

Highlights of the UBCM Executive Meeting held on January 25, 2008

The January meeting is the second Executive meeting of the year. Nine standing committees/ task forces met and a meeting of the Area Association Presidents was held as part of Thursday's schedule. During the full Executive meeting on Friday, members met with the Honourable Ida Chong, Minister of Community Services to discuss a variety of issues.

EXECUTIVE DECIDES

- established policy objectives related to local government participation in the **Building Canada Fund**, a comprehensive federal infrastructure program that includes a Communities Component for local governments under 100,000 population and a Major Infrastructure Component that includes provincial, private sector and municipalities over 100,000 population. The Executive recommended that:

- a significant increase in the size of the Communities Component (currently set at a minimum of \$111 million over 8 years) so that that the funding available is more in line with previous programs.
- an allocation be set aside within the Major Infrastructure Component for the larger municipalities.

At their November meeting the Executive asked for direct involvement in the negotiations to finalize the Communities Component agreement and Community Affairs Minister Ida Chong has now invited UBCM's participation in the current round of talks set to begin very soon.

- received reports on the development of a **new Public Health Act**. While some significant progress has been made to address local government interests, the Executive will be conveying remaining concerns regarding maintaining current local government powers under the Health Act and about the possible scope of new powers of the Minister and Cabinet in relation to local governments

- in response to the emergence of a number of regional district issues, the President has appointed a **Regional District task force** comprised of:

- President, Susan Gimse
- First VP, Robert Hobson
- Director Terry Raymond
- Director Eileen Benedict
- Mayor Terry Lake

- indicated UBCM support for the FCM recommendations outlined in the National Action Plan on **Housing and Homelessness**.

- supported legal funding assistance to Islands Trust v. Ganges Marina

- received a status report on the current provincially funded programs administered by UBCM under the **Local Government Program Services** and the federally funded **Gas Tax/Public Transit Management Services**, also administered by UBCM's Victoria Operations.

- approved that additional work be undertaken on the **fiscal imbalance** resolution adopted at the November Executive meeting.

In keeping with the approved resolution on fiscal imbalance, identified a number of additional short term and medium term financial initiatives to bring forward to the provincial government.

- received an update on **TILMA** discussions between UBCM, the Province and the two Alberta municipal associations.
- advised of the status of work on the **Green Communities Committee**.

This committee was established under the terms of the Climate Action Charter. To date the terms of reference have been approved and the committee has been advised of various provincial initiatives underway with respect to climate change. Three working committees have been identified. One will be focused on **urban strategies** and actions and a second will focus on **rural strategies** and actions. A third group will be more technical in nature and will function on **carbon neutrality** issues.

The Green Communities Committee has agreed to focus efforts to begin working with practical ideas that communities can share now. The formation of the subcommittees is underway and supporting resources are being identified.

The Committee was also in full agreement with the need to begin communicating decisions to a wider audience including the UBCM membership and provincial ministries. A communications bulletin will be distributed to the membership shortly.

- adopted the following framework regarding the development of a new **fire services delivery model**:

UBCM support the development of a new model for the delivery of fire services based on the following general principles outlined in UBCM policy:

- local public services should be provided by a democratically elected responsible, accountable and accessible local government.
- ultimate determination of the local public interest in terms of local responsibilities lies with locally elected representatives; including the freedom to determine the level of local expenditures and taxation.
- local government liability must be limited to cases where negligence is proven.
- local government should have access to sufficient revenue to support essential local services.
- access to additional revenue should be provided when local government is assigned new responsibilities.

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

- senior government policies and regulations that affect local government should respect the varying needs and conditions of different areas of the province.

- financial assistance should be provided to local governments by senior governments when their policies over-ride local priorities or impose an additional financial burden on local government and that assistance should equate to the added cost burden.

UBCM support the implementation and development of a new model for the delivery of fire services which:

- recognizes the autonomy of local governments to determine service delivery;

- recognizes that local government is accountable to the local taxpayer for the level and type of services provided;

- increases local flexibility in the utilization of fire service resources – such as the ability to use a risk based model in the allocation of fire service resources;

- enhances the financial resources available to provide fire services and recognizes that the province and other provincial agencies which are benefiting from the delivery of fire services contribute to the cost of these services;

- provides liability protection to local government when it is responding to a request for fire services outside its local boundaries;

- promotes the development of mutual aid agreements and the enhancement of the delivery of regional fire services where it is agreed to by the local governments in the area;

- promotes the development of cooperation agreements between local fire service providers and provincial agencies to ensure a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities; and

UBCM support measures to strengthen the Office of the Fire Commissioner - research, planning, coordination, training and public education related to both fire fighting and fire prevention.

