

April 6, 2009

UBCM Members
Attention: Mayor and Council / Chair and Board

Re: ELECTION READINESS STRATEGY

At the December 2008 Executive meeting, one of the priorities identified by the board for the coming year was the development of an election readiness strategy in advance of the provincial election. A review was undertaken of UBCM policy priorities and a strategy was drafted. Consideration was given to the new registration provisions of the Elections Act, and the implications that this would have on the type of strategy we developed. The Executive discussed both the policy elements and the type of strategy that we wished to adopt as part of the deliberations at the March meeting.

With respect to the type of strategy, the Executive discussed how proactive we wished to be in promoting local government interests and what the implications of our actions might be. Specifically, consideration was given to the new provisions in the Elections Act. Under the Act, UBCM would be required to register as a third party election advertiser if we were to transmit information, beyond our membership, related to any issue which may be associated with any political party during the election advertising campaign period. The Executive chose to limit UBCM activities to the membership level thereby not requiring us to register as a third party election advertiser. And, with the recent Supreme Court ruling on the Elections Act, UBCM wanted to take a cautious approach with respect to our activities.

Secondly, the Executive discussed UBCM's policy priorities. Seven theme statements emerged as broad policy areas where we felt there was extensive member support. These are provided on page 2 of this document. The Executive then incorporated these policy statements into our CIVICS 101 Strategy that we are pleased to provide to the membership. This information is designed to provide you with a summary of the policy priorities and the history behind the advocacy work that has been done to date in each of these areas. A broader more comprehensive overview of endorsed member policy positions can be found in the 2008 BC Communities Agenda that was adopted by the membership at last year's Convention. It also provided the framework for CIVICS 101 Strategy.

We hope you find the information useful. If you have any feedback or comments on the material please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,



Robert Hobson
UBCM President

UBCM POLICY STATEMENTS

1. UBCM members support the development of a partnership model to implement affordable housing and homelessness initiatives.
(Affordable Housing and Homelessness)
2. UBCM members support the establishment of economic development policies and programs and the development of transition plans for communities affected by the changing resource sector.
(Economic Diversification and Transition)
3. UBCM members support the establishment of an accelerated infrastructure program comprised of tripartite funding that would be intended to reduce the infrastructure deficit and act as an economic stimulus for communities.
(Infrastructure)
4. UBCM members support climate change initiatives that provide local governments with the tools and resources necessary to assist them in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
(Climate Change)
5. UBCM members support the development and implementation of crime prevention programs that will make their communities safe and secure places to live.
(Crime Prevention / Community Safety)
6. UBCM members support fuller integration between community and individual health with other sustainability objectives of local governments.
(Healthy Communities)
7. UBCM members support initiatives that promote effective working relationships between First Nations and local governments in both treaty negotiations and New Relationship activities.
(First Nations)

CIVICS 101



CIVICS 101

- C** Community Economic Diversification and Transition Planning
- I** Infrastructure Funding Accelerated
- V** Voice at the Table in the New Relationship
- I** Integrated Affordable Housing and Homelessness Strategy
- C** Climate Change Tools and Support
- S** Safe, Secure and Healthy Communities

C – Community Economic Diversification and Transition Planning

Broad Policy Statement:

UBCM members support the establishment of economic development policies and programs and the development of transition plans for communities affected by the changing resource sector.

Previous Resolutions and Policy Statements:

UBCM members have endorsed policy papers (2004 Resource Revenue Sharing; 2002 Forest Policy) and a number of resolutions that have sought to provide local governments with a greater level of control over the resources within their area (2007-B43, 2007-B179); improved consultation with resource industry and other governments (2005-B35; 2005-B36, 2005-B37) and a share of the wealth associated with the natural resource sector (2005-B39, 2005-B40, 2007-B44). Members have sought assured access to timber locally (2005-B32, 2006-B148). As well, in response to the devastation incurred by the pine beetle, members have sought more direct intervention on the part of provincial and federal governments. Requests have taken the form of education and retraining programs (2008-B46) and trust funds that would assist communities develop economic diversification strategies and transition plans in challenging economic times (2005-A5, 2005-A6, 2005-B38, 2006-B36, 2006-B41, 2006-B42, 2007-B144, 2008-B94, 2008-B95).

Membership Significance:

On February 10, 2009, Statistics Canada reported that more than 68,000 British Columbians lost their full time jobs in January as the BC's unemployment rate reached 6.1 %. The hardest-hit sector of the economy was manufacturing, which lost 18,000 jobs in January, followed by the construction industry that saw 10,000 jobs lost.

