

Highlights of the April 19 - 20, 2007 UBCM Executive Meeting

For the first time in over six years the UBCM Executive held its meetings in Victoria. It was a very productive time with: eight committee meetings; eight meetings with Ministers; and, networking events with MLAs and Cabinet Ministers and one with Deputy Ministers, Officers of the Legislature and some other senior staff.

General Business of the full Executive:

- continue to participate in the single business licence initiative noting our concerns with the proposed timelines and deliverables.
- in regard to TILMA, UBCM will engage the Province in negotiations with the goal of seeking clarification on specific elements of TILMA and where necessary pursue exemptions or special provisions for local government; secure UBCM representation on the provincial negotiating team and enter into a consultation agreement with the Province in accordance with s. 277 of Community Charter.
- received a report that the federal budget indicates a four year extension of federal gas tax transfer worth \$1 billion dollars. The UBCM President immediately signaled that this was a welcome announcement and has written to the federal Minister, Lawrence Cannon, indicating UBCM's interest in amending the Gas Tax Agreement to include the \$1 billion.
- continue to monitor the new police tax for small communities and rural areas and advise the Ministry on implementation issues.
- work to secure a funding agreement with the Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia to administer an emergency planning program for mass livestock carcass disposal.
- continue to participate in the Local Government statute revision.
- monitor and support the direction by the Off Road Vehicle Coalition to regulate and licence off-road vehicles.
- monitor the implementation of the Mineral Tenure Act amendment related to enhanced notice provisions.
- received a report on the provincial throne speech, budget and recent legislation and with respect to initiatives

mentioned in the provincial budget, the Executive agreed to raise the following proposals with Minister Chong:

- zoning for supportive housing
- changes to funding and transfer payments to ensure integrated regional transportation and housing
- DCC exemptions
- new assessment class and tax exemptions for small unit, supportive housing
- working with UBCM to develop new incentives to encourage smaller lot sizes and smaller homes
- climate change
- legislation to require methane capture from landfills
- Green Building Code
- Green Cities Project
- agreed to respond to the Attorney General's Ministry Green Paper on limitation periods with two recommendations:
 - set the basic limitation period at two years; and
 - reduce the ultimate limitation period from 30 to 10 years.

The latter recommendation is consistent with long standing UBCM policy.

- reviewed the 'Modernization Strategy' that the province is proposing for the Building Code and the four major shifts being proposed:

Shift 1: Clearly defined authorities and accountabilities for the oversight of building construction.

Shift 2: A responsive, timely framework and effective tools for decision making.

Shift 3: Predictable, consistent oversight processes.

Shift 4: Managing the distribution of liability and risk effectively.

The following recommendations were endorsed by the Executive:

- third party enforcement by local government remain a local community decision;

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- gaps in province wide enforcement be addressed through the BC Safety Authority;
- local government consider province-wide mandatory third party inspection of buildings designed for public occupation;
- alternative solutions remain a local government decision and that if independent appeal and approval of alternative solutions is established that local governments do not assume the liability;
- advocate for more education and assistance for local governments to adopt consistent review processes for alternative solutions.
- received a report on the recent activities of the Local Government Leadership Academy including that Rex Murphy has been confirmed as the second keynote speaker for the June 13-15 Forum and planning for other Forum sessions is going well. The LGLA Board members are awaiting a response from the First Nations Leadership Council on potential First Nations representation on the LGLA Board. The LGLA Governance Committee is in the process of recruiting a part-time Program Manager who will be tasked with developing the ongoing curriculum for the Academy;
- were advised that the rezoning and development permits were approved by the City of Victoria, for the new Municipal House. The transfer of property (525 Government Street) from the Province of BC to UBCM has been formally announced by the Premier.
- received a report on the current status of the Gas Tax Management.
- advised that over 300 applications had been received for the current intake of the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund program. Decisions are expected in June 2007.
- received an update on UBCM's most ambitious ever schedule of spring conferences: The Effective Electoral Area Director; BC Local Government Leadership; Treaty Negotiations; Environment Conference. Go to CivicNet (Events) for further details and registration.
- agreed to provide financial assistance to Islands Trust under the Legal Assistance program.
- reviewed and responded to a variety of member and provincial government correspondence.
- confirmed a number of appointments including: Single Business Licence Initiative – Advisory Committee: Councillor Brenda Binnie and Mayor Ella Brown.
- concluded at this meeting the first complete review and reorganization of UBCM Executive Policies. These policies were established in the early 1980s and largely guide UBCM operations. While they have been amended or added to over the last twenty plus years this is the first review and reorganization.

COMMITTEES

Presidents Committee

The Committee reviewed and made recommendations on:

- the responses to the member satisfaction survey.
- an interest allocation policy for the Local Government Program Services.
- investigating the implications of a 2.33 accrual rate for Police/Fire pensions and to communicate to members and seek comments.
- authorizations for consulting services for the construction phase of Municipal House.

The Committee also discussed the 2007 Community Excellence Awards, recent developments with the Picture BC initiative and "seniors" initiatives.

