

BC COMMUNITIES AGENDA 2001 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 2001 BC Communities Agenda is in two parts¹:

- a) Community building means communities that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable; that are safe and secure, accessible 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.*

The BC Communities Agenda also identifies specific actions on a provincial scale that are needed for communities to reach their full potential.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

1. Economically Sustainable Communities

BC communities must have strong and vibrant economies.

Initiatives that would support this goal include:

- completing land and resource management plans that include a secure working forest for resource communities and the implementation of accepted forest certification programs.
- involving communities in the promotion of BC products; including wood and wood products.
- connecting BC communities to leading edge information technology.
- establishing a permanent infrastructure funding program.

¹ Footnote on policy development processes. Each year 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.

The 2001 policies and priorities were discussed and adopted at the January 2001 Executive meeting.

- providing residents with options that will enable them to stay in their communities (i.e. through diversification).
- increasing the number of community forest tenures.
- developing policies that will provide affordable, secure and reliable energy sources.
- developing policies that are supportive of arts, culture, heritage and tourism.

2. Socially Sustainable Communities

Diversity and respect are key community social values. We value communities where the local governments are committed to:

- providing for affordable housing.
- addressing the social problems associated with drug, alcohol and gambling addictions; and respecting local government input into provincial initiatives.
- strengthening a sense of community by fostering partnerships; such as working relationships through pursuit of MOUs between local governments, business, industry, labour, First Nations and environmental organizations.
- establishing networks to share success stories.

3. Environmentally Sustainable Communities

Initiatives that would support this goal include:

- legislation that protects the quantity and quality of drinking water, both surface and groundwater.
- support for the various elements included in the UBCM Environment Action Plan, such as solid and liquid waste, stormwater, product stewardship.
- supporting local governments' response to air quality and climate change.
- promoting community energy planning and conservation initiatives.

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:

- support for community-based policing and crime prevention.
- providing community-based justice alternatives through bylaw and drug courts.
- equitable and accountable financing of policing.

5. Accessible Communities

BC geography dictates access between communities by road, rail, air, and water. Access to these various modes of transportation is imperative to our sustainability. Accessibility within, and between, communities is a key element. Our immediate priorities are:

- secure support for public transportation including repatriation of a share of federal fuel tax, federal tax exemption for employer provided transit benefits and increased provincial contributions.
- recognition and support to regional airports as an integral part of the transportation system; including IFR systems.
- ensuring adequate federal funding is allocated for wharf and port divestiture.
- ensuring all communities have access to a basic level of telecommunication and internet services.
- ensuring ferry services meet the diverse needs of BC communities and are considered part of the highway system.
- upgrade and maintain the provincial highway system.

6. Healthy Communities

Having health care facilities and services accessible, available and accountable is what defines communities – take health care out of a community and we don't have a complete community. Our immediate priorities are:

- reviewing the regional and community governance structures to include local elected representation.
- fostering service access for rural and remote communities.
- working in partnership with our provincial and federal counterparts to address various health care challenges. (i.e. nursing shortages, recruitment of health professionals).

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:

- providing adequate, stable and predictable fiscal capacity.
- no downloading of provincial responsibilities without appropriate funding.
- ensuring that Crown corporations pay the full equivalent of property taxes.
- small communities will continue to need core financial support and guidance.

8. Respectful Governance Relationships

Community building means that the provincial government should respect the plans and laws developed locally and should participate in the communities on the same basis as any other taxpayer. Initiatives that would support this goal include:

- respect for, and adherence to, local bylaws.
- respect for local views regarding provincial policy; including the requirement for notice and consultation provisions.
- maintaining a legislative framework that recognizes and reflects, local government as an independent, accountable and responsible order of government across all statutes.
- a respectful government relationship also applies, as well, between local governments.

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. Individuals also often agree to put their trust in others.

When there are conflicts, the entire community's rights and responsibilities should be clearly defined. Specifically:

- local governments need to be responsible for their actions but not the actions of others (i.e. building regulation liability).
- there should be healthy public debate, but local elected officials should not feel intimidated to speak their minds in the conduct of their office (SLAPP).
- the public and local elected officials need to know when a "conflict of interest" exists.
- one size does not fit all - local election and open meeting legislation.