

## Highlights of the May 12 - 13, 2006 UBCM Executive Meeting

The UBCM Executive held its spring meeting in conjunction with the Lower Mainland Local Government Association's Annual Conference in Harrison Hot Springs. In addition to taking part in their conference activities, the Executive held their usual schedule of eight committee and task force meetings and dealt with quarterly Executive business. The Executive also received two delegations; the first was BC's Senior Regional Minister, the Honourable Chuck Strahl, federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the second was with Dale Wall, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Community Services.

The Executive took action in a number of policy areas, including:

- approve future discussions with the Ministry on **civil liability** and advise the Minister that UBCM is supportive of compulsory insurance coupled with a 10 year ultimate limitation period.
- write the Province to determine what role local government will play in the new **pandemic flu** strategy and whether or not specific funding will be provided to local government to update its emergency plans to prepare for a pandemic flu event.
- continue to participate in the statute revision of the Local Government Act.
- continue to provide support and investigate terms of reference for a small steering committee to support the **BC Transit** governance and funding review proposed by the provincial government.
- continue to monitor projects on the Canada – BC Infrastructure Program "watch" list and complete final tasks for concluding the current program.
- continue to monitor and support the direction by the **ATV/ORV Coalition** to move ahead with the proposed recommendations for the regulation and licensing of ORVs and ATVs.
- monitor the actions of the Office of the Fire Commissioner in developing an information package and operational guidelines to assist Local Assistants to the Fire Commissioner and local governments to determine if any **upgrading of existing buildings** is required and what actions might be taken to ensure an acceptable level of life safety.
- continue to monitor the status of enhanced AIT trade discussions between Alberta and BC.
- prepare a summary of key assessment issues that our members have encountered in recent years and their implications for property taxation in preparation for the Province's comprehensive **review of the assessment system** and request that UBCM be provided with the opportunity to provide input during phase 1 (issue definition) and phase 2 (issues and options) of the review.
- in response to **Bill 30**, request that the Province set aside the Utilities Commission Act amendment and return to the MOU process.
- received reports on the increase to **small community and regional district grants** in preparation for a discussion with the Ministry (see below).
- welcomed new staff - Office Services staff person Rose Rendle, Marlene Wells as the staff support to the First Nations Relations Committee during Joanne Gauci's one-year maternity leave and Dan Farrell as UBCM's summer student.

### Industrial Taxation

UBCM will continue discussions with members on the Competition Council's recommendations on taxation, including a more extensive review of the Council and the Pulp and Paper Advisory Committee reports. Co-Chair Dan Miller's response to UBCM will be posted on the website. Mr. Miller declined to participate in the May 25<sup>th</sup> consultation session with UBCM members. The Executive is looking to the consultation session for specific directions from the membership. In the meantime the Executive is continuing to seek assurances from government that it will not take unilateral action on the Council's recommendations.

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

## **Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund (MRIF)**

The Executive reviewed the current status of negotiations on the \$50 million fund and UBCM rationale for a simplified application process. UBCM's position was emphasized during the Executive meeting with federal Minister Strahl, who agreed that opportunities to announce a concluded deal should be sought in the near future. The Executive advised Minister Strahl that they welcomed the announcement in the federal budget of substantial additional monies for MRIF and hoped that an additional agreement could be concluded before the end of the year.

## **Local Government Leadership Academy (LGLA)**

The Executive received an update on contributions to the establishment of the Local Government Leadership Academy. To date, 40 local governments have contributed over \$29,000 to the LGLA initiative. With the provincial contribution and the other partner contributions, a total of \$1.1 million has now been raised. An investment strategy was determined, whereby the LGLA monies shall be invested in secure government quality funds through the MFA. The Executive also directed that renewed fundraising efforts be undertaken on behalf of the Academy.

A report on the February 22 LGLA workshop and resulting core competencies model was received by the Executive and an official work plan was referred to the Presidents Committee for finalization. Work on finalizing the LGLA charter and focus is ongoing, as is development of an independent LGLA Board to manage the Academy.

## **Municipal House**

The Executive reviewed a report and plans for a new Municipal House proposed to be constructed on property to be donated by the Province of BC in recognition of the UBCM's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The property is located on Government Street near the Parliament Buildings. The proposal is to reach gold level green building standards. LGMA and CivicInfo are exploring the possibility of joining the five groups that occupy the current Municipal House.

## **Local Government Program Services (LGPS)**

The Executive received a report on the status of all Local Government Program Services programming currently underway. It was noted that a very successful series of Emergency Planning workshops for Newly Elected wrapped up in the Village of Queen Charlotte last week, where staff

had the opportunity to raise awareness of other funding opportunities available to local government representatives. To date, two applications for emergency planning funding, and one for community tourism have been generated as a result of these discussions.