MINISTER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, HON. COLIN HANSEN

The Presidents Committee met with the Minister of Economic Development, the Hon. Colin Hansen to discuss the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA). Committee members indicated that the membership had expressed concerns about the implications of extending the Agreement to local government and advised that concerns continue to be raised Area Association meetings. The Minister indicated that his staff are responding to the enquiries and concerns and are working to get out as much information as possible on the Agreement. The Minister agreed to work with UBCM on the following course of action:

- confirmation from the Minister to UBCM members that consultation will take place with local governments.
- invite UBCM to appoint a member to the provincial negotiating team in a manner similar to treaty negotiations and

RCMP contract renewal.

- develop a consultation agreement under section 277 of the Community Charter.

MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION, HON KEVIN FALCON

The two principle topics of discussion were the review of BC Transit and concerns of winter road maintenance. The Minister commented that the results of the review were generally favourable and that the recent provincial budget had increased funding to provide for increased transit service hours. It was agreed that a summary of the review would be prepared and released. After a discussion on road maintenance contracts and reviews it was agreed to consider a session at the convention on the topic.

Community Economic Development Committee

The Committee met and discussed a number of matters:

- reviewed the highlights of the new provincial Energy Plan;
- will be seeking more local government input on Bill C-45, the proposed Federal Fisheries Act;
- considered minor amendments to the MOU on Offshore Oil and Gas with a view to signing for another 2 year term;
- did not endorse referred resolution B174 on Transmission Line Routing Policy;
- will investigate holding a trilateral (local, provincial, federal) conference specifically to address tools for local governments to address pine beetle. The Committee also met with Ministers Coleman and Neufeld.

MINISTER OF FORESTS AND RANGE, HON. RICH COLEMAN

The Minister advised that recommendations will be coming forward within a few weeks in response to the Log Export Review. In regards to mountain pine beetle, he indicated that to date \$.5 billion has been spent by the Province to address MPB and discussions would be taking place with the federal government to discuss the federal funding allocation of \$200 million for MPB. With respect to communities he advised that this type of tenure continues to be a priority and that the pricing policy for community forest licence holders would remain in place.

MINISTER OF ENERGY, MINES & PETROLEUM RESOURCES, HON. RICHARD NEUFELD

The Committee put forward some specific questions related to the new Energy Plan. The Minister indicated that there were no specific details yet with respect to financial incentives for local

governments to shift to hybrid vehicles; further information would be coming. In regard to the BioEnergy Strategy, he indicated that BC Hydro had issued a call for expressions of interest for use of beetle wood as part of the Strategy and 80 expressions of interest have been received. He also indicated that by 2010 there would be revisions to the building code to reflect new energy efficiency standards (R2000 or greater). As well the Minister provided the Committee with copies of the IPP guidebook that the Ministry committed to preparing in response to members concerns about Bill 30, specifically to ensure that local governments understood the opportunities for public and local government consultation and engagement. A copy is now posted on the UBCM website under Featured Policy Topics/Independent Power Projects.

Environment Committee

The Committee also reviewed and approved the 2007 UBCM Environment Conference framework, which focuses on the building of effective partnerships amongst all orders of government for environmental management. After much discussion, the Committee recommended to the Executive to not endorse the "Plastax" resolution calling for a tax on plastic bags. However, the Committee noted the need for UBCM to encourage the plastics industry to both increase the recycleability of plastic bags and to work with local governments on options for enhancing plastic bag reuse, reduction, and recycling. In addition, the Committee directed staff to draft the terms of reference of a Sewerage System Regulation (SSR) working group based on the SSR survey results, which demonstrated that the Regulation has caused significant implementation concerns and issues province-wide.

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, HON. BARRY PENNER

The Environment Committee met with the Honourable Barry Penner, Minister of the Environment, to discuss two key environmental issues: contaminated sites and municipal wastewater. The Committee discussed the Province's proposed interim site profile process for contaminated sites, and the need to ensure the full indemnification of local governments under the process. The Minister committed to the establishment of a working group of UBCM representatives and industry to review the site profile process.

The Committee also raised several key points on the CCME municipal wastewater strategy, particularly the need to ensure that funding options are in place prior to identifying timelines for

the implementation of the strategy. Ministry staff acknowledged that this was the approach they were taking, and identified that 13 local governments are affected by the proposed strategy's shift to secondary treatment of wastewater.

Healthy Communities

The Committee received the first Community Health Promotion Fund Annual Report - a very effective report outlining the initiatives that have been funded through the Fund. Members also approved that UBCM provide \$5000 of funding from the Community Health Promotion Fund to assist with the development of the Community Health and Food Access resource. Committee members were provided with an update on the UBCM relationship with the BC Healthy Communities Initiative and discussed the various initiatives underway by the BC Healthy Living Alliance including a healthy eating strategy, tobacco use reduction strategy and a third strategy related to increasing physical activity. Committee members also received a report on new provincial smoking legislation and requested the establishment of a web-based listing of the various health agencies, their initiatives and related funding programs to assist communities.

