UBCM Submission on Canada’s Revised Draft Policy on Additions to Reserve / Reserve Creation

A. Executive Summary

The Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) represents 100% of the local governments in British Columbia, as well as six post-treaty First Nations members, and has advocated for policy and programs that support its membership’s needs since 1905. Our members have a strong interest in the proposed changes to the federal Policy on Additions to Reserve/Reserve Creation (ATR Policy). BC local governments have demonstrated an ongoing commitment to working with First Nations neighbours to the mutual benefit of their communities. The UBCM membership has endorsed resolutions indicating support for First Nations prosperity and economic development. UBCM has also emphasized the need for consultation and engagement when lands are proposed to be added to reserve. This submission outlines areas within the draft 2013 ATR policy that warrant further consideration and consultation with local government and other stakeholders.

B. Submission

Thank you for providing the opportunity to submit feedback on the draft federal policy on Additions to Reserve/Reserve Creation. We have reviewed the draft policy and associated materials, and have solicited direct feedback from our membership. The comments provided below are reflective of UBCM policy, member input, and internal analysis.

For your further consideration, we have attached copies of the member feedback we received. We would note that in the case of some regional district submissions, feedback has also been solicited from individual regional district members, including municipalities, electoral areas, and First Nations.

UBCM recognizes that with an increased focus on providing opportunities for First Nations’ economic development, there is likely to be an increase in ATR proposals as well. As such, it is more vital than ever that local government perspectives are considered during the policy revision process, to ensure fair, smooth implementation once the policy is finalized.

C. Background

The UBCM Executive Board is comprised of 21 elected officials from all regions of the province, who represent diverse communities of all sizes, from the rural areas to the urban centers. We have a number of issue-specific committees including the First Nations Relations Committee, and Community Economic Development Committee. The First Nations Relations Committee oversees all policy development work related to Aboriginal issues, including treaty negotiations, self-government and taxation. The Committee’s key role is to focus on relationship building between First Nation and local governments through best practices, initiatives and
programs. The Committee has a direct role in compiling member feedback on the 2013 draft ATR policy, and overseeing this submission.

UBCM members have expressed support for First Nations as they endeavour to increase economic development activities in their communities. Local governments recognize the potential for positive outcomes of economic endeavours for both parties, and understand the need to increase socio-economic supports in First Nations communities. Additionally, we recognize the complex cultural and social backdrop, and serious historic wrongs that Aboriginal peoples in Canada have endured, and the lasting legacy of these actions. As such, UBCM understands the real and substantial need for the federal government to support First Nations growth and development in an expedient, straightforward manner.

Relationship building between local governments and First Nations is vital to our communities, and is highly valued by local governments across BC. There are a multitude of examples of BC local governments and First Nations working collaboratively on matters of mutual importance. Direct dialogue, and the strong relationships that it fosters, are hugely beneficial to our local communities.

The relationship that has been established between local governments and the Province of BC, primarily through the Memorandum of Understanding on Local Government Participation in the New Relationship with First Nations is also key. The MOU recognizes that local government representatives are members and respected advisors on provincial treaty negotiation teams. It also recognizes that local government jurisdictions may be affected by the negotiation of land, resource and economic development agreements with First Nations, and accepts that local government constitutes a unique and special interest in the negotiation of a range of agreements with First Nations including modern treaties and non-treaty land, resource and economic development arrangements. This understanding and respect for local governments as key partners, provides a strong foundation for discussions, and fosters open and frequent information sharing between all parties. This focus on collaboration is also apparent in the Province of BC’s submission regarding the revised ATR policy, which emphasizes local government’s role in developing the ATR policy for economic development purposes, and urges Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) to carefully consider the views of UBCM.

By comparison, the established relationship between UBCM and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada is less developed, and lacks a mechanism for ongoing dialogue and exchange. A MOU on Communication and Information Sharing between UBCM and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) was renewed four times, most recently in 2007, but has since lapsed. This agreement represented a commitment to improve communication and strengthen working relationships between INAC and UBCM, building on issues of common interest. Were there still an active MOU formalizing the federal commitment to these priorities, perhaps we would have a stronger ATR policy before us today.