## **New Deal Management Program**

The Executive received a report on the New Deal, which included a discussion of ongoing activities (e.g., distribution of Community Works Funds to 156 local governments, workshops and seminars, distribution of reporting instructions). The report highlighted the ongoing program development work for the Tier 1 and 2 Strategic Priorities Fund, including proposed program objectives relating to maximizing outcomes, providing program efficiencies and providing for equity in approvals.

## **Transit Funding**

The Executive received an update on Public Transit Funding. A one-year Public Transit Agreement is now in place, Canada has transferred the \$52.5 million under that agreement to UBCM and staff is in the process of implementing the agreement. The Executive was also advised that the May 2 federal budget created a Public Transit Capital Trust, subject to a 2005/06 budget surplus. If established, BC's share of the Trust will be \$119.3 million. Staff was directed to work with the federal and provincial governments on details of the Trust and report back to the Executive.

## **Provincial Responses to 2005 Resolutions**

The Executive received a report summarizing the remaining 19 provincial responses to 2005 resolutions and directed that those resolutions relevant to Committees be referred to Committees for review and further action where deemed appropriate. Staff was directed to follow up as necessary on other resolutions and to follow up with the new federal government on resolutions relating to federal policy matters. Copies of the responses have been forwarded to the sponsors and a full listing of the provincial responses is available at [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca) under the Resolutions & Policy tab.

## **2006 Newly Elected Officials Seminars**

The Executive was advised that 440 officials attended the Newly Elected Officials workshops and the seminars were generally well rated (4.2 to 4.6 out of 5). The Executive approved 43 recommendations in regards to planning the 2009 seminar series.

## DELEGATIONS

### Executive Meets with the Honourable Chuck Strahl, Senior Minister for BC and Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food

The Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and BC's Senior Minister met with the Executive on Saturday May 13, 2006. Minister Strahl opened the meeting by stating the federal government was results-oriented and practical in its approach to governing. He indicated the federal government's interest in working with local governments and First Nations and identifying opportunities for partnerships.

The UBCM Executive discussed opportunities for working with the federal government and acknowledged the funding support committed by the Government to a number of infrastructure / transit-related projects.

UBCM Committee Chairs discussed UBCM priorities and their alignment with the federal government's priorities in the areas of community economic development, justice, environment, health and First Nations. The Minister responded to specific initiatives and identified potential partnership opportunities with local government in the area of service delivery.

The Executive closed the meeting by advising the Minister of our UBCM Convention in October where the Prime Minister and the BC Caucus would be invited to take part in the conference.

### Executive Meets with Dale Wall, Ass't Deputy Minister, Ministry of Community Services

Dale Wall, Assistant Deputy Minister, made a presentation on implementing the Premier's commitment to doubling small community and regional district grants. Currently about 120 municipalities receive grants (small communities include those up to 18,000 population). One of the problems with the current system is the significant differences in the amounts of grants received by similar communities. This is a result of the way in which grant cut impacts were managed in 1998. Since then there have been no significant changes to the allocations. The Ministry is looking at a new formula that would have three components: a base amount, a population component and an assessment equalization component. Population funding peaks at 5,000. Any new formulas would be phased in over four years. Due to the problems with the current allocation, moving to a new formula does not result in a doubling of all individual grants. The Executive expressed general support for proceeding with the proposal. It would restore a level playing field and be a transparent process. However, the Executive suggested looking at: some variations to the model components; the relationship to the police costs; and a communications plan to explain the new system and resulting changes.

With respect to regional district grants, Mr. Wall outlined the proposal by the Ministry to date and the Executive suggested that further discussions would need to take place.

## Assessment Review

The provincial government is undertaking a review of the Assessment Act and Assessment Authority Act. At their May meeting the UBCM Executive considered the Terms of Reference for this review, which has been prompted by the "limitations of the current property assessment system to respond to new and existing policy issues."

The general goal of the review is to ensure that the current assessment system is fair and equitable to the taxpayer and supports future economic growth. It will examine BC Assessment's governance and service quality and will also discuss issues related to assessment methodology and policy.

UBCM would like to see this review consider local government interests. In preparation for consultation by the province, UBCM will be developing a summary of key issues raised by our members in recent years relating to assessment and their implications for property taxation, (e.g. "urban" farms, Short Term Overnight Commercial Accommodation Properties, etc). We invite our members to provide us with any current priority assessment issues they would like to see examined as part of this review. Please e-mail a background summary and description of the issue(s) to Alison McNeil at [amcneil@civicnet.bc.ca](mailto:amcneil@civicnet.bc.ca) by June 9, 2006.

## COMMITTEES

### Presidents

The Committee advised the Executive that:

- the Chief Legislative Council has completed the Statute Revision for the Union of BC Municipalities Act and the Legislative Assembly approved it (the final step is Cabinet bringing it into force).
- 2010 Legacies Now is the 2006 Excellence Awards partner and the category is Local Government Partnerships Supporting Physical Activity and Healthy Living.
- legislation has been introduced at UBCM's request to amend the program year for Commercial Vehicle Licenses.
- detailed plans are in place for the distribution of the history publication: UBCM: The First Century during June.

