

RD TASK FORCE UPDATE

“Therefore be it resolved that UBCM petition the province of BC to carry on with instituting a Community Charter for Regional Districts, with any restructuring of regional districts put on hold until after the Community Charter’s fully implemented unless due process and consultation with local government and citizens has been undertaken.”

BACKGROUND

- October meeting with Minister after convention.
- Minister advised no charter for Regional Districts would be forthcoming.
- However, has willingness to look at areas where Regional Districts lack power.
- At the November Executive meeting Minister referred a series of meetings to discuss issues.
- Executive formed a Regional District Task Force to engage the Province.

OVERVIEW OF TASK FORCE

Participation at each session by the Deputy Minister and Acting ADM.

Representation from municipalities and electoral areas.

Reflects the multifaceted role of RD's:

- regional services provided
- political – administrative framework for partnerships
- local government for rural areas

DEFINING THE PROBLEMS/ISSUES

1. Conflict between Regional Districts Shareholders
2. Structures
3. Growth Management and Climate Change
4. Provincial – Regional District Interface
5. First Nations

CONFLICT BETWEEN SHAREHOLDERS

Manifests itself in a number of ways:

- land use planning;
- services delivery;
- disagreement over boundary extensions;
- cost sharing for electoral area planning;
- “free rider” issues.

STRUCTURES

- Two traditional roles of local government are:
 1. Govern at a local level
 2. Facilitate the local delivery of services in efficient manner
- Community Charter – emphasizes governance at a local level.
- Regional Districts – established to be federations of municipalities and electoral areas. More oversight by the Province.
- Forty-year-old structure – does it reflect current needs?

GROWTH MANAGEMENT/CLIMATE CHANGE

- Growth management has been issue for some time.
- Climate change is relatively new.
- Two are interrelated and will present even more challenges in the future.
- Regional scale and local scale issues as growth moves to rural areas from incorporated areas.

PROVINCIAL – REGIONAL DISTRICT INTERFACE

- Increasing number of instances where conflict occurs between RD's and Province.
- Examples: Ski hills, resorts, and independent power projects.
- Conflict relates to local objectives versus broader objectives.
- Local government perspective is that local community is not being adequately considered.
- Provincial perspectives: that local governments are selecting when they wish to be involved.

FIRST NATIONS

- First Nations relation is an emerging and growing issue.
- Treaty outcomes resulting in land transfers, economic development pressures and governance.
- New Relationship not as defined but also impacting Regional Districts.

PRINCIPLES

- Respect for local government autonomy.
- Respect for Provincial Jurisdiction.
- Accountability to citizens.
- Respect for regional differences: it is accepted that this is a diverse Province and that different regions may need different solutions.
- Flexibility to provide critical services at various scales; the context for local governments is complex and changing. The regional district system has to have the ability to deal with issues at various scales: local; sub-regional, regional and extra-regional.
- Respectful relations between local governments: Relationships between all local governments should be based on respect and characterized by openness, dialogue, respect for interests and the use of alternative dispute resolution tools to deal with irreconcilable differences.

GOING FORWARD

- Task Force and community services looked at a targeted review of 3 key issues:
 1. Electoral Area Governance
 2. Crown – Regional District Interface
 3. Fringe Planning and Servicing Issues

PROCESS

- Process will include consideration of original design of RD system
- Consider how we got to present day system
- Each issue/sub-issue will be reviewed in the following context:
 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?

RESOURCES AND TIMING

- Agreement to work collaboratively with the Province.
- Consultant to be hired to lead the process – supported by UBCM and Province.
- No specific time frame for conclusion. Recognition that process will proceed through 2009.
- Will include a consultation process:
 - needs to include broad opportunity for membership input;
 - also include targeted focus group sessions around the province;
 - both elected officials and staff.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

- Representation on Task Force reflects that RD issues are important to both electoral areas and municipalities.
- Collaborative with the Ministry of Community Services.
- Province has stated no charter forthcoming – Executive believes we need to move ahead with this review.
- Desire to not just identify problems – will have an analytical component.
- Process will be targeted review of 3 issues (and sub-issues).
- Consultation is a necessity.
- Will take time to complete.

QUESTIONS??