COMMITTEES

Presidents

The Committee met and indicated action on the following matters:

- undertake to develop the arguments and architecture for a new revenue sharing program.
- will prepare a report on alternative **revenues sources** such as:
 - transfer of school tax;
 - transfer of a portion of the property purchase tax;
 - transfer a portion provincial fuel tax.
- pursue for immediate implementation a two-pronged **action plan** of:
 - proposals that support implementation of provincial objectives;
 - proposals that respond to 2008 opportunities.
- enter into a partnership with Civicinfo on the Professionals Directory component of the Network*book.

Environment

The Committee received two delegations from the Ministry of Environment. The first delegation included Zita Botellho, Manager, Strategic Water Initiatives, and Randy Cairns, Water Policy Advisor from the Water Stewardship Division. The delegation outlined their intentions to modernize the **Water Act** over the next three years, and sought advice on the best methods for local government engagement. The Committee also received a delegation on **provincial air quality objectives** for PM 2.5 (particulate matter) which included Natalie Suzuki, Senior Air Quality Science Specialist, and Glen Okraneitz, Manager, Air Protection Section. The delegation outlined the Province's intention to establish provincial ambient air quality criteria for PM_{2.5} (particulate matter 2.5 µm or smaller), which would address objective 24-hour and annual averages, as well as longer-term planning goals.

The Committee also made recommendations to the Executive to:

- discuss the provision of assistance to small communities in implementing the CCME **municipal wastewater strategy** with the Ministry of Environment;
- meet with the Ministry of Environment to discuss liability protection for local governments under the site profile process for **contaminated sites**; and
- support the Ministry of Environment's **Wildlife Conflict** Operator Training and Certification Program through the provision of a steering committee representative and provide staff advisory services where appropriate.

Healthy Communities

The Committee made recommendations to the Executive to:

- accept the proposal from the Minister of Health, the Hon. George Abbott, to review the progress on the implementation of the 2003 report and recommendations on **capital cost sharing with Regional Hospital Districts**. This review had been agreed to at the 2007 Convention.
- adopt a phased approach to develop a policy paper on **home support services**.
- agree to distribute a summary of the **Conversation on Health** report to members and to advise the minister that UBCM supports continued support for community health promotion by local governments.

The Committee also reviewed a report on the **regulatory framework for food processing** particularly as it relates to community events such as bake sales, potluck dinners, farmers' market sales and community fund raisers and have asked staff to investigate further. The Committee advised of the imminent launch of a new **Healthy Food and Beverage Sales** grants programs being administered by UBCM under the auspices of the BC Healthy Living Alliance.

Community Economic Development

The Committee met and received a delegation from Nick Crisp, Executive Director, MEMPR responsible for the **Oil and Gas Regulatory Review** Initiative. Mr. Crisp provided an overview of some of the elements that are proposed in a **new Oil and Gas Activities Act**. The Committee also made the following recommendations to the Executive:

- signal support for the work underway to coordinate **energy conservation and efficiency** initiatives
- provide information to, and seek input from, the membership on the reintroduced federal **Fisheries Act** (Bill C32).
- recommended the following with respect to 2007 referred resolutions:
 - **B142 Provincial Single Business Licence Initiative**
Endorsed
 - **LR7 Single Business Licence**
Endorsed
 - **B143 Small Business Lens**
That the report be received for information.
 - **B178 Adoption of Sustainable Aquaculture Recommendations**
Tabled the resolution
- seek additional information on the federal government's recently announced \$1 billion Community Development Trust.

Convention

The Committee reviewed final results of the 2007 Convention – including an in-depth analysis of Delegate Evaluation results. Initial planning items for the **2008 Convention**, such as programming and fees were also discussed. The following key directives were approved by the Executive:

- Tuesday clinics include one or two clinics per forum interest area to a maximum of six and that Wednesday, Thursday and Friday clinics be limited to four (or five if exceptional circumstances) per day.
- minimum of four half-day study sessions and two study tours be planned for Monday and that other local governments be invited to propose Monday sessions for consideration at the next meeting.
- a series of four (five maximum) concurrent workshops and/or tours be planned for the Thursday afternoon.

That registration fees and sponsorship goals be confirmed as follows:

- Member registration fee be \$385
- Non-member registration fee be \$485
- Provincial Government meeting support fee at \$95
- Sponsorship goal of \$140,000

Community Safety

The Committee met with Kevin Begg, Assistant Deputy Minister and Director of Police Services, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and ministry staff who provided it with an update on **RCMP contract discussions**, the provincial view of the recommendations of the Brown Task Force on the RCMP, and federal funding for new police officers.

The Committee also met with Robert G. Kroeker, Executive Director, Civil Forfeiture Office, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General provided the Committee with an update on the **Civil Forfeiture Act** and outlined ways that the legislation can assist local communities.