These statistics, while shocking, are no surprise to many resource-based communities who have been dealing with significant job losses for a number of years, specifically in the forest sector. Forest policy changes, industry restructuring, softwood lumber agreement and pine beetle have collectively taken their toll on communities. More recently, the realities of the global economic crisis have hit as communities such as Mackenzie, Campbell River, Port Alberni, Williams Lake and Quesnel have shut down mill operations leaving hundreds of workers without jobs. Over the years, similar downturns have been felt in the fishing industry, mining and other resource sectors.

UBCM has consistently endorsed resolutions and policy positions that have called on both provincial and federal governments to work with communities to develop long term economic development strategies and / or transition plans that will assist them to diversify and expand their economic potential. These types of strategies are necessary if communities are to survive the present economic downturn.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Provincial and federal governments work together to ensure that funding programs and assistance to communities and workers are coordinated to ensure maximum benefit.
2. Assistance be provided to communities that need to develop diversification strategies and long term economic development plans in response to the present economic situation.

I – Infrastructure Funding Accelerated

Broad Policy Statement:

UBCM members support the establishment of an accelerated infrastructure program comprised of tripartite funding that would be intended to reduce the infrastructure deficit and act as an economic stimulus for communities.

Previous Resolutions and Policy Statements:

Both the UBCM and FCM membership have endorsed a number of resolutions over the years calling for a permanent infrastructure program along with increased funding. The B.C. Communities Agenda that was adopted at the 2008 Convention called for the creation of a permanent, tripartite infrastructure program.

Membership Significance:

The infrastructure deficit for local governments in Canada is well documented. For years there has been inadequate funding dedicated to the infrastructure that forms the backbone of our communities. The introduction of the federal gas tax and the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Funding Program and the Canada-B.C. Infrastructure program have been welcome developments. However the latter two application-based programs were significantly over-subscribed, as was the case of the first intake of the Communities Component of the Build Canada Program. Simply put, there is more demand for infrastructure renewal than there is funding available.

The 2009 federal budget identified infrastructure renewal as a priority and provided significant new funding to support this commitment. As well the 2009 federal budget identified infrastructure investment as a means of economic stimulus. Investment in local government infrastructure was highlighted as a key component of this strategy. Local governments in B.C. urgently require accelerated infrastructure funding programs and it is essential that the funding identified by the federal government flows through to local governments in a timely and efficient manner.

Likewise, the 2009 provincial budget identifies infrastructure spending as a priority. The budget states the expectation that the Province will receive \$1 billion in funding from a variety of federal government funding programs and commits to matching that amount. While some funding provinces such as the Towns for Tomorrow Program are specifically identified for increases, the Provincial Capital Plan will be a key document that identifies infrastructure priorities and spending.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Provincial government matches federal initiative to accelerate funding in Build Canada programs from a 7-year time period to 2 years.
2. Provincial government matches federal government's top-up of Communities Component of Build Canada Program.
3. The funding under the Major Infrastructure Component of Build Canada identified for communities with a population greater than 100,000 is increased beyond current levels.
4. Local government infrastructure priorities are identified and included in the provincial capital budget.
5. New federal infrastructure stimulus funding is matched by the provincial government and can be accessed by local governments for large and small-scale priority projects.

V – Voice in New Relationship Negotiations with BC First Nations

Broad Policy Statement:

UBCM members support initiatives that promote effective working relationships between First Nations and local governments in both treaty negotiations and New Relationship activities.

Previous Resolutions and Policy Statements:

UBCM members endorsed resolutions and policy papers (1991, 1992) that call for consultation with local governments during the treaty process, and the identification and consideration of the impacts to local government prior to finalizing a treaty (1994-A3). Members also called for consultation with regional districts and trust committees before lands are added to First Nations treaty settlement post-treaty (2004-B88) and for consultation on any initiative to transfer crown land to First Nations (2007-B60).

UBCM members have also endorsed resolutions that support information sharing and mutual education among local governments and First Nations. For example, in 2002 UBCM called on the Province to establish an effective process for sharing information between local governments, negotiators, and aboriginal communities to ensure timely and effective consultation and treaty resolution (B66). Also, in 2007 members urged the Province to establish a mutual education program between First Nations and local governments to encourage understanding and foster positive relationships (B60).

