



ITEM 6(a)
Executive Agenda
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Arjun Singh, President
Union of British Columbia Municipalities
60-10551 Shellbridge Way
Richmond BC V6X 2W9

Dear Mr. Singh:

Thank you for the discussion paper entitled the "Role and Implications of Alternate Unelected Electoral Area Directors" submitted to me by the Union of British Columbia's (UBCM) Ad-Hoc Committee on Alternate 'Unelected' Electoral Area Directors (Ad-Hoc Committee) on June 7, 2018. I also appreciated the opportunity to speak with former UBCM President Booth on July 4, 2018, to discuss this paper and the Ad-Hoc Committee's work on the issue. This topic was discussed further at the September 2018 UBCM Convention.

I know that the appointment of electoral area (EA) alternate directors is a multi-faceted, long-standing issue within the regional district system, with many different perspectives and opinions on both the actual nature of the problem and the possible solutions. I fully appreciate the substantial effort that UBCM and the Ad-Hoc Committee have undertaken in exploring the issue and in identifying possible approaches to address challenges associated with instances of extended absences of EA directors.

The discussion paper provides an important starting point for further dialogue on this topic and I recognize the intent of the recommendations put forth by the Ad-Hoc Committee. As you can appreciate, many of the proposed recommendations have potentially significant implications for the regional district system, such as changes to existing rules around quorum and by-elections. Some of the recommendations are also somewhat inconsistent with one another. For instance, removing a regional district's obligation to fill an EA director vacancy in the year of a general election appears out of step with the recommendation to require a by-election after 6 months of an EA director's absence.

Given the potential impacts of the recommendations and the many perspectives on this issue, I can see value in further analysis to gain a more complete understanding of the current nature and extent of the issue at the regional district level before determining any potential solutions, especially those that would result in legislative amendments. As part of this work, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing staff will undertake research and further exploration of the issue by engaging directly with regional districts to gather information and build a stronger understanding.

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As the discussion paper illustrates, the success of any changes to the existing framework requires balancing several considerations including: flexibility around alternates to represent their communities when EA directors are absent; the practical operational needs of regional districts; and the need to ensure ongoing representation for communities. My expectation is that the Ministry's information gathering will help to further assess any potential solutions, but also to enhance regional districts' understanding of the role of alternate EA directors in their own jurisdiction and in neighbouring jurisdictions. As such, I also see value in working collaboratively with UBCM, as you consider appropriate, to build and enhance education and guidance materials, and raise awareness of useful 'on the ground' training practices regarding EA alternates. That work will help ensure that there is a shared understanding of the existing rules and their intent and highlight practical ways that regional districts manage the roles and expectations of alternates.

The Ministry's research and exploration may also help develop and promote the Ad-Hoc Committee's best practice recommendation regarding remuneration bylaws as a way to eliminate the potential compensation of both an EA director and the alternate at the same time. This best-practice approach may be a practical way, within regional districts' existing authority, to address concerns about alternate directors potentially serving too long in the place of an EA director. This approach also respects regional district autonomy while providing a tangible way for regional districts to manage the issue.

I remain committed to ensuring that the regional district legislative framework works effectively. As you may also appreciate, this issue must be balanced with the many priorities currently engaging both our organizations including affordable housing, responsible conduct and others. Again, I commend the Ad-Hoc Committee for the work that has gone into putting together the discussion paper and I want to thank you for starting a healthy dialogue.

Sincerely,



Selina Robinson
Minister