MINISTER OF HEALTH, HON. GEORGE ABBOTT

The Committee met with the Honourable George Abbott, Minister of Health. They provided the Minister with an update on the funding provided to local governments under the Community Health Promotion Fund and a report on the activities of the BC Healthy Communities Initiative. The Committee advised that a major policy priority this year was to address ways to improve local government-Health Authority communications and relationships.

Convention

Planning for the 2007 Convention is well underway. At the meeting on April 19, the Committee discussed several aspects of the program including the Welcome Reception, the submissions process for Clinics and Workshops and Partner's Program choices. The Committee also determined that a dance will be held at this year's Annual Banquet and agreed to have the Province's Green City Awards on the program.

Community Safety

The Committee met with staff from the Ministry of Transportation to discuss highway standards and public safety across the province. The idea of holding a session on highway issues at the 2007 UBCM Convention was discussed.

The Committee discussed the measures that needed to be taken in regard to the RCMP contract negotiations and recommended a number of follow-up initiatives.

The Executive also considered Committee actions on the following issues:

- write the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General and request clarification as to what the costs to local government may be in implementing PRIME.
- endorsed a WorkSafeBC proposal to provide broad coverage to volunteer firefighters to include emergency response duties and public relations, subject to discussions with the Volunteer Firefighters Association of BC;
- send out a notice to local government informing them of the review of the Railway Safety Act, when public consultations will be held in British Columbia and requesting that they forward any submissions to UBCM;
- send a notice to local government outlining the information that has been received on the federal funding of police positions in urban areas;
- requested that the federal and provincial government fund a five year plan for the Fraser River debris trap;
- requested federal funding for flood protection measures and that a federal-provincial agreement be developed to address this issue on a long term basis;
- proposed that the UBCM Executive establish a Task Force on Homelessness to identify best practices, act as a clearinghouse for information and identify the responsibilities of each level of government.

First Nations Relations

MINISTER OF ABORIGINAL RELATIONS & RECONCILIATION, HON. MIKE DE JONG

The First Nations Relations Committee met with the Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. Discussions focused on the failed ratification vote by the Lheidli T'enneh community, overlapping land claims and funding for local governments in treaty negotiations.

Regarding overlapping land claims, the Minister indicated that the Province would take a more active role in the future in consulting other First Nations. When the BC Treaty process was set up, the three Principals agreed First Nations would resolve overlap issues amongst themselves. Generally, First Nations with overlapping claims have had dialogue but it has been inconclusive. The Province recognizes its need to consult with First Nations before making decisions.

The Committee expressed an interest in having a transparent approach to funding local governments participation in treaty negotiations. The Minister indicated his interest in having a long-term funding regime in place that plans for a longer term than 12 months. He also indicated the Province has an interest in disbursing resources strategically to those geographic areas that are priorities for BC.

In follow up, the Committee agreed to obtain additional information from Treaty Advisory Committees (TACs) on their annual budget and year-end financial reports, and any other relevant information from local governments, to assist UBCM with discussions on funding with the Province. The Committee also

discussed TACs inability to share confidential treaty information with other TAC groups and, in some cases within a TAC. This prevents TAC groups from acting in a concerted manner on issues. The Committee approved a recommendation that UBCM communicate its concern with the Province regarding the need to share confidential treaty information within and among treaty advisory committees.

The Committee also received an update on planning of the UBCM conference, Final Treaty Agreements: Examining Local Government Interests, on May 23 – 24, 2007.

Tourism Task Force

Tourism Task Force members reviewed potential funding formulae for Phase 2 of the Community Tourism Program. Work to finalize these formulae and accompanying guidelines for the program will be completed at a follow-up meeting. The Task Force also reviewed the status of local government participation in Phase 1 of the Community Tourism Program.

DELEGATIONS

EXECUTIVE MEETS WITH THE HONOURABLE IDA CHONG,

Minister of Community Services and Minister Responsible for Seniors' and Womens' Issues

The Executive raised a number of key issues including provincial budget initiatives, the single business license initiative and the extension of the federal gas tax agreement for discussion with the Minister. In terms of the provincial budget, the Minister acknowledged the Province's desire to have municipalities with populations over 25,000 identify in their official community plans areas for supportive housing by 2008. The Minister sought input on initiatives designed to facilitate affordable housing including changes to funding and transfer payments to ensure integrated regional transportation and housing, development cost charges exemptions, and a new assessment class and tax exemptions for small unit, supportive housing.

As part of the Province's green agenda, the Minister noted that a Cabinet committee on climate change had been developed as part of the provincial goal of reducing green house gases by 33% by 2020. The Ministry of Community Services is also working with the Ministry of Environment on potential legislation to require methane capture from landfills, as well as the development of a green building code. The Minister also provided the Executive with an update in the Green Cities Project.

Minister Chong also discussed the single business initiative, designed to establish a harmonized business framework throughout the Province. Discussions centered around whether the initiative was envisioned as establishing a number of inter-municipal licensing schemes or the development of a single business license for all trades.

The Minister also commented on the federal budget announcement to extend the Gas Tax Agreement by another four years, which would provide an additional \$1 billion in infrastructure investments for local governments.