

Union of BC Municipalities
Regional District Task Force

BACKGROUND

At the last meeting of the Regional District Task Force and Ministry of Community Services there was agreement to investigate further a targeted review of 3 key issues. These were as follows:

1. Electoral Area Governance
2. Crown – Regional District Interface
3. Fringe Planning and servicing issues

In terms of next steps the Task Force and Deputy Minister asked that Gary Paget and Gary Maclsaac report back on the following items:

- Resources required for such a project;
- Time Frame for such a review;
- Process to be followed and project deliverables;
- Advice on how we communicate with the membership;
- Method of engaging participants at June Electoral Area Forum.

PROCESS AND DELIVERABLES

The Task Force has identified three issues that it would like to explore in more detail. These are:

- Issue # 1: Electoral area governance:
(Possible) sub-issues:
 - electoral areas – wide
 - individual electoral area
 - communities within an electoral area
- Issue #2: Municipal interest in electoral area planning:
(Possible) sub-issues:
 - how to define the municipal interest
 - municipal voting / opt out
 - other mechanisms
- Issue #3: Overlap between provincial & regional district jurisdictions:
(Possible) sub-issues:

- gravel / mines approvals
- crown land tenure approvals
- major project approval processes

It is proposed that each of these issues / sub-issues be examined by the Task Force through a disciplined, facilitated process.

The objective of the exercise would be to think about how the original design of the regional district system reflected the issues (listed above), as they were at that time (ie the mid-1960's), and how the principles underpinning the overall design of regional districts were applied to each issue. The Task Force would review the issues in light of the way regional districts were designed, and how they have evolved since that time.

This approach is designed to get back to the heart of the purpose of regional districts. The idea is that, by starting at the time regional districts were created, the Task Force can assess how they are positioned now to address the issues, in light of the many external changes that have occurred over the past 40 years.

In this way the Task Force can look ahead to the changes needed for regional districts to address the issues over the next 40 years. Out of this we might achieve a common understanding of the views of municipalities, electoral area directors and the Province, which can lead to consensus on moving forward.

The approach would be to work through the following questions, for each individual issue / sub-issue in turn.

1. What was the situation like in 1965, before the incorporation of regional districts?
2. What did the designers of the system do to tackle the issue at that time?
3. What adjustments have been made, and what do we have now?
4. What has the regional district system accomplished to date?
5. What are the challenges we face today and in the future?
6. What options do we have to make the regional district system work better in the future?

A standard format to address each issue is attached. Also attached is an attempt to apply the format for one particular sub-issue.

ISSUE #?:

1. What was the situation like in 1965, before the incorporation of regional districts?

2. What did the designers of the system do to tackle the issue at that time?

3. What adjustments have been made, and what do we have now?

4. What has the regional district system accomplished to date?

5. What are the challenges we face today and in the future?

6. What options do we have to make the regional district system work better in the future?

ISSUE #1: ELECTORAL AREA GOVERNANCE COMMUNITIES WITHIN AND ELECTORAL AREA
1. What was the situation like in 1965, before the incorporation of regional districts?
2. What did the designers of the system do to tackle the issue at that time?
3. What adjustments have been made, and what do we have now?
4. What has the regional district system accomplished to date?
5. What are the challenges we face today and in the future?
6. What options do we have to make the regional district system work better in the future?

Example

This approach can be illustrated by looking at one problem which is encompassed within the issue of conflict at the edge of municipalities: municipal financial contributions to and voting on electoral area planning.

1. In 1965 there was no general purpose local government for rural areas and land use planning was spotty or non-existent. If planning was done it was done by the provincial Ministry of Municipal Affairs using Victoria based staff by creating Community Planning Areas using authority in the *Local Services Act*. Where planning occurred it was not effective and democratically accountable. Furthermore, large areas of the province had no planning at all, at a time when the province was growing rapidly and with much of this growth occurring at the edge of municipalities.
2. In 1966 the first regional districts were incorporated, providing a local government for unincorporated areas. As part of this, regional districts were mandated to plan for rural areas. Municipalities were mandated to contribute financially and were given voting rights on rural plans. This was to ensure that regional districts had the resources to hire planning staff and to develop plans and regulatory bylaws. This also provided a means for municipalities to have a say in controlling development on the edge of municipalities.
3. In 1983 provincial legislation eliminated regional planning and municipalities were to wholly or partially opt out of electoral planning provided they gave adequate notice. This led initially to instability in the system as municipalities opted out and regional districts had to cut staff. In 1995 regional growth

strategies were introduced. Mutually agreed upon regional growth strategies provided a means for municipalities to achieve their interests without participation in electoral area planning. In 2000 legislation was introduced to better enable partial participation of municipalities through agreements with fully participating members having the final say.

