

HIGHLIGHTS OF UBCM EXECUTIVE MEETING January 25 - 26, 2001

The Executive had a busy schedule including nine Committee meetings; a meeting with the Leader of the Official Opposition, Gordon Campbell; a delegation with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Jim Doyle; as well as attending to regular Executive business.

Prior to the Executive meeting, the President and members of the Communities and Resources and Environment Committees participated in a day-and-a-half workshop sponsored by Forest Renewal BC. The purpose of the workshop was to consider what role communities could play in the development of a communities and industry strategy for dealing with marketing issues facing the BC forest industry. In addition, meetings of the BC Rail Task Force and Environment Protocol Committee were held.

Priorities Session

Now that we have recognition as an independent, accountable and responsible order of government, where do we go from here? That was the question posed by Executive members at their November Executive meeting. For the past decade UBCM members have focussed on recognition and legislative reform. With those goals attained to a large degree at the provincial level, it is time to look ahead to the next decade. At the November meeting, Executive members had an opportunity to identify some key short term priorities for local governments and also discussed the development of a longer term strategy for BC communities. A draft document was prepared for Executive consideration at this meeting and based on the feedback from Executive it will be updated and circulated to local governments in the coming weeks. The Executive will be seeking your input and direction on a strategy that we wish to pursue. As well Area Associations will be encouraged to consider the material as part of their annual spring meetings.

General Business: Executive Decides

The Executive considered a number of policy matters and has taken the following actions:

- **Ports Competitiveness Committee** will prepare a response to the draft report and will work to ensure affected municipalities are consulted.
- **UBCM/Government Water Partnership Committee** is holding ongoing consultations with the provincial government on new measures to protect local drinking water and the role of local government in this process. We would be interested in hearing the views of local government on the type of measures that should be taken and the role it should play in the process.
- confirmed UBCM participation on a joint Committee with the Municipal Insurance Association to seek legislative reform in the area of **building regulation liability**.
- received a report on the activities of the **Canada-BC Infrastructure Program Management Committee**. The Executive noted that the Program Guide and Application Kits have now been mailed to all local governments and that appropriate internet web links are also up and running. One outstanding policy matter that the Committee was seeking UBCM's input on is whether or not to implement a "project cap" on eligible costs for any individual project. The UBCM Executive will advise the Infrastructure Program Committee of its agreement with the idea of capping the amount to be paid on any single, significantly large, project to ensure maximization of the overall funds for the province, with determination of the amount of the cap being left to the Management Committee.
- received a report from the President on the recent **annual grants consultation** meeting with Minister of Municipal Affairs. The news for the coming year has been communicated in a separate memo to members dated February 2, 2001. This memo contains very

important information on grant expectations, especially with respect to continued small community protection grants and the doubts around traffic fine revenue sharing.

- considered referred resolution **B82-7% TAX ON VESSELS AND RVs LEFT FOR STORAGE IN BC** and endorsed the resolution as proposed by the sponsor which reads as follows: THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the UBCM petition the British Columbia Ministry of Finance to stay the collection of this tax for the above purpose: AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Ministry of Finance and Corporate Services amend the *Social Services Tax Act*, Section 16(1)(c)(i, ii, iii, iv and v) so that vessels and RVs stored in British Columbia are not subject to the 7% tax.
- reviewed a report that proposed a meeting of affected parties to follow-up on the recommendations respecting **industrial assessment appeals** that came out of the Assessment Roll Stability policy paper that was endorsed at the 2000 Convention.
- discussed the increases that have taken place in **natural gas prices**, reviewed various correspondence on this matter from the membership and decided to write the Premier again, (the President wrote the Premier on December 12th) urging him to take action and provide some relief to homeowners and businesses. In addition, a letter will be sent to the federal government requesting some financial relief as a result of the windfall revenue from the GST.
- received the **President's Report** on activities including highlights of his attendance at: Fraser Basin Council conference; Infrastructure Management Committee meeting; and Treaty Negotiation Advisory Committee.
- discussed the restructuring of **Joint Council** and will provide our proposal including issues such as membership, frequency of meetings, etc. to the Provincial Government for consideration.

Please make copies of this circular and distribute to Council/Board Members /Staff.

