



Speech from the Throne

The Speech from the Throne on July 24, 2001 contained many now familiar "New Era" commitments. Of interest from a local government perspective were some new proposals on:

Community Charter

.... government will also initiate a far-reaching reform of local governance. It began with the appointment of a new Minister of State for Community Charter.

In this session, legislation creating a Community Charter Council will be introduced. The Council will be tasked with preparing draft Community Charter legislation which will be submitted by January 15, 2002, for debate in the spring session.

Provincial Congress

(The government) will host an annual "Provincial Congress" that will bring together all B.C. MLAs, MPs and Senators. This forum will also include the mayors from our province's 12 largest cities, the presidents of the five regional municipal associations, the president of the Union of B.C. Municipalities, and aboriginal leaders.

The Congress will help to establish an inclusive understanding of B.C.'s agenda and will aim to publicly identify and overcome issues of regional alienation within Canada and British Columbia. My government trusts all participants will accept this initiative in the spirit in which it is intended, to forge new linkages and communication between jurisdictions, regions and, above all, between people. (For information, the current 12 largest municipalities are Vancouver, Surrey, Burnaby, Richmond, Abbotsford, Coquitlam, Saanich, Delta, Kelowna, Langley Township, North Vancouver District, Kamloops).

Question Period

Under this proposal, British Columbians serving in a range of elected capacities outside of the Legislature will be invited to submit written questions to the Speaker. (UBCM understands this will include locally elected council and board members) Questions will be drawn by lot and then put to the government by MLAs during Question Period.

Core Service Review

Each and every program, agency, board, commission and Crown Corporation will be thoroughly assessed to ensure that every function assumed by government has, in fact, a compelling public purpose and that it reflects our current fiscal situation.

Market Campaign for Forest Practices and Products

We must not allow an unfounded propaganda war waged against our workers, communities and forest industry to succeed. As promised, my government will apply one percent of all direct forest revenues, not including "super stumpage," to promote global marketing of B.C.'s forest practices and products.

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

Health Care

In addition to a rural and remote training and support program, the government will establish provincial health standards; provide a five million-dollar rural travel assistance program; increase residency positions; enhance training for ambulance attendants; and make a substantial commitment to tele-health and increased locum support.

Aboriginal

Efforts will be redoubled to address urban aboriginal issues, to build capacity, and to negotiate reasonable interim measures agreements.

Government will honour its pledge to fast-track treaty talks, under the Attorney General's guidance as the Minister Responsible for Treaty Negotiations.

Within the next year, the government will fulfill its commitment to hold a provincial referendum on the principles that will guide government's approach to treaty negotiations. In this session, a legislative committee will be appointed to consult with all British Columbians, including First Nations. That committee will draft the questions that will be asked in the referendum.

The government will also offer to negotiate delegated models of self-government with First Nations, to ensure that all aboriginal governments have the same legal status in British Columbia as they do in every other province.

Also of interest were the announcements regarding:

- Crown corporations to be held accountable by a committee of the Legislature.
- doubling physical fitness and amateur sport funding to \$44 million over 4 years.
- a new Olympic Arts Fund will also be established with an initial commitment of five million dollars this year and matching commitments in the years to follow.
- three year rolling funding envelopes to improve school board long-term planning and budgeting.
- the Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services will focus on ensuring that the day-to-day services that are important in every community are delivered in a thoughtful, accountable and effective way.
- eliminating interprovincial trade barriers (This most likely confirms that B.C. will remove the exemption for the MASH sector from the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT). This was discussed by Cabinet recently and they directed that consultation be held with UBCM).
- ensuring more equitable sharing of federal transportation funding.

Of a particular interest to UBCM and local governments using government relations specialists will be the following announcement:

A law will be introduced in this session to require the registration of professional lobbyists who are paid to lobby government on behalf of their clients. The list of registered lobbyists will be open to the public and available at the Office of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Commissioner.

UBCM HAS MOVED DOWN THE HALL!

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