The Committee made recommendations to the Executive to:

- establish a Task Force to deal with the issue of **homelessness** and that it use an integrated approach in addressing the issue.
- write the federal Minister of Public Safety and the provincial Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General and request that the federal and provincial government undertake a full evaluation of the **Community Safety Officer** pilot program.
- distribute a copy of the report and **Scrap Metal Dealer Regulation** Bylaw developed by a working group in the Lower Mainland to all local governments in the province.

First Nations Relations

The Committee's discussions focused on the BC Supreme Court ruling: **Tsilhqot'in v. British Columbia** and local governments' role in BC's New Relationship with First Nations. The Committee made the following recommendations to the Executive:

- The Committee review other legal opinions and reviews on the BC Supreme Court ruling: **Tsilhqot'in v. British Columbia** before seeking a legal opinion on the implications for local governments.
- Consider BC's **New Relationship** with First Nations, and local governments' role in that initiative, as a pre-conference policy session at Convention.
- Pursue a new UBCM protocol/agreement with the Province on local governments' role in New Relationship activities at a Committee meeting with Minister de Jong (to be scheduled in April 2008).
- Regarding the Community to Community Forum program, that:
 - a funding request for \$70,000 be forwarded to each the Ministry of Community Services and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada following approval from First Nations Summit;
 - maximum available grant for the C2C program be amended to \$5,000; and
 - deadline to hold events be amended to the end of the fiscal year for both spring and fall applications.

Resolutions

After discussing resolutions sessions attendance, delegate feedback, increased numbers of resolutions submitted, and provision of information to members, the Committee made recommendations to the Executive to:

- respond, in writing, to member correspondence on resolutions issues.
- work with the Convention Committee to reduce background noise during plenary sessions.
- solicit a staff report on options to address "off the floor" resolutions in a manner not disruptive to the flow of the regular resolutions sessions.
- prepare a circular to the membership, to:
 - advise that they have discussed the concerns raised by members;
 - alert members to resources for developing resolutions;
 - request that members avoid submitting repetitive resolutions;

- encourage members to limit the number of resolutions submitted;
- request of members to ensure that a council / board representative attends resolutions sessions.

- amend the Gold Star criteria as follows:
 - 8) Resolution must be submitted to relevant Area Association prior to UBCM.

Regional District Task Force

The newly established task force met and agreed that it would not conduct another issue identification process but would focus on the work done in 2006 whereby an extensive process was undertaken. The Task Force will work with the Ministry in a joint process involving **regional districts** and will further explore issues such as expert advice to regional districts and improved communication about existing regional district powers and tools.

DELEGATIONS

MEETING BETWEEN HONOURABLE IDA CHONG, MINISTER OF COMMUNITY SERVICES, AND THE UBCM EXECUTIVE

Minister Chong attended the regular meeting with newly appointed Deputy Minister, Dale Wall. The Minister opened the meeting by commenting on the **Build Canada Fund**. She discussed the BC allocation and the two components of the program – the **Communities Component** and the **Major Infrastructure Component**. The Minister confirmed that UBCM would be invited to participate in further discussions as with previous infrastructure programs.

President Gimse advised the Minister that she had met with the Solicitor General, John Les regarding the special resolution on **pawn shops**. She advised that the Solicitor General was supportive of UBCM's position and indicated that he would investigate potential courses of action.

The Minister provided updates on a number of local government grant programs. She noted that the **Traffic Fine Revenue Sharing Program** with an \$8 million increase in 2007/08, will likely now plateau around \$59-60 million. As well, Year 3 of the Small Community / RD grant program will increase by another \$7 million in 2008/09 to \$21 million over the 2004/05 level; discussions are underway to extend the federal **Gas Tax** program and she also noted that the **Local Motion Fund, Towns for Tomorrow and Spirit Square** programs have been well subscribed. She also announced that the **Green Cities** program is adding a new partnership category to recognize partnerships with a non-profit organization or developers.

The Minister addressed the Province's interest in promoting **twinning** arrangements between BC communities and Asia Pacific communities and asked communities to indicate what barriers prevent, or what assistance might support, local governments with these partnerships.

With respect to **regional districts**, the President indicated that an Executive task force had now been struck and are ready to engage provincial staff in discussions on regional district matters. The Minister confirmed her support for this process. And finally, the Minister indicated that with respect to climate change, the Province is pleased to see some 100 local governments signing Charters and advised that the Province would be responding to the proposals put forward in the UBCM's 2007 policy paper that would assist local governments to support **climate change** action plans and build green communities.

Please visit www.civicnet.bc.ca to download an electronic copy of the Executive Release.