

*The Union of BC Municipalities and the Province of BC have a joint working group focused on developing a framework for engaging local governments in Province-First Nations negotiations, per the 2024 UBCM-MIRR MOU. This document is an update from that working group, centered on feedback from a joint session at the 2025 UBCM Convention.*

## **Local Government Engagement on Reconciliation:**

### **UBCM Convention Session Highlights, What We Heard, and What's Next**

British Columbia and the Union of BC Municipalities have had a long-standing *Memorandum of Understanding on Engagement with UBCM and Local Governments on First Nations Negotiations and Other Initiatives with First Nations* ([MOU](#)), with successive iterations of the agreement in place for more than two decades. The MOU provides a framework to guide provincial engagement with local governments during the negotiation of agreements with First Nations. The MOU recognizes the interests and responsibilities of local governments and commits both parties to improving transparency, information-sharing, and opportunities for local government input during provincial–First Nation negotiations.

The 2024 renewal of the MOU committed the Province and UBCM to strengthen the Province's engagement practices with local governments to support provincial – First Nation negotiations through a jointly developed implementation plan. To deliver on this commitment, the parties have established a joint Working Group, overseen by a Steering Committee, to develop updated guidance, tools, and processes to support earlier, clearer, and more consistent engagement with local governments across the province.

At the 2025 UBCM Convention, more than 300 delegates attended a joint Province–UBCM session, focused on practical steps to implement the renewed 2024 MOU on local government engagement. The session provided an [overview](#) of provincial negotiation processes, a discussion with provincial chief negotiators, and included a feedback segment to help shape the MOU implementation planning work underway between the Province and UBCM. The session was chaired by Councillor Cori Ramsay, Chair of UBCM's Indigenous Relations Committee (now UBCM President), with opening remarks from the Honourable Spencer Chandra Herbert, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR), and closing remarks from the Honourable Christine Boyle, Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs.

The Convention session provided the joint Province-UBCM Working Group an opportunity to share early thinking, to gather direct input, and to ensure emerging concepts for consideration in work

planning remain grounded in the realities and priorities of local governments. This work continues beyond the Convention, with further collaboration planned throughout 2026.

## **What we heard**

Delegates emphasized that capacity and timing constraints continue to shape their ability to participate in engagement related to provincial–First Nation negotiations. Internal capacity of local governments remains the most significant barrier (58%), with 56% reporting limited resources and a need for adequate notice of upcoming engagement opportunities related to negotiations.

Participants strongly expressed the importance of early involvement in discussions about potential agreements that may affect local government interests, with 69% preferring engagement to begin during the exploratory phase of Crown–First Nation discussions.

Delegates also highlighted the need for more clear and predictable processes for how and when provincial negotiators initiate engagement with local governments, including consistent initiation and ongoing engagement, timely sharing of contextual information, and transparency about the scope and timelines of negotiations. Many participants underscored that engagement should meaningfully incorporate local perspectives and avoid a perfunctory or procedural approach.

When asked what tools would best support effective engagement between the Province and local governments during provincial–First Nation negotiations, delegates identified facilitation support to strengthen local government–First Nation dialogue (81%), access to reconciliation expertise for staff and advisors (77%), and guidance, templates, practical tools tailored for local use, and resources (70%).

Participants also highlighted the many strengths that local governments bring to reconciliation, including long-range planning experience, local knowledge, and established relationships with First Nations.

Delegates also noted the importance of ensuring that engagement approaches are developed in a manner that respects existing relationships with First Nations. Presenters affirmed that gathering input from First Nations on the evolving approach to local government engagement on First Nations negotiations and initiatives will be an important step, and planning for that work is underway. This work is anticipated to be undertaken in 2026.

## **How feedback will inform next steps**

The Working Group will integrate the feedback gathered during the convention session into the next phase of developing updated engagement guidance for BC negotiators. Key areas of focus include:

- Designing clearer processes for provincial negotiators to initiate engagement early with local governments in negotiations,
- Strengthening information sharing tools and templates,
- Identifying approaches that support local government capacity, and
- Ensuring guidance is adaptable to the varied contexts and relationships across the province.

A consistent theme throughout the session was the need for Provincial-local government engagement approaches that are flexible and responsive to conditions on the ground. Each First Nation negotiation evolves differently, and each local government has distinct circumstances, relationships, and timelines. Updated guidance aims to reflect these realities while promoting a more consistent and transparent approach across the province.

## **What's ahead**

The Provincial-UBCM Working Group, which includes participation from both the ministry responsible for Indigenous relations and the ministry responsible for local governments, will continue meeting through 2026, refining materials and incorporating feedback gathered at the Convention session. The Province and UBCM remain committed to improving engagement practices through transparency, early information sharing, and ongoing dialogue.

Following completion of an engagement framework for use by provincial negotiators, the Provincial-UBCM Working Group will deliver a companion product that outlines what local governments can expect when negotiations take place in your region of the province.