

August 2, 2018

The Hon. Selina Robinson  
Minister of Municipal Affairs  
and Housing  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC  
V8V 1X4

The Hon. Mike Farnworth  
Minister of Public Safety  
and Solicitor General  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC  
V8V 1X4

Dear Ministers:

***Re: Fire Safety Act***

At our July 13<sup>th</sup> UBCM Executive meeting, Minister Robinson advised that the Province wishes to establish one standard for public safety across BC. Referencing the Fire Safety Act, she indicated that the Province, through the Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) wished to engage UBCM on this matter. And while UBCM is supportive of this 'one standard' approach in principle, it is important that we share the history and context to this file.

Prior to the new Fire Safety Act being passed in May 2016, UBCM members requested that responsibilities related to fire inspections and enforcement be made optional for regional districts, not mandatory, as the Act now states. A commitment was made by the then Minister of State for Emergency Preparedness to amend the new Act, prior to it being brought into force, to remove the new requirements on regional districts.

Consequently, it was surprising to learn about the change in provincial direction from Minister Robinson. However, upon Minister Robinson's advisement we have proceeded to establish a Fire Safety working group to consult with the OFC. The working group comprises staff and elected officials from regional districts previously engaged on this file.

Our first meeting was held on July 27, 2018. Fire Commissioner Gord Anderson made a presentation to the working group on the Province's direction. Working group representatives reiterated their previously expressed concerns and identified the challenges associated with requiring regional districts to take on these new responsibilities. While few regional districts may have the capacity and resources, we can assure you that the majority do not, and requiring them to do so, will certainly be viewed as downloading.

We are committed to working with the Province on this issue and helping to identify solutions that will allow the Province to meet its goal of one standard for public safety. Our working group is committed to continuing to meet with the OFC but it would be helpful for UBCM to have a better understanding as to:

- who the decision maker is on this file;
- why the new direction was adopted;
- why regional districts, not another provincial agency or authority, are viewed as the means to achieving one standard;
- what assistance will be offered to regional districts if the Province is committed to continue with this approach; and
- what timeline the Province is working toward.

In addition, we feel it is important to engage our broader membership on this issue at the upcoming UBCM Convention. It would be important to have the OFC, or someone from the Province, attend to explain to our regional district members the new responsibilities that are being asked of them. We would propose a session at the Electoral Area Directors Forum on the morning of Tuesday September 11<sup>th</sup>.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with both of you to discuss the path forward; the challenges that this new direction will create for our regional district members and how we can best work together to engage our membership. Please feel free to contact me directly to arrange a time to discuss further.

Thank you and we look forward to your earliest response.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wendy Booth', with a stylized, cursive script.

Wendy Booth  
UBCM President

cc: Becky Denlinger, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor  
General  
Gord Anderson, Fire Commissioner, OFC  
Kara Woodward, Director, Local Government Policy, Ministry of Municipal  
Affairs and Housing