

Date: Tuesday, May 28, 2024

To: Elizabeth Tracy, Chief Administrative Officer

From: Gwendolyn Kennedy, Manager, Corporate & Legislative Services

Subject: Union of British Columbia Municipalities: Meeting Requests and Resolutions

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's input on resolutions for submission to the 2024 Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) convention and to obtain direction from Council regarding requests for meetings with provincial cabinet ministers and with staff of ministries, agencies, commissions, and corporations during the convention.

BACKGROUND

The 2024 UBCM convention will be held from September 16 – 20 in Vancouver. The annual convention is a valuable opportunity for the Village to present concerns and requests to the Province by submitting resolutions for consideration at the convention and through meetings with provincial ministers, the premier, and staff of provincial ministries, agencies, commissions, and corporations. The [Provincial Appointment Book](#) includes information regarding the ministries, agencies, commissions, and corporations available for meetings and the topics under their jurisdiction; information on the resolution process is available on the [UBCM website](#).

At Regular Council Meeting No. 1600, held Tuesday, May 7, 2024, Council discussed ideas for resolutions and directed staff to conduct research and bring back draft resolutions on topics that have not been thoroughly considered by UBCM in the past. Council proposed the following topics:

- funding of the Wildlife Safety Response Officer program;
- the potential impact of the increasing use of electric vehicles on revenue from gas taxes; and
- funding to support the planning and development of active transportation networks.

In addition to the topics noted above, Council asked staff to work with the Pemberton Valley Diking District to draft a resolution addressing the hardship faced by communities required to meet 200-year event standards in building dikes.

DISCUSSION & COMMENTS

Resolutions

Wildlife Safety Response Officer Program

Although supportive of the Wildlife Safety Response Officer program, Council indicated concerns regarding the cost, which is borne by the community rather than the BC Conservation Service. Staff present the following resolution for Council's review:

WHEREAS the Province is responsible for preventing and responding to natural resource law enforcement infractions and human-wildlife conflicts through the BC Conservation Officer Service;

AND WHEREAS the Province created the Wildlife Safety Response Officer program, funded by communities, to support BC Conservation Officers and communities in proactively managing human-wildlife interactions:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the UBCM lobby the provincial government to fully fund the Wildlife Safety Response Officer program to ensure that all communities have access to the tools they need to protect wildlife and reduce the risks associated with human-wildlife interactions.

The proposed resolution and accompanying backgrounder are attached to this report as **Appendix A**.

Zero Emission Vehicles and the Canada Community-Building Fund

Council discussed the potential impact of the transition from gas- and diesel- powered vehicles to zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) on tax revenue from fuel sales.

Unlike in the U.S., where gas taxes directly fund road maintenance and road building, in Canada, a portion of federal and provincial fuel tax revenue is allocated to public transit and local infrastructure, but most goes into general revenue. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that Canada, like the U.S., will feel the pinch as revenue from gas taxes declines.

Staff reviewed past UBCM resolutions related to zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) and found none addressing this concern, despite the issue having appeared in the media on several occasions in the past few years. Staff propose the following resolution asking UBCM to advocate for a new system that will ensure that all drivers contribute fairly based on kilometres driven, whether they purchase fuel at the gas pump or charge their vehicles from the electric power grid:

WHEREAS the rapid increase in the use of zero-emission vehicles and corresponding decrease in the use of gas- and diesel-powered vehicles will significantly reduce revenue from taxes collected at the gas pump within only a few years;

AND WHEREAS a portion of this gas tax revenue is distributed to British Columbia municipalities through the Canada Community-Building Fund and funds municipal infrastructure projects:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Union of British Columbia Municipalities ask the Province to work with the federal government to develop a new tax or fee system that will ensure that drivers of electric-, gas-, and diesel-powered vehicles contribute fairly to the Canada Community-Building Fund to ensure municipalities experience no reduction in funding for infrastructure projects as revenue from gas taxes declines.

The draft resolution and accompanying backgrounder are attached as **Appendix B**.

Provincial Funding of Active Transportation Planning and Infrastructure

Past Resolutions

Council asked staff to review past UBCM resolutions regarding provincial funding of active transportation planning and infrastructure. Resolutions addressing this issue are available at the following link: [UBCM Resolutions](#). Past resolutions focused the development of active transportation infrastructure in highway rights-of-way; creation of a provincial active transportation strategy; and funding of active transportation infrastructure projects. Of the two resolutions requesting funding, one asking for the establishment of a dedicated fund was not admitted to debate and a second, asking for an increase in the fuel tax that would be dedicated to the funding of active transportation projects, was endorsed, but the idea was turned down by the Ministry of Finance.