- made a number of policy decisions including:
 - to work with the WCB to develop a manual for Fire Departments; to update WCB regulation 7.1 – Members of Fire Brigades to more accurately **reflect what volunteer departments are doing today**; and to open discussions to determine the increased WCB costs to cover gaps in coverage.
 - awaiting the report of the **Aggregate Industry Review** and will assist in organizing a workshop for members if required.
 - heard a report on a proposed new federal regulation with respect to **railway grade crossings** which would have implications for local governments relative to maintenance of grade crossings; land use and zoning adjacent to grade crossings; issuance of building permit near crossings; and the removal of grandparented “no whistle blowing” crossings and new applications for these exemptions. Further reports will be prepared on the implications and FCM is being requested to advise UBCM of its position.
 - in response to recent concerns about **farm property classification** being given in an urban area where agricultural uses are not permitted, it was agreed to write to the Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture and BC Assessment to request that the *Standards for the Classification of Land as a Farm Regulation* be amended to ensure that the farm classification is not conferred on properties where the municipal zoning does not permit agricultural uses, except where these uses are legally non-conforming.
 - heard a report on a possible new requirement to **license sub-trades** under the Homeowner Protection Office and similarly **contractor registration** for the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors.
- received confirmation that the Supreme Court of Canada has dismissed the appeal request by **Musqueam Holdings Ltd.** et al in their case with the City of Vancouver.
- received confirmation that the provincial government is presently considering the endorsed **resolutions from the 2000 Convention** with a full package of responses expected by April or May, 2001.
- received a status report indicating that **UBCM dues** are on track with payments received from 166 of 182 members.
- requested a report back from staff on a member’s request to seek an amendment to the *Local Government Act* to clarify the **tax exemption**

- relating to local elected officials expenses.
- will be seeking an amendment to the **WCB forestry regulation** to ensure work undertaken by local governments is exempted.
- received correspondence via the City of North Vancouver on the issue of GST being included in the market value for **property assessments**. The Executive requested staff to review information and report back their findings to the next meeting.

COMMITTEES REPORT

All nine UBCM Committees and one of its Task Forces met during the meeting. The following section highlights their deliberations and actions:

Protective Services (previously known as Justice and Protective Services/Gaming)

The Committee discussed a number of issues and recommended action on the following matters:

- Approved a change of name for the Committee and updated its terms of reference;
- Requested that the provincial government change its auxiliary constable policy for RCMP policed communities that requires local government to indemnify the Minister against liability for auxiliary constables and that local government be involved in the development of these programs;
- Supported the need for increased traffic enforcement and requested a meeting with Ministry of Attorney General staff to discuss the implications to local government of the recommendations in the “Traffic Services Study Report”; and
- Requested that the RCMP begin a review of its policing services outside of the lower mainland and agreed to send information to the members on the measures negotiated by the 12 communities in the lower mainland on policing services with the RCMP.

Member Services/Local Government Awareness

The following Committee recommendations were approved by the Executive:

- Municipal Pension Plan (MPP):** Deferring further action on the implementation of the Convention recommendations on Joint Trusteeship for the Municipal Pension Plan until there is complete information on ratification;
- Group Benefit Plan Renewal:** Authorizing the

Member Services Committee to affect the renewal with Pacific Blue Cross and Canada Life;

CivicNet: Exploring sponsorship advertising opportunities for the CivicNet website;

Local Government Awareness Program: Approval of the 2001 work program, the associated program awards and a new “Winners Idea Summary” for the local government kits; and

Special Assignments: Issuing Request for Proposals to assist in special assignments including the elected officials’ role definitions, guides of practice, update of the Regional District Responsibilities booklet, revision of the UBCM Ethical Standards of Conduct and related guidelines on conflict of interest.

Health

The following Committee recommendations were ratified by the Executive:

Referred Resolutions Disposition:
B93 and B98: Endorse

B96: No Action Required [Note: the Institute is established and has been funded by the government; the issue of concern is no longer operative.]

A4: That UBCM write to the Minister of Health and encourage him to formalize his commitment to fund the assessment process for foreign-trained doctors proposed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and that he further ensure that the administrative process to implement this process is fast-tracked.

Health Authorities Representation: That UBCM adopt the resolution’s representation model as a long term strategy for change; and as a short term or interim strategy, recommend to the government that a seat be set aside for the Regional Hospital District (RHD) on each Regional Health Board (RHB) and Community Health Council (CHC).

[Note: The Committee felt that there are immediate representation and consultation concerns that could be alleviated in the short run by ensuring that a member of the RHD was sitting at the table with their health authorities as a full member.]