Instead of acting in collaboration, UBCM has experienced delay and difficulty in having its voice heard by AANDC. An example of this is apparent in AANDC’s delayed response, and lack of commitment regarding the Regional Community-to-Community Forum program, a program administered jointly by UBCM and the First Nations Summit, and previously funded by contributions from the BC Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development, and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. The program provides opportunities for local governments and First Nations to come together to engage in meaningful conversations and collaborate on shared initiatives. The Province of BC continues to be committed to the program, but unfortunately the importance of these activities does not appear to be a federal priority, and consequently, the future of this highly successful program is
unclear. It is this type of dialogue between First Nations and local governments that sets a foundation for working together on complex issues, such as additions to reserve.

In order for local governments to fully support First Nations in their economic endeavours, the federal government must recognize local authorities as participants in processes that impact local jurisdiction, from the outset. By not engaging local governments until a late stage of policy development, the federal government risks indirectly damaging the First Nation-local government relationships. Establishing dispute resolution mechanisms has been raised as an avenue for expediting the Additions to Reserve process; however, it is possible that some disputes could be avoided altogether if all parties feel respected and engaged from early in the process.

This is the first time that our organization has been provided with a formal opportunity to provide feedback during the ATR review. As such, we hope that you will take the time to thoroughly consider the implications of the following policy areas, and how best to work together to the mutual benefits of all parties:

1. Local Government Consultation
2. Expediency and Clarity
3. Facilitation and Dispute Resolution
4. Non-contiguity and Jurisdiction
5. Service Agreements
6. Land Use Compatibility and Community Growth
7. Fiscal Implications
D. Policy Implications – Local Government Perspective

1. Local Government Consultation

UBCM has been monitoring the federal Additions to Reserve policy for over a decade, and has expressed interest in the current ATR review process several times. In October 2010, UBCM First Nations Relations Committee Chair, Councillor Murry Krause, wrote to then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, the Hon. John Duncan, requesting an update on the ongoing ATR review and an opportunity to provide input. Subsequent correspondence was sent to Minister Duncan in December 2011 to follow-up on the review’s progress, and in February 2013 to convey concerns and again request an opportunity for input. During the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples’ ATR review in March 2013, Councillor Krause wrote to Senator Vernon White, expressing disappointment and concern that local government had not been consulted, or asked to provide testimony, during the ATR review.

Upon later follow-up with AANDC staff, the UBCM First Nations Relations Committee was able to arrange for a teleconference with Mr. Kris Johnson, Senior Director, Lands and Modernization, AANDC, during their July 2013 meeting, and received an update on the ATR review. This update was provided less than two weeks before the draft policy was released for public comment.

Because UBCM members expressed a strong interest in the ATR policy review, we invited AANDC staff to participate in a pre-conference session at the UBCM Convention in September 2013, in order to provide an update prior to the original September 30 feedback deadline. The level of member concern expressed at the session underscored the need for much more substantial local government engagement on the revised ATR policy.

We appreciate AANDC providing an opportunity for public comment prior to ATR policy finalization, and extending the deadline to October 31. However it would have been prudent to provide those with direct involvement in ATR proposals with an opportunity for fulsome discussion and engagement much earlier in the review process. The lack of local government perspectives in this review speaks to an underlying issue in the draft policy itself—the absence of a clearly defined and recognized role for local authorities within the ATR process.

The UBCM membership has regularly called for an increased commitment by the federal and provincial orders of government to meaningful engagement and consultation with local government on matters that impact their programs, services and operations. The membership has also requested meaningful consultation when lands within local government jurisdictions are being transferred to First Nations.

Although the goal of streamlining and simplifying the ATR policy in order to expedite a lengthy and at times cumbersome process is a worthy undertaking, this streamlining must not be at the expense of thorough consultation with local government, and other impacted parties. The following are specific concerns related to local government engagement, as outlined in the draft 2013 ATR policy:

a. Language regarding Collaboration (Directive 10-1, 7[c])

The 2013 draft ATR policy states that “the views and interests of provincial, territorial and local governments will be considered, and collaboration between the First Nations and those governments will be encouraged on issues of mutual interest.
and concern”. This statement lacks strength and a requirement for action, and sets the tone for a relationship built upon notification rather than true consultation. There is no mention of addressing local government interests or concerns, nor is there a requirement that First Nations and other orders of government collaborate. The policy should be revised to strengthen and formalize local government’s role within the ATR process.

b. **Letter of Support Issuance** (Directive 10-2, 5.2)

According to the “Summary of the Proposed Revisions to the Policy on Additions to Reserve/Reserve Creation”, one of the stated objectives for revising the policy is to streamline the process through the earlier issuance of a letter of support, which establishes conditions required to complete the proposal. This letter of support will be considered once minimum requirements are met. However the minimum requirements do not require local government consultation, or even notification. This component may occur after the letter has been issued, and it is assumed that it would be included as a condition for proposal approval, based on Directive 10-1, Annex A, 9.0.

