



2025 Advocacy Mission

Meeting with the Minister of State for Local Government and Rural Communities, the Honourable Brittney Anderson

- The Lower Mainland Local Government Association is one of the five areas associations of UBCM.
- We represent the Lower Mainland of British Columbia including Metro Vancouver, the Fraser Valley and Sea to Sky.
- We represent 30 local governments and 3 regional districts and almost 70% of the population of BC.

Topics Important to our Membership

HOUSING

7 of our 40 resolutions submitted by our membership were on the topic of housing. They included issues that municipalities are facing because of the province's mandate of accelerated and densified housing and its strains on social and community infrastructure as well as housing stability for BC's most vulnerable population.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Our members are concerned about flood and extreme heat event strategies and strengthening regional emergency management capacity.

AGRICULTURE

Our members have requested an increase in funding for agriculture, in particular an increase in funding to the Agricultural Land Commission so that the compliance and enforcement team can reduce non-compliant land uses and illegal dumping.

Specific Areas of Concern Include:

SUBJECT #1: REGIONAL DISTRICT REFORM

Current Situation: The Local Government Act (LGA) provisions regarding Regional Districts require modernization.

Regional Districts acknowledge and are grateful for amendments by the province that have occurred over the years. That said, the legislation has not been updated substantively since 1965. While municipalities were modernized under the *Community Charter* in 2004, Regional Districts remain constrained by outdated legislation.

The province committed to regional district legislative reform in 2022, but this work was never completed. Since then, over 160 UBCM resolutions have called for amendments to the LGA, with consistent requests for comprehensive modernization.

The main issues are as follows:

- **Limited Tools:** Regional Districts lack reasonable and effective authority to address emergencies and disasters, climate resilience and adaption and standard municipal matters such as tree removal-powers that municipalities in BC already hold.
- **Slow, Inefficient Processes:** Establishing new services or regulatory schemes or navigating subdivision approvals can take far longer than the processes available to municipalities, at great cost and frustration to the residents.
- **Governance Gaps:** Weighted voting formulas are complex, and rules for alternate directors raise accountability and democracy concerns.
- **Indigenous Representation:** The Indigenous representation rules are inequitable.
- **Financial Fairness:** Regional District services must be supported by balanced and efficient revenue streams that do not increase property taxes for owners or occupiers.

REQUEST

That the province undertake a comprehensive modernization of regional district legislation, guided by the principles and recommendations of the *Regional District Roadmap (February 2025)* written by Don Lidstone to ensure equitable governance structures, enhanced authority, inclusive representation, and flexible revenue tools that reflect the current and future needs of all regional districts in British Columbia.

SUBJECT #2: ETHICS COMMISSIONER - Mandatory Codes of Conduct, Conflict Adjudicators and Sanctions

The Lower Mainland LGA appreciated the session during UBCM where ministry staff said that the province was looking into:

- A mandatory province-wide code of conduct, instead of each council making it up themselves.
- A mandatory requirement for third-party investigators or integrity commissioners to resolve disputes and issue punishments, instead of councillors voting on whether to approve investigations or sanction one another.
- Punishments of up to 90-day suspensions from office.

Our members still have concerns about what this will look like, particularly about who will be covering the costs of the third-party investigators or integrity commissioners and whether the province can oversee a roster of these people to ensure that all municipalities in BC receive consistent, good advice from qualified professionals.

Current procedures are also vague and easily challenged in court, allowing councillors to derail investigations or delay censures/penalties at significant taxpayer expense. The province should therefore establish a clear, legislatively consistent procedure framework to ensure timely, enforceable outcomes and either streamline or remove the appeal process to prevent prolonged legal disputes.

SUBJECT #3: ALIGNING THE BY-ELECTION PROVISIONS OF THE SCHOOL ACT WITH THOSE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT

The provincial government establishes the legislative framework under which all local governments in British Columbia deliver local government and school-trustee by-elections. The provisions of the *School Act* related to the timelines for setting a general voting day for a by-election differ from those in the *Local Government Act*, with the latter providing more flexibility. A certain degree of flexibility is required in setting a general voting-day for a by-election in order to address timing challenges and minimize potential conflicts for candidates and voters, and to address logistical considerations and operational needs.

REQUEST

In order to allow local governments the same flexibility in setting a general voting day for a school trustee by-election as for a local government by-election, that the province revise the wording in Section 36(3.1) of the *School Act* to align with the wording in Section 54(4) of the *Local Government Act*, read as follows:

"36. (3.1) In the case of a trustee election required to be conducted by a municipality, the municipal council must appoint a chief election officer as soon as practicable after being notified under subsection 3(b).

SUBJECT #4: PROVINCIAL LOBBYIST REGISTRATION

The province has recognized the potential impact of lobby activities for its public office holders and introduced the *Lobbyist Transparency Act* to provide the Government of BC legal tools to oversee, monitor and enforce lobbyist activities in the pursuit of open, accessible, and accountable government.

Unregulated lobbying activities at the municipal and regional district level can lead to undue influence from special interest individuals, groups, or organizations and BC municipal governments and regional districts are not afforded the same statutory authority to moderate local lobbyist activities.

REQUEST

That the province introduces legislative reform that either:

- Enables municipalities and regional districts to use the Office of the Registrar of Lobbyist for BC, or
- Enables municipal councils and regional district boards to establish, monitor and enforce lobbyist activities within their jurisdiction parallel to mechanisms available under the *Lobbyist Transparency Act*.

