



Premier Makes Significant Announcements at UBCM Convention

The Premier made a number of significant announcements during his annual address to UBCM. Among them are the following:

100% of Net Traffic Fines to be Transferred to Municipalities

We all want to live in safe communities. When you think of it, if people don't feel safe in their communities, the very quality of life that we want to celebrate disappears. If people can't walk down the streets feeling comfortably, if they can't use their community centres and their parks feeling comfortable and confident, we all lose something.

We know that local governments are in the best position to determine the kind of community priorities they have, to build safer communities throughout the province. We also know that they're in the best position to determine policing priorities.

So we said to you prior to the last election that we would return 75 per cent of net traffic fine revenue generated within municipal boundaries to your municipalities within our first term. We talked to your executive, and we thought we would be able to meet that objective in 2005; in fact, we expected to meet it next year. But today I can tell you we are going to meet that commitment this year, one year ahead of schedule.

In fact, we are going to exceed our commitment. Starting this year, 2004, we will be returning 100 per cent of all net traffic fines to the municipalities in your communities. That means more money for your policing, more for crime prevention, and more money to make your communities safer.

Community Opportunities Task Force established

We've come a long way in the last three years,

working in partnership with the UBCM. You led the way in Canada with your community charter. For over a year now, you've had the autonomy and the control over your destinies, that other municipalities across the country are wanting.

But there's more to be done as we reshape government to respond to the needs of our communities and the families that live there.

So today I am establishing a community opportunities task force to recommend how we can help you move forward to strengthen your communities, rural and urban, to meet the needs of the families you serve. I've asked former UBCM president Steve Thorlakson to co-chair the task force with Minister Coell. I've asked Frank Leonard, Donna Barnett, Herb Pond to join with them, as I've asked councillors Brenda Binnie and Marvin Hunt to do the same.

The community opportunities task force will report back to next year's convention with their recommendations on three areas of concern: regulatory reform, governance, and revenue sharing.

I want to say one thing about revenue sharing. Revenue sharing is not about raising taxes. As we've always said - and I started saying this when I was a member of the UBCM - there is only one taxpayer. We've always recognized that there is one wallet that supports all of our governments - whether they're local or provincial or federal. The question is not whether taxpayers are sending us enough of their resources; the question is how do we deliver services that people need as cost effectively as possible?

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Special \$25 million Grant for Community Promotion

I want you to be able to tell your stories. I want you to be able to show off your communities wherever you live in the province. The province will make a one-time grant of \$25 million to the UBCM to allow you to tell your stories of tourism across B.C.

I want you to understand this is going to be your money. You can use it how you see fit, whether it's for marketing or building products or connecting with other people.

With those two decisions (*the Premier also announced a doubling of Tourism BC's marketing budget*), I believe that we will make British Columbia tourism a powerhouse, and you will see benefits in every region of our great province.

We want to create gateways to British Columbia that showcase all of our products and our materials and our opportunities. We want to do that in Sparwood, in Valemount, in Prince Rupert. We want to build on the leadership that we've seen from the community of Golden. There is no part of the province that we don't want to celebrate British Columbia in. Our gateway projects working with you will make a huge difference.

The Premier also provided an update on the Picture BC initiative.

Safe Streets

Finally, you've made it clear to me at this convention that there is more we can do to improve public safety in our communities, that you support new tools to protect British Columbians from undue harassment and threatening behaviour. And we're going to advance that objective by bringing in a new Safe Streets Act and a new Trespass Act this fall.

I do want to recognize the work that Lorne Mayencourt and the safer streets committees have done. I also want to recognize the work of the UBCM as we move forward. The Solicitor General and the Attorney General look forward to working with you and continuing to build safer communities for all British Columbians.

Olympic Live Sites

In the weeks ahead you're going to hear much more about our specific plans for Olympic live sites. You know that it's a \$40-million project that is shared \$20 million-\$20 million between the federal and the provincial government. We want to get on with it. In November Minister Les and myself will bring together 100 or so Spirit of 2010 committees for a meeting to outline our Olympic Live centre program. We will also make sure that each municipality and local government in the province gets a full briefing on how that Olympic Live program will work.

I also want to outline a complementary initiative that will enable us to bring even more of your proposals to life.

I can tell you that two years ago when I announced Olympic Live in Whistler, it was a \$40-million program. I've had about \$400 million of ideas generated by you, in local government. We don't have that much, but we do have a way that we can springboard opportunities for each of you, and we intend to do that.

Task Force on mental illness, homelessness, and addictions

We need to improve shelter options for people who need safe housing. We need to improve drug and alcohol treatment programs to help those who want to break out of the cycle of dependency and dysfunction and despair that addictions create. In the months ahead you will hear much more about we intend to do that.

I'm asking Mayors Campbell, Lowe, Kinsley, Gray and McCallum to work with Ministers Locke, Brice, Coell and me to establish a framework for an integrated, comprehensive program to tackle the challenges of mental illness, homelessness, and addictions in our communities.

This is a great province. We can care for those in need and make our streets feel safer. People need clean, safe rooms. They need treatment for illness. They need counselling and support. They need training. They need jobs. To have all those things, we need a strong economy.