By comparison, Directive 10-1, Annex D, 5.0 of the 2001 ATR policy directed that “[t]he First Nation contact the province, municipality or other federal government departments/agencies as necessary and, where applicable, initiate discussions to resolve any areas of concern with respect to the proposal”, prior to the issuance of Approval in Principle (AIP).

It is disconcerting that AANDC would issue even conditional support to a proposal without prior local government consultation, and consideration of local government interests. It is recommended that the proposal minimums include not only indication of the proximity of the Proposed Reserve Land to a local government, but also written proof of the initiation of discussions with local governments in proximity.

The establishment of early, transparent communication between all parties from the outset of a proposal has the potential to lead to more open dialogue during negotiation of sensitive matters later in the process.
2. **Expediency and Clarity**

When taking efforts to streamline policy, special care should be taken to ensure that necessary previous components are still represented, and that a “one-size-fits-all” approach is not taken at the expense of a clear, thorough policy. Reducing the ATR policy length from 73 to 31 pages, condensing category criteria, and redrafting sections, has created vagueness in some areas that could counteract attempts to expedite the process, as areas of the policy are left to individual interpretation. The following are specific areas that require clarification in the 2013 draft ATR policy:


The 2001 ATR policy contained a three-month review period for local governments. The 2013 draft ATR policy does not. It has been indicated by AANDC staff that this is an unintentional omission that will be corrected going forward. This is appreciated, given the need for local governments to have a clarity regarding timelines for proposal assessment.

It would also be advantageous to the process if the review period made reference to local government reporting structures, processes and cycles, as present within applicable legislation. Local governments require adequate time to fulfill their fiduciary duty to their taxpayers, by thoroughly assessing issues of taxation, regional growth, and servicing, among others. Ensuring that ATR proponents are aware of these requirements may aid in establishing a greater understanding of factors that local governments are required to consider when assessing an ATR proposal.

b. **Definition of Local Government** (Directive 10-1, Annex C)

We recognize and appreciate the efforts made to replace references to “municipal considerations” and “municipality” with the more inclusive term, “local government”, throughout the 2013 draft ATR policy. To further clarify and represent the various local structures that are impacted by ATR proposals, we would encourage AANDC to consider Metro Vancouver’s recommendation that the definition for local government be amended to read: “‘Local Government’ means a city, town, village or other built-up area with municipal or regional authorities and includes a rural or urban municipality, or regional transportation authority, as defined in relevant provincial legislation.”

We recognize that the ATR policy is national in scope, and must apply to various local governance structures across Canada. However, regional districts in British Columbia are key participants in the ATR process, and as such, should be clearly recognized within the policy.

We would also note that within the “regional authorities” category are entities such as regional hospital districts and school districts, which are not otherwise recognized within the policy, but would be impacted by ATR proposals that involve large-scale residential development on First Nations land. Consideration should be given to recognizing these local authorities within the policy in order to ensure consultation and engagement, and service capacity.
3. Facilitation and Dispute Resolution

The ATR process is built upon a "good neighbour" approach to negotiating agreements, which is the preferred approach to any kind of discussion or negotiation between adjacent communities. However in this specific instance, positive relationships and efforts to promote constructive dialogue can be strained by the understanding that financial and other implications may result from the transfer of lands out of local government jurisdiction. In some cases, a local government may wish to support First Nations economic aspirations, but may not feel that the ATR proposal is in the best interest of its community members. These issues are compounded by the fact that negotiating parties are functioning within a complex multi-jurisdictional realm, with concurrent spheres of authority.

With these complex dynamics in mind, facilitative support and thorough dispute resolution mechanisms are crucial to improving the current ATR process. The following are specific concerns regarding AANDC’s role in negotiations, and dispute resolution mechanisms, within the 2013 draft ATR policy:

a. Facilitative and Technical Assistance (Directive 10-1, Annex A, 9[j])

AANDC will now provide a facilitative role to assist in negotiations where requested by a First Nation, and subject to resource constraints. This is in addition to the technical assistance offered in the 2001 ATR policy.