4. Today virtually every regional district has planning staff and virtually all settled areas have community plans and zoning bylaws. Six regional districts have regional growth strategies and four are underway.
5. We still have conflict over municipal participation in electoral area planning. The municipal interest in unincorporated area planning is not well understood and there is no direction on how to define that.

On the other hand we have examples of where this occurs. For example, the Regional District of Nanaimo Regional Growth Strategy defines an urban containment boundary, delineating areas which will be rural and urban. This provides a stable, agreed upon framework to guide decisions on provision of urban services and municipal boundary extensions. The Central Okanagan Regional District has established municipal participation agreements with all their municipal members enabling them to participate in electoral area planning adjacent to their boundaries.

6. What are the solutions?

PROJECT RESOURCES

In order to proceed in a timely manner this project will require dedicated resources. There are a number of options that could be followed to achieve this. One method would be for UBCM and the Ministry of Community Services to each appoint respective staff resources to work on this project. This model has been done in the past on a variety of different projects and has worked well. In the case of UBCM this will involve additional resources to the existing complement.

A second option would be for UBCM and MCS to collaboratively resource the project. This would likely involve hiring a consulting firm of some kind to provide staff resources to the project. This is approach that was used in the development of the Regional District toolkit, where an outside consultant was engaged and was supported by staff from both the Ministry and UBCM.

We recommend the second approach.

TIMING

We will need to discuss this further with the RD Task Force and Deputy Minister. At present there are significant resources allocated to the Green Communities Committee, both from UBCM and the Ministry of Community Services. They are operating on tight timelines and our work must be substantially complete in time to report to Convention. The Regional District Task Force work cannot be completed in advance of Convention and direction will be required as to expected timelines.

COMMUNICATION WITH UBCM MEMBERSHIP

This project cannot happen in isolation from the UBCM membership. While some of the historical background can be generated by staff resources consultation needs to occur for Questions 5 and 6 in the Approach section. Input will be required on the challenges that we face today and in the future and on potential changes to the Regional District system to address these challenges.

We would envision that the consultation process would involve both a broad consultative piece (perhaps a survey) intended to seek input across the membership, as well as several targeted focus group sessions around the Province which would be intended to drill down on the specific problems and solutions. The focus groups would have representation from both elected officials and senior local government staff.

JUNE ELECTORAL AREA FORUM

At the last meeting it was recognized that the Electoral Area Forum is scheduled for June 12-13 and understandably this will be a topic of discussion. We were asked to consider the best way to engage this group in the RD Task Force discussion.

The Electoral Area Forum will be professionally facilitated by Gord McIntosh. As it currently stands the RD Task Force is slated for a two-hour session on Friday, June 13 from 8:30 -10:30 a.m.

The session will need to begin with an information piece that provides an overview of the participants on the Task Force and provides a brief description of the meetings to date. In addition the Task Force may wish to provide an update on the response from the Minister to the 2007 Resolution and the subsequent decision of the Task Force to move forward on targeted areas of discussion.

Following the introductory piece we would suggest that Gord McIntosh facilitate a session. This could involve two potential workshop topics. One option could be

to take one of the sub-topics and begin to utilize the methodology suggested above. This could serve as a dry run for the process. However, we are likely too early in the process to successfully do this and this process will take significantly more time than is allotted.

A second approach would be to back up a step and have a facilitated session on issues identification. At the conclusion of this process the results could be compared against the issues that have been established by the RD Task Force. This could be helpful in determining whether there are other issues that need to be addressed by the Task Force and Ministry of Community Services, in addition to the ones already identified. In the event that the results of both groups are similar, this may result in buy-in for the RD Task Force workplan.

We would recommend the second option.

I:\Special Projects_Strategic Initiatives\Regional Initiatives\Regional Districts\UBCM Task Force\RD Task Force analysis model.doc