



LOWER MAINLAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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ADVOCACY WORK AT THE UBCM CONVENTION

The Executive of the Lower Mainland LGA met with BC Government Ministries on ten different topics during the UBCM Convention as part of our ongoing mission to advocate on behalf of our membership.

The following meetings were held:

Meeting with Minister of Agriculture and Food

Illegal Dumping on Agricultural Land

CURRENT SITUATION:

Over the last year, electoral areas in the Fraser Valley Regional District have experienced significant challenges with agricultural property owners accepting large volumes of waste on their lands. In some cases, the purported "compost" has, in fact been deemed "business waste" by the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Agriculture and Food. In spite of this designation, enforcement and clean up efforts have not been timely or satisfactorily been removed.

Residents are concerned about the significant community impacts that these sites may have, including excessive commercial vehicle traffic, noxious odours, and potential air and water health risks.

The ability of local governments to take action on this is very limited. The regulatory framework for agricultural lands is the Agricultural Land Commission. Local governments should not be responsible for the oversight and enforcement of provincial regulations.

The recent changes to the Agricultural Land Commission Act that included prohibitions for dumping water and other damaging substances on farmland with significant penalties and new tools for enforcement do not seem to have been effective, as rural communities are witnessing increasing numbers of illegal landfills arising on agricultural lands.

REQUESTED ACTION:

That the province follow through on the changes contained within the Act and invest more resources into prosecuting offenders who unlawfully deposit on agricultural lands.

Ban on Sale of Invasive Species

CURRENT SITUATION:

Invasive plants can cause significant economic harm by damaging crops, fisheries, forests and infrastructure, and impose costs on industry and taxpayers for control and eradication efforts.

Regulating the sale and distribution of invasive plants is a key strategy for preventing their introduction and spread, and for protecting native ecosystems and economies.

REQUESTED ACTION:

That the province ban the sale and distribution of invasive plants.

Agri-Industrial Activities

CURRENT SITUATION:

In 2019, the BC Food Security Task Force recommended that the province allocate up to a quarter of a percent of the Agricultural Land Reserve be made available for agri-industrial activities and that a commissioner be established for agri-industrial lands.

Creating a dedicated areas for agri-industrial activity will give businesses in food and agritech a strategic opportunity to support the modernization of agriculture and enhance food security.

REQUESTED ACTION:

That the province provide an opportunity for communities to pilot agritech opportunities in alignment with the BC Food Security Task Force Findings and Recommendation report.

Meeting with Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation

Incentives for Heat Pumps and other Climate Resilient Retrofits in Multi-Residential Buildings

CURRENT SITUATION:

Existing Multi-Residential Building Units are particularly vulnerable to overheating as they were designed to perform under historical conditions that no longer represent current and future climate conditions.

Direct solar gain, heat island effects, internal heat gain and inadequate ventilation all contribute to overheating in Multi-Residential Building Units. While passive cooling strategies such as shading, air sealing and upgrading windows, walls and roofs may help minimize heat gain, active cooling is needed to mitigate overheating, especially in south and south-west facing units.

The CleanBC Better homes program provides incentives and rebates for some, but not all dwelling types to be able to do upgrades and it excludes Multi-Unit Residential Buildings yet over 30% of BC's population live in these buildings.

REQUESTED ACTION:

That the province make the necessary changes to the CleanBC Better Homes program to ensure that all dwelling types are eligible for incentives and rebates for retrofits to ensure the health and safety of all British Columbians, particularly the most vulnerable, while working towards the Province's GHG reduction targets.

Understanding BC Hydro's Electrification Capacity

CURRENT SITUATION:

Many municipalities in BC are moving quickly to enable electrification through community climate action plans and municipal energy and emissions plan and are encouraging residents to transition existing buildings from fossil fuel energy to electrical energy.

There is currently a lack of funding or incentives to support electrification in existing residential, commercial and institutional building retrofits, and a lack of certainty that the electrical grid has the capacity to accommodate the anticipated electrical demand that will result from future retrofits.

Municipal governments are not privy to detailed information on BC Hydro's readiness to support wide-scale electrification. While we understand that capacity and demand will vary across the province, given the potential for unintended consequences of unmet demand, this effort should be coordinated at a provincial level to ensure comprehensive planning for multiple scenarios.

