

What We Heard Report

Joint Webinar: “Strategizing for UBCM Ministers Meetings”

August 27, 2026 | 12:00-1:00 p.m.



Webinar Overview

Speakers

- Shirley Bond, former Provincial Cabinet Minister, MLA and Leader of the Official Opposition
- Aileen Machell, former Deputy Chief of Staff for Premier Eby

NCLGA facilitated the joint webinar on August 27, 2026, co-hosted with AVICC, SILGA, LMLGA and AKBLG. The partnership reflected the province-wide relevance of strategic preparation for UBCM meetings. NCLGA President Kyle MacDonald opened the webinar and moderated the Q&A. In total, 175 elected officials and senior staff from across British Columbia attended the virtual session.

The speakers offered perspectives from the Cabinet table and the senior staff level. Their 30-minute presentation examined the current government, its priorities and the political landscape, and how local governments can make a focused case, align requests with provincial priorities, and make it easier for ministers and staff to respond positively.

- **Webinar recording:** [Strategizing for UBCM Ministers Meetings - Webinar Recording](#)
- **Webinar presentation slides:** please review the [Presentation Slides](#) sent out to membership via your local area association

Key Takeaways

- Prepare one focused, evidence-based request and connect it to current provincial priorities.
- Use UBCM as part of a year-round relationship: brief staff early, involve local MLAs, and follow up promptly.
- Keep presentations brief and leave-behind supporting materials concise; consider providing links to supporting documentation in a follow-up email.
- Designate one principal spokesperson, even if the full council attends, and leave time for the minister's response.

- Approach government and opposition members considerately, respectfully, and with the same core briefing material.
 - Use informal events to build rapport – not to deliver a detailed advocacy pitch.
-

Webinar Q&A

The following responses have been lightly edited and condensed for clarity while preserving the meaning of the speakers' responses.

Q1. At what type of council meeting should a local government discuss and plan its UBCM strategy in depth?

Shirley: Each council will prepare differently, but residents should understand the issues their local government intends to raise. Councils should avoid disclosing every detail in advance, while also avoiding an unnecessarily closed process. A working session with staff is often appropriate for setting priorities and requesting meetings. The goal is a well-organized presentation that works for the delegation, the minister, and government staff.

Q2. This year, ministerial staff meetings will be held online in the week before UBCM. How can local governments make these meetings as useful as possible, particularly if it is unclear whether slides can be shared?

Aileen: If you have the staff contact, send concise materials in advance and consider a short call to confirm the agenda.

Shirley: Treat staff meetings as important opportunities. Staff will brief their minister, so focus on the few matters you genuinely want to raise. Avoid a large deck covering every council priority. Accept the meetings you are offered and use them to build the relationship.

Q3. What approaches can help raise the profile of a community and its needs?

Aileen: Prince George has elevated local issues effectively by responding constructively to provincial initiatives. When a new policy aligns with community priorities, the City identifies ways to participate; for example, by offering potential sites or implementation support. Communities can also use media strategically when an issue has a compelling local impact. The strongest approach is to show how local priorities align with provincial objectives.

Shirley: Valemount demonstrated that a small community can present professionally and earn a minister's attention. Its council raised issues respectfully, followed up consistently, and kept its MLA informed. Regardless of community size, preparation, respectful communication, concise materials, and engagement with the local MLA can strengthen advocacy.

Q4. Should the approach or key messages differ when meeting with government versus opposition members?

Shirley: The presentation and core briefing should not change. The objective is not to use one group against another, but to ensure that representatives across the legislature understand the community's story and priorities. Meet with government, opposition, and other parties in the same respectful manner, invite their perspectives, and make the same evidence-based case to each.

Q5. Should a one-page briefing include links to reports that support the ask?

Aileen: Yes. A link can give recipients access to more detail without adding a large paper report to the meeting package. Additional material can also be sent by email afterward.

Shirley: Before leaving the meeting, confirm the required follow-up. If you bring supplementary material, give it to ministerial staff rather than making it part of the presentation. A concise leave-behind or a follow-up email is more realistic than expecting a minister to read a full report during UBCM.

Q6. What is good advocacy etiquette during informal interactions, such as networking events or hallway conversations?

Shirley: Informal events are valuable for building relationships, but they are not the right setting for a detailed advocacy pitch. Introduce yourself, have a respectful and enjoyable conversation, and help the minister remember your name and community. Ministers may be managing dozens of meetings, so be mindful of their time and save substantive asks for an appropriate setting.

Q7. Given the volume of meetings at UBCM, can it be more effective to request meetings with ministers at another time?

Aileen: The Premier and some ministers may prioritize communities that travel farther or have fewer opportunities to meet with the Province. If your community has met with them recently or is closer to Victoria, a meeting outside UBCM may be effective and may allow more than 15 minutes.

Shirley: Use UBCM as a touchpoint to introduce your delegation and priorities, while continuing to request meetings throughout the year. Invite ministers to your community, while recognizing the demands of travel and the legislative calendar. Meetings with smaller and rural communities are important, and there is value in requesting additional meetings outside UBCM when more time is needed.