The Executive approved the recommendations to transfer all group benefits under the 3,000 person UBCM Group Benefit Program to Pacific Blue Cross.

### Environment

The Environment Committee reviewed the status of several policy and regulatory issues, and approved the following on the Riparian Areas Regulation (RAR):

- respond in writing to those local governments that have raised concerns with UBCM signing the RAR tripartite protocol agreement; and
- allow the UBCM President to sign the RAR tripartite protocol agreement pending the completion and resolution of all outstanding implementation tools and issues.

### Community Economic Development

The Community Economic Development Committee received status reports on a variety of policy areas including forests, fishing, agriculture and energy. The Executive approved actions in the following areas:

- in response to the softwood agreement, write the Council of Forest Industries and the Coast Forest and Lumber Association requesting that they encourage their industry members to establish community development funds from the returned duties;
- prepare a draft submission for Phase I (electricity/alternative energy) of the new energy plan for member consideration

with the Committee authorized to finalize that report for submission to the Province; and

- meet with members of the Government Caucus Committee charged with developing an Agricultural Plan for BC at their July meeting and determine opportunities for local government input.

### Healthy Communities

The Healthy Communities Committee discussed a range of policy issues. The actions approved by the Executive include:

- review the design for the next round of Community Health Promotion funding at the July Executive meeting;
- recommend to BC Healthy Communities Steering Committee a communications vehicle on Healthy Communities specifically for local governments that will advise them of how they can engage with this initiative;
- develop a plan with a strategy for creating and maintaining a network of "health and learning" contact people within local governments;
- maintain the Active Civic Employees (ACE) "Community of Practice" webpage currently accessed through the UBCM website for an additional year; and
- with the Environment Committee, develop a resolution on a province-wide anti-litter campaign to recommend to the Province.

### Convention

The Committee discussed several aspects of Convention program development including clinic and workshop submissions, the Welcome Reception and Banquet Entertainment. In addition to these items, details such as the Convention theme, budget and catering were reviewed. A report from the Host City of Victoria was also received.

The 2006 Convention theme will be "Vibrant, Integrated Communities".

### Community Safety

The Community Safety Committee discussed a number of different issues – BC211, crime prevention conference, liquor policy, implementation of new bylaw adjudication systems –

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and the following key actions were approved by the Executive:

- will request that compliance and enforcement remain the major focus when undertaking a five year review of the liquor policy penalty schedule under the Liquor Control and Licensing Act;
- indicated that proposed changes to the Liquor Control and Licensing Branch "public interest" policy may create problems for local government and requested time to review zoning regulations prior to a new policy being introduced;
- requested a meeting between the Liquor Control and Licensing Branch and the UBCM liquor policy working group to discuss liquor policy changes; and
- requested that the province establish standards for the home and property inspection industry.

## First Nations Relations

The First Nations Relations Committee reviewed a number of treaty-related policy issues and recent activities related to local government-First Nations relations. With respect to treaty negotiations, the Committee approved the following priority actions:

- conduct a review and analysis of the Yale and Yekooche Agreements-in-Principles with respect to local government interests;
- continue monitoring the issue of fiscal impacts to local governments from treaty settlements, including any provincial activity with regard to treaty adjustment;
- send a UBCM response to the Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation expressing support for development of a treaty adjustment funding program; and

- seek a legal opinion on language used in the Tsawwassen Agreement in Principle that applies to local government and additions to Treaty Settlement Lands.

With respect to local government-First Nations relations, the Committee approved the following priority actions:

- review the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada MOU workplan and identify priority initiatives that could be pursued in the remainder of the current MOU term;
- arrange a meeting between the First Nations Relations Committee Chair and the First Nations Summit Task Group as soon as possible to sign the renewal of the existing Protocol and discuss other matters of mutual interest; and
- proceed with the 2006/2007 Regional Community to Community Forum Program incorporating staff recommendations on program administration.

## Police Financing Task Force

The Police Costs Task Force discussed a number of issues related to the new police financing formula proposed by the provincial government:

- identified a number of issues that needed to be addressed at the member consultation on police financing – legislation, police financing model/formula (minimum/maximum cap of police costs; recognition of rural tax contribution to police costs; accounting for provincial prisons and work camps), accountability measures, timing and allocation of new financial resources (phase-in of police costs; allocation of traffic fine revenues) and implementation measures (control/certainty over policing costs; industrial tax issue; policing resort communities).
- establishment of a local government working group.

UBCM members are reminded of the following upcoming member consultations:

**Thursday May 25, 2006, 1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

Municipal Industrial Property Taxation  
Independent Power Production (with Minister Richard Neufeld)

**Friday May 26, 2006, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (9:30 – Registration)**

Police Costs In Small Communities And Rural Areas

**Place: Hilton Vancouver Airport, 5911 Minoru Boulevard, Richmond**