Having AANDC assistance in negotiations at either a technical or facilitative level may be of use during negotiations. However, having this assistance available only to the First Nation proponent is problematic. Although the policy stipulates that the First Nation is responsible for negotiation of agreements, there are two equal parties at the negotiation table, either of which may require support or clarification from AANDC. As such, it is recommended that the clause be amended to read “[w]here requested by the First Nation or local government, AANDC may provide facilitative or technical assistance in support of negotiations.”

b. Dispute Resolution

In its report, Additions to Reserve: Expediting the Process, the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples recommends the development of an action plan that includes legislative or policy options relating to “support mechanisms, including dispute resolution assistance, to First Nations in their negotiations with municipalities and third parties”. In its response to the report, the Government states that it will “better support productive negotiations between First Nations and local governments and/or third parties through improved guidelines, tools, and resources under the ATR policy and access to negotiating expertise through the National Aboriginal Land Managers Association”.

Ultimately the only way of resolving outstanding disputes within the 2013 draft ATR policy is via a unilateral decision by the Regional Director General, based on his determination of whether the parties are negotiating in good faith. Local government consent is not required for ATR proposals. Good faith negotiating may be difficult if a local government does not feel that an ATR proposal is in the best interest of its taxpayers, and there is no established mechanism for resolving the specific issues of concern. Given the recognized importance of dispute resolution to ATR expediency
and success, specific dispute resolution measures must be outlined within the policy. The guide *Communities in Cooperation: A Guide to Alternative Dispute Resolution for First Nations & Local Governments in British Columbia*, outlines a thorough dispute resolution mechanism that may be of use in drafting dispute resolution principles within the policy. The dispute resolution chapters of recent treaty final agreements also provide an example of a clearly outlined dispute resolution process.

Again, the utilization and development of tools and guidelines outside of the policy may be a beneficial additional resource, but are not a substitute for specific measures within the policy.

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4. Non-contiguity and Jurisdiction

In general, local governments wish to ensure that lands added to reserve not result in a patchwork of jurisdictions within a small geographical area. For this reason, UBCM supports selection of contiguous parcels of land rather than dispersed and unconnected lands, in order to preserve jurisdictional clarity and uniformity, and allow for the efficient use of public facilities and services. The following are specific items of concern regarding non-contiguity, within the 2013 draft ATR policy:

Selection Area (Directive 10-1, 9.0)

In reference to 2013 draft ATR policy Directive 10-1, 9.0, the “Summary of the Proposed Revisions to the Policy on Additions to Reserve/Reserve Creation” states:

The proposed 2013 policy allows the selection area to be outside of the First Nation’s treaty or traditional territory, provided that it is within the province or territory where the majority of the First Nation’s existing Reserve land is located. This will improve First Nations’ access to lands that have high economic development potential, such as lands close to highways and urban centres.

The policy stipulates that Proposed Reserve Lands should normally be located within a First Nation’s treaty or traditional territory, but that they may also access lands that are not adjacent to existing reserves, and that are outside of their traditional territories. UBCM members have expressed serious concern regarding this shift in policy. Some of the concern is due to the substantial expansion of the potential applicant base, and the potential increase in ATR proposals, resulting in unpredictability and uncertainty.

This change could lead to a significant increase in ATR proposals in some regions of the province, and result in the removal of lands from local jurisdiction, directly impacting local residents. The issue of potential “satellite reserves” is of particular concern in urban areas, where land has high economic development potential, and is likely to be targeted. The relaxing of the land selection criteria in the 2013 draft ATR policy creates an environment wherein First Nations from across the province may be competing for prime parcels of land within an urban centre for economic development purposes. The resulting patchwork of jurisdictions may make land use compatibility, bylaw harmonization and servicing irreconcilably complex.

The 2013 draft ATR policy’s approach to non-contiguous lands is of serious concern to local governments, and requires reconsideration by the federal government to ensure that the policy does not adversely impact local governments, or First Nation-local government working relationships, in the long-term.

