



MEMBER RELEASE

July 28, 2011

TO: Mayor and Council | Chair and Board | Senior Staff
FROM: Councillor Barbara Steele, President
RE: **MUNICIPAL AUDITOR GENERAL UPDATE**

Summary

UBCM has been advised that the Minister is surveying local governments about the proposed Office of the Municipal Auditor General (MAG). The attached MAG Context Paper is a UBCM document intended to support Council/Board discussions as they prepare their responses to the survey.

The Minister has also invited us to share our views on MAG with her colleagues.

The Context Paper may also be useful if local governments wish to conduct MAG discussions more broadly within their communities or with Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Background

My June 27 Member Release provided information about the Office of the MAG work underway by the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development. In that Release, I made a commitment to update the membership as new information became available.

Minister Chong spoke with Executive about MAG on July 22. This Member Release provides a MAG update focusing on that discussion.

Minister/Executive Discussion

Executive appreciates the two hours the Minister and her staff devoted to the MAG discussion, which allowed for considerable dialogue on the issue.

The Minister made it clear that she is responsible for implementing the MAG commitment made by the Premier, and that she is interested in receiving views on such matter as: the Office's roles, duties and functions; to whom it should report; and how it should be funded.

Executive stated that it was not in a position to speak on behalf of the membership on this issue, due to the lack of specific policy direction at this time, but indicated that it was seeking that direction at the next Convention.

Executive stressed that local governments have a strong interest in a robust accountability system, and that questions it has posed about MAG should not be taken as questioning the need for local government accountability. Rather, Executive was seeking some clarity about what, if any, gaps there are in the existing accountability system, and if there are gaps, whether a MAG is the best corrective measure.

Consequently, Executive raised questions about: what problem the MAG is intended to resolve; whether the MAG was the best mechanism to resolve the problem; how the work on MAG is related to other municipal tax reform commitments made by the Premier, including ensuring municipalities are properly funded; how the MAG fits within the overall accountability system; and what other options have been, or would be, considered.

Further details of the discussion are included in the attached Context Paper.

Ministry's Next Steps

In order to solicit the views of local governments on the structure and powers of a MAG, the Minister has asked for a MAG session at our next Convention.

The Minister is surveying local governments prior to the Convention so that the results can inform design of the Convention session. We understand that the Minister distributed this survey to all local governments yesterday.

Municipal Auditor General Context Paper

Information accompanying the Minister's MAG survey was brief. Given this, and in order to support an informed discussion by Councils and Boards, UBCM has prepared the attached Context Paper.

The Context Paper is not intended to influence the outcome of Council or Board discussions on MAG, but rather to inform those discussions.

The Context Paper may also provide useful background information should you wish to discuss the MAG with Members of the Legislative Assembly, or with others in your community.

Further Information and Feedback Request

If you have any questions or concerns about the MAG Concept Paper, please feel free to contact us as noted below.

UBCM is in the process of developing a Policy Paper on MAG for consideration at Convention and your feedback would be useful to that process.

If you wish to contribute your thoughts or experiences about the local government accountability system, performance reporting or auditing, how best to support value for money for local governments, or the proposed MAG in BC, please feel free to provide these to us via email as noted below.

Particularly useful are examples of the ways in which your local government demonstrates value for money to its taxpayers.

Contact Information

email: ubcm@ubcm.ca
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