the broader transportation network.
- ensuring that all communities have access to a basic level of telecommunications including province-wide internet services and cellular coverage.

6. Healthy Communities

Health care facilities and services that are accessible, available and accountable, as well as effective health promotion programs are essential for a healthy community. Our immediate priorities are:

- ensuring that adequate health care facilities and services are available and accessible to all citizens especially those in more rural, remote and northern communities.
- supporting local governments working in partnership with provincial and federal governments to address urgent challenges such as nursing shortages, recruitment of (foreign-trained) doctors and specialists as well as other health care professionals.
- supporting fuller integration between community and individual health and other sustainability objectives of local governments.
- maintaining effective communication, coordination and collaboration between Regional Hospital Districts and Health Authorities.
- working with other orders of government to ensure that health-related legislation reflects local government positions and needs.
- supporting disease prevention and community health promotion programs, including those that foster community food security, access to healthy foods and beverages and compact, sustainable, and healthy built environments that promote active transportation opportunities.

GOVERNING COMMUNITIES

7. Financially Sustainable Communities

Communities are where we live, work and congregate. Communities need a reliable revenue source and in BC we need to ensure that communities have a secure and viable financial base. Initiatives that would support this goal include:

- achieving fiscal balance that will ensure that communities have access to a predictable, stable and secure source of revenues that will allow them to provide essential services.
- establishing a permanent federal-provincial-local government infrastructure funding program.
- ensuring that no downloading of provincial responsibilities occurs without appropriate funding (as set out in the *Community Charter*)
- addressing local government needs with respect to financing costs associated with new development.
- implementing the 2008 federal budget commitment to establish the federal gas tax transfer program as a permanent, predictable source of funding for local governments.
- ensuring that existing grant programs are relevant to the responsibilities and priorities of local governments.
- creating opportunities for local governments to benefit from synergies between and leveraging of grants, programs and other resources.
- supporting initiatives to build capacity within local governments, in recognition of their expanding and increasing complex role.
- requiring that all Crown corporations pay the full equivalent of property taxes to all local governments.

8. Respectful Governance Relationships

Achieving intergovernmental relationships that are founded on respect between local governments and provincial, federal and First Nations governments is a goal shared by all BC communities. Initiatives that would support this goal include:

- maintaining a legislative framework that reflects local government as an independent, responsible and accountable order of government across all statutes.
- supporting initiatives that promote effective working relationships between First Nations and local governments in both treaty negotiations and New Relationship activities.
- respecting and adhering to local government bylaws.
- ensuring adequate notice and consultation occurs between local governments and other orders of government when new, or changes to,

- policies, programs, legislation and regulation are being considered that will impact communities.
- recognizing that a respectful government relationship also applies between local governments.
 - ensuring that any decisions related to governance restructuring require the inclusion of all affected local governments.
 - recognizing that all communities are unique and must have the ability to meet the needs of their citizens within the bounds of local capacity and resources.
 - supporting an exemption for local governments from the provisions of the National Do Not Call list.

9. Fair Balancing of Community Interests

A community emerges when individuals agree to form a united entity and set aside some individual interests for the greater good of all. When there are conflicts, the entire community's rights and responsibilities should be clearly defined. Initiatives that support the fair balancing of community interests include:

- recognizing that local governments are responsible and accountable for their actions but should not be responsible for the actions of others (i.e. building regulation liability)
- balancing community interests in New Relationship agreements with First Nations can be achieved by supporting local government participation in these negotiations.