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5. Service Agreements

One of the primary interests and functions of local government local service delivery, including: sewer, water, parks, recreation, waste management, library services, protective and emergency services, and more. Local government is also responsible for setting acceptable standards for servicing, and planning for future service and infrastructure development requirements. The following are specific items of concern regarding servicing within the 2013 draft ATR policy:

a. Service Agreements and the Regulatory Gap

The existing jurisdictional and legislative barriers to servicing non-treaty First Nation’s lands directly impact service provision for non-contiguous reserve lands. UBCM policy recognizes that local governments have in good faith developed service agreements with First Nations to facilitate economic development on reserve lands, despite the fact that:

• reserve lands are exclusively federal lands and jurisdiction, outside of local government regulatory and taxation authority, and yet reserve lands are included within local government boundaries;
• there is an inability for local governments to regulate utility services on reserve lands;
• and without effective regulatory tools, local governments are exposed to financial, environmental and public health liability if a problem arises with a local government service provided to reserve lands.

UBCM has called on the provincial and federal governments to work with the organization and First Nations to close the regulatory gap that presently exists regarding the establishment of service agreements between local governments and First Nations, and provide local governments with effective legislative tools to protect themselves and reduce their exposure to financial, environmental and public health liability.3

The 2013 draft ATR policy recognizes that it may be necessary to address provision of services, bylaw compatibility, consultation and dispute resolution process for matters of mutual concern, or potential net tax loss adjustments through a formal agreement (Directive 10-1, Annex 1, 9[g]). While we recognize that the ATR policy is not in and of itself a mechanism for addressing the complex issues associated with the current regulatory gap, it is an example of how this issue impacts day-to-day operations for both First Nations and local governments.

The Government Response to the report Additions to Reserve: Expediting the Process indicates that there is a willingness to consider legislative actions to further expedite additions to reserve. We would recommend that any and all legislative and non-legislative changes include provisions that would protect local governments and reduce their exposure to financial, environmental and public health liabilities.

b. **Servicing Capacity**

In addition to the potential liability issues raised above, local governments must consider whether infrastructure and service capacity is available, and could be provided without impacting service delivery for residents. Given that the policy has been relaxed in regards to contiguity, advance and ongoing local government consultation is especially crucial from the outset of ATR proposals to allow local governments to consider servicing capacity at an early stage.

c. **Timeframe for Service Agreement Completion**

AANDC should consider requiring agreement completion prior to proposal approval, where the First Nation and local government have determined that a service agreement is necessary, and possible. In this way, all parties can be sure that necessary service capacity is in place when it is required, that the service provider is being compensated from the outset of service provision, and that AANDC can provide facilitative assistance for negotiating agreements within the framework of the ATR process.
6. Land Use Compatibility and Community Growth

BC local governments have well-established planning processes and structures that often involve extensive community engagement. In the case of Official Community Plans and Regional Growth Strategies, these processes are entrenched in provincial legislation. The planning interests of local government relate to land use within, and adjacent to, local government boundaries. Local governments are interested that land uses on reserve lands are compatible or harmonized with those of the local government beside or around the reserve lands.4 The following are specific items of interest for local government regarding land use, within the 2013 draft ATR policy:

a. Land Use Planning

The 2001 ATR policy states that “[t]he First Nation should ensure a neighbouring municipality does not have competing land use plans for the land in question, prior to submitting its proposal to INAC. Otherwise, there could be delays afterwards as the First Nation/INAC seek this determination” (Directive 10-1, Annex B, 12.6). This requirement provides for early consideration and discussion regarding land use planning and harmonization.

The 2013 draft ATR policy states that “First Nations and Local Governments will discuss issues of mutual interest and concern (joint land use planning/bylaw harmonization, tax considerations, service provision or dispute resolution)” (Directive 10-1, Annex A, 9[b]). It also requires that where the Proposed Reserve Land is within or adjacent/abutting a local government, the First Nation notify the local government to provide them with the opportunity to assess any potential impact on their existing land use plans and service delivery (Directive 10-1, Annex A, 9[f]).

In our view, the broad requirements for discussion and notification are not adequate given the complexity of the issues listed. In addition, in the case of sub-clause 9(f), the onus is on the local government to consider whether the proposed land use is clear and consistent with long-term municipal and regional plans. Early, meaningful engagement that is outlined clearly within the policy should commit all parties to considering potential impacts of the ATR proposal on land use plans, and acting as needed to address these issues.

To this end, the federal government should consider amending Directive 10-2, 5.1.1(iii) of the 2013 draft ATR policy to require not only a description of the current and intended use of the Proposed Reserve Land, but also indication of whether the proposal is compatible with relevant local government land use and growth management policies. Including this provision, as well as written proof of the initiation of discussions with local governments (as requested in Item 1(b) above), would assist in recognizing the role of local government in the ATR process from the outset of a proposal.