Current Grant Funding

A federal initiative by Infrastructure Canada, no longer active, provided funding of up to 50% of the cost of active transportation planning and infrastructure and allowed stacking of federal and provincial grant funding up to 100% of eligible costs. The Province currently offers grant funding for planning and infrastructure projects under the BC Active Transportation Infrastructure Grants program. The program is based on a cost-sharing model, with local governments contributing a minimum of 50% of network planning costs and between 20% and 50% of infrastructure project costs. Given the high cost of planning and infrastructure projects, the cost-sharing model will unfortunately keep the development of a complete active transportation network out of reach for small communities, resulting in lost opportunities to foster equitable, inclusive, livable communities. Staff propose a resolution seeking 100% funding of active transportation network planning and infrastructure projects for small communities. The proposed resolution (**Appendix C**) reads as follows:

WHEREAS the provincial government offers grant funding to support the development of active transportation network planning and infrastructure, based on local governments contributing between 20% and 50% of project costs;

AND WHEREAS a local government's required contribution to an active transportation infrastructure project can far exceed a small community's financial capacity:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the UBCM request that the provincial government fund 100% of the cost of active transportation network planning and infrastructure projects for communities with a population of less than 15,000.

Diking Standards

WHEREAS diking authorities in British Columbia are currently mandated to design, repair, construct, and maintain dikes to a 200-year event standard, which entails significant financial and logistical burdens;

AND WHEREAS a 100-year event standard would provide a sufficient level of protection against flooding and associated risks and allow for the development of more diking infrastructure, while reducing the financial strain on local governments and enabling diking authorities to allocate resources more efficiently, prioritize critical infrastructure projects, and enhance community resilience against natural disasters:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the UBCM calls upon the provincial government to amend existing regulations pertaining to diking requirements, relaxing the current 200-year event standard to a more practical and financially sustainable 100-year event standard, or to a lesser return period that can be shown to provide valuable protection through engineering, geomorphological and geotechnical professional review and recommendations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the UBCM urges the provincial government to engage in meaningful consultation with municipalities, diking authorities, and interested parties to develop and implement revised standards that strike a balance between ensuring public safety and mitigating undue financial burdens on local governments.

Staff are seeking Council's feedback on the proposed resolutions.

Meetings with Ministers and Staff from Ministries, Agencies, Commissions, and Corporations

On May 16th, staff attended a webinar hosted by the Ministry of Municipal affairs outlining the process for requesting meetings with ministers and staff from ministries, agencies, commissions, and corporations. Correspondence regarding the meeting request process was forwarded to all members of Council and is included on the agenda of this meeting.

The deadline for requesting a meeting with a cabinet minister is June 21st; the deadline for requesting a meeting with staff is August 21st. The schedule has been set so that a local government that is unsuccessful in obtaining a meeting with a cabinet minister may, on receiving the minister's regrets, request a meeting with ministry staff instead. Meetings with staff may also be requested during the convention.

Meeting requests must follow the established format, limited to 100 characters for the title, 700 characters for the background, and one sentence of no more than 300 characters for the specific request.

Meetings with ministers are fifteen minutes in length, while meetings with staff are 30 minutes. Up to three topics may be discussed in one meeting; only one meeting may be requested with each minister. Council may consult the [Provincial Appointment Book](#) for information on topics available for discussion with the various ministries, agencies, commissions, and corporations.

Staff are seeking direction from Council regarding requests for meetings with ministers and staff from ministries, agencies, commissions, and corporations.

COMMUNICATIONS

This report does not entail a communications element.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no legal considerations.

BUDGET & STAFFING

There are no impacts to the budget or staff hours.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL IMPACT

Corporate and Legislative Services staff collaborated with Office of the CAO staff in crafting the resolutions.

COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

Resolutions and meetings have no impact on the Community Climate Action Plan strategies.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Lobbying the Province on issues of concern to the Village aligns with the strategic priority, *operate with excellence*.

IMPACT ON THE REGION

This initiative has no impact on other jurisdictions.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

There are no alternative options.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT Council provides input on the resolutions proposed for submission to the 2024 Union of British Columbia Municipalities convention.

THAT Council provides direction to staff regarding requests for meetings with ministers and staff of ministries, agencies, commissions, and corporations.

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A: Draft resolution, Wildlife Safety Response Officer Program Funding

Appendix B: Draft resolution, Zero Emission Vehicles and the Canada Community-Building Fund

Appendix C: Draft resolution, Provincial Funding of Active Transportation Planning and Infrastructure

Prepared by:	Gwendolyn Kennedy, Manager, Corporate & Legislative Services
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