Membership Significance:

UBCM signed previous agreements with the provincial government that ensure a voice for local government in treaty negotiations by securing a seat for local governments at the treaty table. With BC entering into the New Relationship with First Nations in 2005, UBCM has been working to ensure local governments have a voice in non-treaty negotiations as well. UBCM signed an expanded MOU with the Province in 2008. Early and ongoing consultations are commitments UBCM received in the MOU. The challenge now turns to implementation of these high level commitments and determining just how local governments will have a voice.

Local governments have been instrumental in finding practical solutions to treaty making because they have a voice in the process. Local governments have been directly involved in working out their post-treaty relationship with First Nations. For example, in the Lower Mainland, the Lower Mainland Treaty Advisory Committee was closely involved in developing the intergovernmental relations and services chapter for the Tsawwassen Final Agreement. Also, the City of Prince George, the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George and Lheidli T'enneh negotiated the innovative comprehensive master agreement that aimed to harmonize planning and land use, taxation, and servicing arrangements.

During both of these negotiations the Province supported local government in developing their working relationship with the First Nation.

Similar to the treaty process, local governments can be instrumental in finding practical solutions to non-treaty negotiations and there have been a few agreements where this has been the case. For example, agreements with the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations and Kamloops Indian Band have seen involvement by local government (District of Tofino and City of Kamloops respectively). However, how local governments are given a voice in other negotiations as per the MOU still remains to be seen.

In addition to the above, the provincial government is in discussions with the BC First Nations Leadership Council about developing legislation that would formally recognize Aboriginal Rights and Title. This follows the 2005 New Relationship Vision document where the Parties agreed to establish processes and institutions for shared decision-making about land and resources (e.g. land use planning, management, tenuring) and revenue sharing. Broad legislation on this topic would inevitably have implications for local government.

In response to a briefing on the proposed legislation, the President invited the Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation to meet with the UBCM Executive in March 2009. The Executive expressed concern that the proposed legislation appeared to be moving forward in the absence of local government consultation. Members specifically referenced the recently signed MOU with the Province that commits to early and ongoing consultation with local government on New Relationship activities. During the meeting, the Minister committed to establishing a process for consulting with local governments on the proposed legislation.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Provincial government consults local governments early and ongoing during non-treaty negotiations with First Nations on issues that may affect local government jurisdiction.
2. Local governments are broadly and adequately consulted on the proposed indigenous recognition and reconciliation act and the instruments that would follow it.
3. Provincial government continues to support the Community to Community forum program and other initiatives that strengthen the relationship between local governments and First Nations.

I – Integrated Affordable Housing and Homelessness Strategy

Broad Policy Statement:

UBCM members support the development of a partnership model to implement affordable housing and homelessness initiatives.

Previous Resolutions and Policy Statements:

In response to growing community concerns regarding affordable housing and homelessness the members at the 2008 UBCM Convention endorsed a policy paper entitled “Affordable Housing And Homelessness Strategy”.

The strategy endorsed by local government at the 2008 UBCM Convention called on the province to:

- develop and implement a Provincial Affordable Housing and Homeless Plan in cooperation with local government;
- establish a partnership model to promote cooperation and collaboration of local government, non-profit organizations and the business community with the provincial government;
- establish a provincial land bank and endowment fund to address affordable housing and homelessness;
- ensure there is sustainable long-term financial assistance to expand the capacity of local government;
- coordinate provincial ministry actions to ensure that the funding and resources are in place to fully address affordable housing and homelessness issues; and
- coordinate provincial ministry policy to ensure that it supports local government initiatives to address affordable housing and homelessness.

Local governments called for a national and provincial housing strategy, with sustained funding, including the use of surpluses and property transfer tax revenue, to support the development and maintenance of affordable housing for those in need, including non-market housing units; and incentives for the private sector construction of new rental housing including low income tax credits, GST exemptions, and capital cost depreciation allowances (2008-A3).

Membership Significance:

Over 60 local governments from across the province, responding to a UBCM survey in 2008, indicated that they were faced with the challenge of dealing with affordable housing and homelessness issues.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Increased funding for homeless shelters.
2. New funding for affordable housing.
3. Announcement of a strategy to promote cooperation and collaboration with local government.

C – Climate Change Tools and Support

Broad Policy Statement:

UBCM members support climate change initiatives that provide local governments with the tools and resources necessary to assist them in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Previous Resolutions and Policy Statements:

In the 2007 Environment Action Plan, the UBCM membership endorsed working with the Province on developing a joint local government-provincial government action plan for addressing climate change in British Columbia which includes: devising principles of joint collaboration; establishing working groups for identifying strategies for reducing greenhouse gases; and working with the Province on developing actions and options for local governments to reduce greenhouse gases.