REQUESTED ACTION:

That the Province coordinate with BC Hydro and the BC Utilities Commission to understand BC Hydro's readiness to meet electrification requirements to support electrification in retrofits in order for communities to meet climate change goals.

Meeting with Minister of Finance

Expanding Property Transfer Tax Exemptions

CURRENT SITUATION:

The high cost of land is one of the greatest barriers to non-market housing development in BC.

While affordable housing delivery is under the jurisdiction of the federal and provincial governments, local governments in BC are increasingly using their own resources, including land and financial grants, to help facilitate the development of non-market housing.

A common form of assistance offered by local governments is the provision of land, leased to not-for-profit organizations at a nominal rate. Often these nominal land leases have a term of 60 years or more and local governments are forgoing significant potential revenue in support of housing affordability.

Not-for-profit organizations are required to pay a provincial property transfer tax when the lease is registered at the Land Title Office. The Property Transfer Tax is based on fair market value of the property (land and improvements) and must be paid unless the organization qualifies for an exemption. Currently, the province only provides an exemption for registered charities, but not for non-profit organizations that may be doing similar work in delivering much-needed affordable housing to BC residents.

REQUESTED ACTION:

That the Province review the Property Transfer Tax and other provincial legislation to expand the exemption from payment of Property Transfer Tax to all not-for-profit societies, co-operatives or corporations who are leasing municipal lands for the development of affordable housing from payment of Property Transfer Tax to eliminate this financial burden on the creation of non-market housing.

Varied Taxation Rate for Residential(Class 1) Properties

CURRENT SITUATION:

The Province specifies that there is one assessment class for all types of residential properties even though assessed value of attached and detached residential properties change values at different rates. Other jurisdictions, such as Ontario, allow different tax rates for attached and detached residential properties.

Two distinct residential classes can allow a different rate to be applied to each type to allow for the difference in the rate at which attached and detached residential properties change their value and allow local governments to more accurately charge for the costs of providing services to attached and detached residential properties.

REQUESTED ACTION:

That the province amend the BC Assessment Act and the Community Charter to allow the residential class to be split into two distinct residential classes.

Vacant Property Tax on Commercial and Industrial Properties

CURRENT SITUATION:

The province has adopted vacancy taxes on vacant residential properties as one tool to assure land speculation does not result in properties standing fallow to the detriment of community livability and other goals. Commercial and industrial property values are inflating province-wide, and increasingly face investment speculation resulting in similar underutilization of commercial property in many municipalities across BC.

REQUESTED ACTION:

That the province provide local governments with an option to introduce a vacant property tax applicable to commercial and industrial properties.

This would give local governments the option to apply this tool to better manage land use in their commercial areas to spur redevelopment of underperforming buildings and vacant lots in commercial areas, so that they can better serve our growing communities.

Meeting with Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Provincial Cannabis Tax Sharing with Local Governments

CURRENT SITUATION:

The federal government legalized the sale of cannabis products for recreational use in 2018. Currently, cannabis-specific revenue is split 75/25 between the federal and provincial governments, with the federal government having agreed to a 100 Million cap on its share of the revenue.

The provincial governments of Ontario, Quebec and Alberta have all passed on a share of those tax revenues to municipalities, as originally intended by the federal government, which stated its expectation that one third of provincial government shares are to be given to municipalities.

REQUESTED ACTION:

That the Province share up to 50% of provincial revenues generated from the production and sale of cannabis products with BC municipalities.

eGaming Revenue Distribution

CURRENT SITUATION:

The provincial government collects and shares casino revenues with host cities that have a casino within their boundaries, with the funds going to any purpose that is of public benefit to the community. This revenue sharing does not extend to online gaming/eGaming operated by the BC Lottery Corporation which has experienced rapid revenue growth both during the COVID-19 pandemic while casinos were closed and has continued since.

REQUESTED ACTION:

That the Province allocate a portion of the BC Lottery Corporation's online revenue based on per capita or eGaming revenue earned from each municipal resident to spend.



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Association in partnership with
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