Committee Priorities:

- To work with the HABC to lay the groundwork for a broad public discussion on the future of health care in BC, to be carried out the following year. This might include assisting to facilitate discussions of health issues in communities;
- To seek greater representation from local government on health authority boards;

- To develop a communication plan for local governments and health authorities and to formalize some requirements for short and long term capital planning for health authorities and regional hospital districts; and
- To establish an appropriate and productive working relationship with the Health Association of BC.

Aboriginal Affairs

The Committee reviewed progress on a wide range of on-going issues and decided on the following future directions:

- Develop a guide for local governments to address their on-going issues arising from the 1997 Supreme Court of Canada decision in *Delgamuukw*.
- Recommend that the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs produce written material for Treaty Advisory Committees (TACs) to review on their policy development work pertaining to local government—First Nations relations in treaty.
- Request that the federal Treasury Board include us in the current reforms to their disposal of surplus Crown land policy and express our concerns regarding the CFB Chilliwack situation.
- Provide feedback to the province on their Approach to Protected Areas in Treaties.
- Advise our affected members of the First Nations Land Management Act implementation and offer a meeting on February 15, 2001 in Vancouver to provide advice to the Department of Indian Affairs.
- Write to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs to request increased funding to TACs.
- Proceed with organization for the March 6, 2001 Community to Community Joint Forum with the First Nations Summit.
- Approved six additional applications for regional Community to Community Forums under the federally funded program.
- Follow-up on actions arising out of the most recent Treaty Negotiations Advisory Committee (TNAC) meetings.
- Continue implementation and monitoring of the Protocol on Interim Measures.

Resolutions

The Committee reviewed its Terms of Reference and the delegate comments and concerns about the resolutions process this past year. The Committee's **objective is to complete all resolutions in the allocated timeframe at the 2001 Convention**. The strategy for achieving that objective is to:

- Ensure there is adequate time for resolutions.
- Disciplined scheduling by all Executive chairs (to cut-off times) for speeches and policy papers.
- Firm chairing—adhere to rules on repetitive speakers.
- Clearer more concise communications to delegates on procedures.

And in regard to the above objective and strategy, the following recommendations were endorsed by the Executive:

- That the an additional 30 minutes be allocated for resolutions / policy paper discussion to ensure there is adequate time for all policy matters.
- That the introductory resolutions session, which outlines the resolutions process, be streamlined to provide more time to debate resolutions.
- That session Chairs ensure that speakers are aware of, and adhere to, their allocated time and be firm when enforcing the rules on repetitive debate.
- That prior to Convention, a memo be sent to all members with a copy of the Conference Rules and Procedures for Handling Resolutions indicating that these are the rules and request that all delegates read them prior to attending the Convention.
- That the Committee consider more technological improvements (ie. visual support for policy papers) but that these improvements not be to the detriment of the flow of the resolution sessions.
- That a minor amendment be made to s. 41. of the Conference Rules and Procedures for Handling Resolutions so the section now reads:
- "All resolutions originating at a Convention workshop or seminar (i.e., workshops, Tuesday Forums, etc.) that is not held as a regular plenary session shall be referred to the Executive unless handled pursuant to Step 39 or 40."

Communities and Resources

The Committee discussed a number of issues and the following recommendations were endorsed by the Executive:

- correspond with the relevant federal and provincial ministers to reiterate the endorsed UBCM resolution on the **softwood lumber agreement** and encourage the commencement of discussions and indicate the importance of community input in these

discussions. (Copies of this letter would be provided to the various associations involved in the issue as well as all UBCM members.)

- determine the federal government's intention regarding the protection of **endangered species**; and
- if the new legislation is introduced UBCM write the federal government indicating it supports the negotiated voluntary approach stressed in the discussion paper on compensation measures and request that an **economic transition program** for local government be built into the process when implementing endangered species measures.
- seek a meeting with representatives of the **Mining Association of BC** to determine what role local governments may be able to play in assisting the mining sector.

Convention

The Committee reviewed delegate survey responses for the 2000 convention and thanks all members for their valued comments. The committee has agreed to expand the time allotted for resolutions at the 2001 convention in response to your requests. Planning for the 2001 convention program has begun. Hotels for the 2002 convention in Whistler are being finalized and a list will be supplied to members shortly.