Over the years, the UBCM membership has endorsed numerous resolutions calling for assistance in mitigating, and adapting, to the effects of climate change. In 2007, local governments requested assistance in funding the development and implementation of local government climate change adaptation strategies (B34). The membership also called on the senior orders of government to provide financial support as well as incentives designed to encourage energy efficiency as well as new technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (2007-B33). New tools such as carbon calculators have been requested to measure community carbon footprints (2008-B90), and local governments have called for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through the use of ethanol in fuel (2006-B27), infrastructure for non-GHG emitting transportation (2006-B110), energy efficient buildings (2006-B111), and the use of emissions standards (2005-B28, 2008-B76).

Membership Significance:

Local governments throughout the province are actively involved in initiatives designed to address climate change, the effects of which are increasingly visible through water shortages, forest fires and rising sea levels.

Communities large and small have engaged in a variety of projects designed to retrofit existing community infrastructure, develop efficient public transportation networks, draw energy from waste, and in general, reduce the carbon footprint of communities. From Ladysmith's organic waste diversion program, to Dawson Creek's municipal building retrofit program, to North Vancouver's district energy heating system, local governments in BC have demonstrated leadership in reducing their corporate and community greenhouse gas emissions.

To date, over 174 local governments have signed on to the Climate Action Charter, signaling their commitment to: becoming carbon neutral in their operations by 2012; measuring and reporting on their GHG emissions profile; and creating complete, compact, more energy efficient rural and urban communities. Support from the Province is key to the ability of local governments to meet their commitments under the Charter.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Local governments are provided with tools such as carbon calculators and inventory tools, and associated training support, to assist them in meeting their carbon neutral commitments
2. Local governments are provided with capacity building support to assist them in engaging in community greenhouse gas emission reduction initiatives.
3. Local government carbon offset programs are supported which allow for the sale or purchase of valid local offsets, and which can fund carbon offset projects within local government boundaries.
4. Capital funding for energy retrofit and conservation projects is provided to local governments to help them reduce both corporate and community wide emissions.

S – Safe, Secure and Healthy Communities

Broad Policy Statements:

UBCM members support the development and implementation of crime prevention programs that will make their communities safe and secure places to live.

UBCM members support fuller integration between community and individual health with other sustainability objectives of local governments.

Previous Resolutions and Policy Statements:

UBCM members over the years have supported measures calling for:

- increased prison sentences for violent crime;
- increased funding and new programs to address youth crime;
- funding to address Crystal Meth and other drug problems in local communities;
- laws to protect local communities from high risk offenders;
- increased funding for restorative justice and victim service programs;
- new powers to address marijuana grow-ops and drug labs in local neighbourhoods.

UBCM members have also endorsed several resolutions calling for

- adequate funding for Health Authorities, including for the purpose of promoting healthy living and chronic disease prevention (2007-B49; 2006-B126; 2004-B28; 2004-B27).
- adequate hospital facilities and fair cost sharing capital equipment (2008-B130; 2008-B129; 2008-B131)
- a national child care program (2005-B126)
- and to consider and address accessibility issues (2006-B132, 2008-B157, 2008-B158, 2008-B159).

Membership Significance:

The recent increase in gang activity in Metro Vancouver and the expansion of drug activity around the province have increased the need for immediate action on this issue.

Local governments are increasingly working on various projects that contribute to community and individual health, including the provision and development of community gardens; building trails, greenways and other opportunities for active transportation; inclusion of seniors in planning and accessibility standards for disabled community members.

Members have recently signed two MOUs that support the promotion and development of health initiatives. MOUs with BC Recreation and Parks Association to

work together to promote province-wide initiatives on issues of mutual interest including planning and building active transportation options; promoting accessible and inclusive recreation, parks and cultural facilities, programs and other opportunities for all ages and abilities; and developing policies that will encourage community health promotion. And, a second MOU with the Ministry of Health, 2010 Legacies Now and BC Recreation and Parks regarding inter-agency collaboration and coordination on implementation of age-friendly community guides.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Provincial government provides new and ongoing financial support in the form of grants to local governments for healthy communities projects such as healthy food and beverages, age friendly community planning, and community health promotion.
2. Local governments, health authorities, and the Province have a working relationship that encourages collaboration and effective communication.
3. New measures to address drug and gang issues in local communities.
4. Provincial support for the development of crime prevention strategies in local communities to address youth issues.