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Provincial Announcements of Interest

This circular reports on three recent announcements from the provincial government of interest to local government.

Regional Transportation Advisory Committees

Structure Announced and Nominations for Chair and Members Sought

The Ministry of Transportation is establishing eight Regional Transportation Advisory Committees (RTACs) throughout British Columbia that will identify regional transportation needs and advise the minister on regional priorities. The province indicates that the purpose of establishing the RTACs is "to ensure business, industry and government stakeholders input into provincial transportation planning, investment and priority setting to support the reasonable and accountable management of the provincial transportation system." These RTACs will participate in the ministry's annual planning processes and feed into the Provincial Strategic Transportation Plan.

The Province has indicated that the eight RTACs will be advisory bodies rather than financial authorities and control of transportation investments will remain with the province. The Terms of Reference indicate that RTACs will respect that transportation within a region should be viewed as a whole, and therefore the activities of the RTAC include to "take a regional view of all forms of transportation including, but not limited to public roads, public transit, airports, ferries, ports, rail and transportation demand management measures."

The RTAC boundaries will be based on regional district boundaries except in the Bulkley-Nechako, which has been divided into coastal and interior sections. There will not be

an RTAC established in the GVRD, where Translink, a regional transportation authority, already exists. Maps of the RTAC boundaries and the complete terms of reference are available on the Ministry of Transportation web site, at www.th.gov.bc.ca/RTAC/rtac.htm.

Each RTAC will comprise up to 15 members appointed by the minister through a nomination and application process. In RTAC regions that have two or fewer Regional Districts, the RDs will have 2 representatives/RD. In RTAC regions with 3 or more RDs, the RDs will have 1 representative/RD. Committee membership will be no more than 50% local elected officials, and the remaining selected from business and industry stakeholders. Local government officials interested in sitting on an RTAC will have to fill out a Candidate Profile and Declaration Application Form, including applicants who wish to represent the Regional Districts.

Nominations are being accepted for the position of RTAC Chair (deadline January 24, 2003) and Members (deadline February 7, 2003). Terms of appointment for Chairs will be 2 years, and for members will be 3 years, coinciding with election terms. Complete descriptions of the skill profile for these positions and applications are available on the Ministry of Transportation web site, at www.th.gov.bc.ca/RTAC/rtac.htm.

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Consumer Legislation Review

Will include Cemetery Act

On January 2, 2003, the provincial government released a discussion paper on consolidating and improving consumer protection legislation and is inviting public and industry input in this review. Anyone interested in submitting comments to the government is asked to do so by January 31, 2003.

The proposed new Consumer Protection Act will combine and replace the following existing seven statutes:

- Cemetery and Funeral Services Act
- Consumer Protection Act
- Cost of Consumer Credit Disclosure Act
- Credit Reporting Act
- Debt Collection Act
- Trade Practice Act
- Travel Agents Act

The government is looking for input in a number of areas, including:

- simplifying the legal framework for consumer protection
- identifying opportunities for self-regulation
- streamlining or eliminating legislated contract requirements that override individual consumer/supplier contracts
- developing standard consumer legislation that will eliminate the need for industry-specific legislation
- finding simple and effective ways for consumers and business to seek redress when a transaction fails

The consultation material for this initiative is available on the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General's web site at: www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/legislation. Feedback may be sent via the web site feedback form or to:

Consumer Policy
 Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
 PO Box 9296 Stn Prov Govt
 Victoria, BC V8W 9J8
 Fax: (250) 953-4072

Ambulance Service Core Review

When the provincial government restructured the regional health authorities in December 2001, it was recognized that a review of future governance and operational directions for the BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) was also required.

To this end, the Ministry of Health Services engaged the firm of KPMG Consulting to review the governance and operations of the Emergency Health Services Commission and the BCAS within the framework established by the government core services review process. UBCM participated in a workshop as part of the review process last June.

UBCM is advised that the KPMG review was completed in summer of 2002, with this report serving as a resource to the continuing review of BCAS now being completed by the Ministry. This internal review, being lead by consultant Peter Cameron, is assessing the key issues relating to BCAS' governance and operational structure, with the view to making recommendations for improved operational efficiency, performance and accountability. Mr. Cameron is now in the process of completing his review, and will be forwarding his recommendations to the government for consideration and final decisions regarding implementation.

UBCM has been told to expect a public report on the government's intentions for the BCAS before the end of February.