In addition, UBCM has received member feedback requesting that consideration be given to ensuring that an impact study is undertaken when lands are being considered for reserve status, which indicates potential outcomes on surrounding local governments, such as community growth limitation. This would provide a formal structure for analyzing and reporting on the potential impacts of an ATR.

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4 Land Use Coordination, Servicing and Dispute Resolution: Towards Certainty for Local Government Through Treaty Negotiations (2000)
b. **Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) lands:**

Some UBCM members have expressed concern regarding the impact that the 2013 draft ATR policy could have on provincial Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) lands. It is unclear whether ALR status would be retained or could be removed through the ATR process. It would be appreciated if the federal government would clarify what impact, if any, the 2013 draft ATR policy will have on ALR lands.
7. *Fiscal Implications*

The strict budgetary process designated by the *Local Government Act* requires local governments to recover costs and balance their budgets (Section 815). As such, maintaining financial stability is of critical importance to local governments, in order that they continue to be able to provide the services expected by their residents, at a reasonable cost. Significant or unanticipated changes to any of their revenue sources may result in revenue shortfalls and tax increases, unless there is a corresponding decrease in expenditures.\(^5\) If lands are removed from the local government tax base, the loss of existing tax revenues for some local governments may be significant. The following are specific items of concern for local government regarding fiscal implications, within the 2013 draft ATR policy:

**Net Tax Loss Adjustment Guidelines**

The 2001 ATR policy included guidelines for the negotiation of reasonable compensation for local government tax loss (Directive 10-1, Annex A, 12.3). These guidelines are absent in the 2013 draft ATR policy.

It has been indicated by AANDC staff that these elements were removed from the proposed policy revision and will be expanded and developed in a separate guideline document. Creating external documents to outline best practices in negotiations may be a helpful additional tool, but is not an adequate replacement for detail and clarity within the policy itself.

The 2013 draft ATR policy does set some restrictions, such as stating that net tax loss adjustments are not intended to compensate indefinitely for the gross level of lost taxes, but does not stipulate precisely what formula or cost recovery mechanism is appropriate, or over what timeframe adjustment payments can be expected. There is a strong possibility that local governments will experience fiscal impacts and eventual revenue shortfalls. In the absence of the ability to negotiate indefinite compensation for tax loss, local government should be provided with a framework that outlines what they can anticipate, so that they may be better equipped to mitigate potential losses. To this end, clear provisions, within the policy, are needed.

It is difficult to thoroughly assess the draft policy and provide feedback, when guidelines and mechanisms that are intended to replace policy elements are not provided for concurrent consideration. Impacted parties should have the opportunity to provide input on all tools and documents that will be utilized within the proposed revised ATR process in advance, to ensure that their interests are represented.

\(^5\) *Local Government and Aboriginal Treaty Negotiations: Defining the Municipal Interest* (1994)
E. Next Steps and Concluding Remarks

It has been indicated that the input gathered during the public comment period will be used to finalize the new ATR policy. We sincerely hope that the items raised above will be thoroughly considered during this finalization, leading to a stronger, clearer policy that will benefit all involved parties. It is our view that further policy development is necessary, especially as it relates to local government consultation and engagement, dispute resolution, land selection and jurisdictional fragmentation, servicing, land use planning, and fiscal implications.

In addition to this submission, UBCM welcomes the opportunity to participate further in the advancement of the ATR policy, including development of standards and guidelines, and implementation. As stated previously, it is difficult to thoroughly assess the revised policy without all accompanying resources at our disposal. By continuing dialogue and sharing feedback during the development of these resources, we can look to improve implementation of the policy, on the ground. More work must be done, and we look forward to having the opportunity to work with First Nations and the federal government to ensure that the revised ATR policy is as strong and clear as it can be.

We would note that UBCM is currently pursuing a joint staff working group structure with the BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. Initial discussions on this matter have indicated a strong desire to engage AANDC staff as participants. We believe that establishing a formalized structure that meets regularly could open a line of communication that is vitally needed for issues of mutual importance, such as the Additions to Reserve policy. We look forward to discussing this possibility with the federal government further.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. Questions and comments regarding this submission can be directed to Angela Turner at aturner@ubcm.ca or at (604) 270- 8226 Ext. 117. We look forward to continued dialogue on the draft 2013 federal Policy on Additions to Reserve/Reserve Creation.