Q8. How many people should a delegation bring? Does full-council attendance demonstrate strength, or is a smaller speaking group more effective?

Shirley: There is no magic number. A full council may reasonably want to participate, particularly after travelling from a smaller or rural community, but numbers alone do not strengthen the case. Designate one principal spokesperson, assign any supporting roles in advance, and leave time for the minister to respond. Include the local MLA where appropriate, and focus on preparation, respect, and disciplined use of the available time.

Post Webinar Q&A

The following questions were either noted in the Q&A but not addressed in the webinar due to time constraints, or sent in by participants in the two days following the webinar. Aileen and Shirley have noted their responses below.

Q9. Often smaller communities feel left out or dismissed by ministers. Can you suggest ways to overcome this?

Aileen: Keep your issue front of mind through regular communication – emails, letters. Focus on how your issue aligns with government's priorities and goals – e.g., what is in the mandate letters or in their core priorities: jobs and economy, housing, healthcare, public safety. Connecting with journalists is

another way to elevate your priorities if necessary.

Shirley: Many ministers recognize that smaller communities have fewer options to meet ministers in person and will often find ways to close that gap. You may want to invite them to visit you as part of a broader tour. Again, be sure to work with ministerial staff; those relationships are important as they provide another opportunity to be more connected to a minister.

Q10. Can you speak to how you would strategically use UBCM as part of a broader, year-round advocacy strategy for a municipality? Not only using those meetings to advance specific asks, but also perhaps to introduce or tee up an issue, build understanding within government, and set the stage for a more substantive follow-up meeting or delegation to Victoria later in the year?

Aileen: UBCM can be a place to set the stage for getting to “yes”. It can lay out the issue with a simple ask to continue the conversation at a next meeting or within a certain time frame. Set goals for when you want to see progress on the issue, e.g., three months, six months or by the next UBCM conference. Identify milestones coming up on the issue and ensure government is aware of those milestones as potential communications opportunities (and issues).

Shirley: This is a great approach for how to take advantage of UBCM. It should not be viewed as a stand-alone opportunity, but a conversation starter. Delegations to Victoria are always an option, recognizing of course, that this is not always possible for some municipalities. At UBCM, it would be helpful to be clear about next steps, including how follow-up will occur.

Q11. Do ministers link communities with similar requests in follow-ups so they can work on issues together to find solutions?

Aileen: Yes, this is a strategy that is sometimes used in government. For example, on the issue of repeat property offenders, street disorder, and other public safety issues.

Shirley: Yes, cross-ministry working groups are often created in government to ensure that there is a comprehensive approach to tackling issues that multiple communities are facing, or that are a high priority for government.

Q12. How can a local government frame a request for provincial advocacy on an issue involving federal jurisdiction, such as railways or waterways?

Aileen: “Could you help our community elevate this priority to the federal government, by writing to the minister responsible and asking for a meeting or asking that they meet with our community to discuss the issue and our ask?”

Shirley: Raising the issue at UBCM or a subsequent meeting would be appropriate. Keep the same criteria for a provincial ask in mind. How does it impact your residents specifically, what are the broader implications for the province as a whole, if there are any, and come prepared with any possible solutions.

Q13. What distinguishes a compelling ministerial request from one that is unlikely to gain traction, and how can a local government strengthen its case?

Aileen: The most compelling case is one showing that the request will make a tangible difference in residents’ lives. It should propose a concrete action, deliver clear results, and be supported by an understandable and compelling story. It may be strengthened by fitting into some of the top priorities for government: jobs and economy (and protecting people’s livelihoods in the face of US President Trump’s attacks on our economy), housing, healthcare, and public safety.

Shirley: Financial considerations may impact an ask. It does not mean it will never happen, but timing and context matter. Are there legislative changes required? This too can delay an ask.

Q14. With only a few minutes available, how should elected officials and senior staff divide their roles and communicate their most important message?

Aileen: It may be helpful to designate one person to lead the main topic and refer to others for additional context if there is time.

Shirley: Agreed, multiple speakers dilute the time and opportunity to get an ask across in mere minutes.

Q15. If a minister cannot commit to the requested action during the meeting, what should the delegation ask for to secure a meaningful next step?

Aileen: Ask for a follow-up meeting to your request within a certain time frame – perhaps several months. If it seems your ask may require multiple ministers to weigh in, you could ask that the topic be raised with the other relevant ministers, and a follow-up provided within a certain time frame.

Shirley: Send a follow-up letter to the minister, summarizing what you heard, thanking the minister and staff for the meeting, and make the ask again for a follow-up meeting – providing the minister with a compelling reason for the timeline you suggest. For example, “We would hope to have the meeting in the next three months, because...”

Area Association Contacts

- North Central Local Government Association (NCLGA): Terry Robert - trobort@nclga.ca / Sandra Moore - admin@nclga.ca
- Lower Mainland Local Government Association (LMLGA): Shannon Story - sstory@lmlga.ca
- Southern Interior Local Government Association (SILGA): Koryn de Vries - yoursilga@gmail.com
- Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC): Theresa Dennison - tdennison@avicc.ca
- Association of Kootenay Boundary Local Governments (AKBLG): Linda Tynan - admin@akblg.ca