Environment

The Committee discussed a wide range of issues and recommended actions on the following matters:

- Requested further consultation with the Ministry of Health on new septic sewage regulations and supported the development of these new measures under the umbrella of the Liquid Waste Planning process;
- Supported the establishment of a task force to develop a consultation policy with respect to the relocation of contaminated soil;
- Supported the creation of a Local Government Stewardship Council;
- Requested that the federal government adopt a negotiated voluntary approach and that an economic transition program for local communities be included in the process when taking measures to protect endangered species;
- Supported stormwater management plans as part of the Liquid Waste Management Planning process;
- Agreed to participate in an implementation Committee established for the new

- Streamside Protection Regulation; and
- Supported the new provincial Bear Smart Community program and agreed to assist in getting information out to local communities.

Arts, Culture, Heritage & Tourism

The Committee feels that it should have a singular focus in its message in the coming months, so that the economic benefits of arts, culture, heritage and tourism are in the forefront. The linkages to other sectors will be highlighted; contacts will be made with provincial elected representatives.

BC Rail Task Force

The Executive endorsed the following recommendations of the Task Force:

1. That the technical review of BC Rail property assessments should proceed expeditiously, and that UBCM and Treasurers from BC Rail communities should be part of the working group;
2. That to ensure certainty and stability in local financial planning this budget year, the same distribution of payments in lieu should be used for 2001 as was used for 2000. The revised schedule based on the technical review should be implemented for 2002, with ample notice to affected local governments;
3. That BC Assessment should produce annual updated values for exempt BC Rail properties, as it does for taxable properties; and
4. The \$2 million cap on payments in lieu for BC Rail continues to be inappropriate for a company that is acting fully in the commercial marketplace, and the corporation should be directed to pay full taxes on all its holdings. Appropriate legislative changes should be put in place to make this possible.

EXECUTIVE MEETS WITH LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION, GORDON CAMPBELL

On Thursday afternoon, Executive members had an opportunity to meet with Gordon Campbell, Leader of the Official Opposition. Mr. Campbell elaborated on many of the commitments made during his address at the 2000 UBCM Convention:

- confirmed that **crown corporations would pay full property taxes**
- committed to amending the **Interpretation Act** to ensure that local government bylaws apply to crown corporations
- elimination of **photo radar**, but not red light cameras
- sharing 75% of **traffic fine revenues** with local governments
- committed to introducing the **Community Charter** into the House as part of the 90 day agenda and confirmed that he would consult with UBCM members on the document.
- indicated that he would review **FRBC** and where revenues are presently being allocated.
- recognized the severity of problems with the **health care system** and committed to working with local governments, and other key interests in solving the problems.
- committed to **eliminating 1/3 of the regulations** presently in place over a three-year timeframe.
- committed to completing **land use plans** and ensuring that there is a designated working forest land base. He indicated that all land use plans would include socio-economic impact studies
- indicated that he wanted to **open up government** and stated that FOI would apply to all crown corporations.
- indicated support for individuals who want to live in rural areas by ensuring that all communities have access to **telecommunications** (internet) services.
- committed to working with local governments to address **policing costs**, especially in light of the many communities that will reach the 5,000 population threshold.
- confirmed that resource industries will continue to be the back bone of the BC economy but identified the need for communities to **diversify** their economies.

Mr. Campbell made a number of other comments related to provincial – local relations:

- will “not be driving any amalgamations”; will “not impose them”
- recognizes no “quick fix” for regional districts. The status quo will remain for regional districts. The Community Charter is Phase I and regional districts will comprise Phase II.
- committed to undertaking a joint consultation process with UBCM members to discuss the Charter.
- provide local government with the authority to make their own decisions – “giving you the problems and the resources” to address them.
- indicated that provincial ministries would be restructured - foresees a smaller Ministry of Municipal Affairs as it will not be required to play a major role in “policing” the activities of local governments under the Charter.

MINISTER DOYLE MEETS WITH UBCM EXECUTIVE

On Thursday evening the UBCM Executive met with the Honourable Jim Doyle, Minister of Municipal Affairs. The Executive had detailed discussions with the Minister on the following issues:

- Status of **local government grants** - the details are contained in the February 2, 2001 Release to members;
- **B.C. Rail Grants** – the Minister indicated that a review was underway regarding the assessed value of the property owned by B.C. Rail and that local government would have the opportunity to review this report.
- Land and Resource Management Plans – Minister supported completion of the land and
- Farm Tax Assessment Exemption - highlighted the need to fix loophole that allowed some residential properties to obtain a farm tax exemption and the Minister agreed to address the problem.
- Natural Gas Prices - Minister agreed the rising cost of natural gas was a problem to people on fixed incomes, the poor and small business and indicated that cabinet was looking at a rebate program.