



November 16, 2021

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Mayors and Regional District Chairs of British Columbia

Attendees of October 2021 Regional Meetings with Minister Josie Osborne and UBCM President Laurey-Anne Roodenburg

Dear Mayors and Chairs,

Thank you for taking the time to join Minister Josie Osborne and UBCM President Laurey-Anne Roodenburg for the October 2021 regional meetings. Hearing from UBCM directly on some of its key interests and issues was very much appreciated. As Minister Osborne and President Roodenburg said during the call, these meetings continue to be a great opportunity to hear from you about the key issues and opportunities you are working on in your communities now and in 2022 (in addition to COVID-19).

I first wish to acknowledge the many people and communities in B.C. currently facing emergencies due to severe weather and flooding. I know that in many places you and your residents are under intense stress, facing evacuation orders and alerts and doing everything possible to stay safe. Please know that our thoughts and support are with you, along with our deep gratitude for the courage, tireless work and dedication to community demonstrated by you and your staff in this emergency situation.

There were a number of themes that came up during the meetings, including guidance regarding the implementation of vaccine mandates for local governments, local government finance review, rising infrastructure costs, and protection of old growth forests. This email provides links and resources to some of the topics raised.

COVID-19 Update

Federal COVID-19 proof of vaccination for travel

The Government of Canada has created a [federal COVID-19 proof of vaccination](#) document for travel within Canada and internationally. As of October 30, 2021, the federal government requires all travellers 12 years and 4 months of age and older to be fully vaccinated and show proof of vaccination to use federally regulated methods of travel. Note that BC Ferries does not require proof of vaccination.

People who live in BC have 3 options to get Canada's COVID-19 proof of vaccination for travel:

- Access online through Health Gateway (gov.bc.ca/covidtravel)
- Request by phone ([1-833-838-2323](tel:1-833-838-2323), translators are available)
- Visit most Service BC offices (Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey locations don't offer printed copies)

The federal government has indicated that it will allow British Columbians to use the BC Vaccine Card to travel within the country until November 30, while the national proof of vaccination is implemented.

More information is available at gov.bc.ca/covidtravel.

PHO Order on gatherings and events

On October 25, an updated [PHO order on gatherings and events](#) was released. Under the updated order, there are no capacity restrictions for indoor or outdoor personal gatherings (unless specified in specific regional health orders).

There is no capacity limit for indoor organized gatherings, including sporting events, concerts, live theatres, movie theatres, dance and symphony events, art events, weddings, funeral receptions outside of funeral homes, and other gatherings such as parties. [Proof of vaccination](#) is required for organized gatherings for more than 50 people. The requirement that individuals must remain seated in pubs and restaurants has been removed in order to allow for more freedom of movement. Note that some organized gatherings have some capacity restrictions and seats must be provided at some events with more than 50 people.

Other public health restrictions remain in place, including [indoor mask requirements](#). Capacity limits also remain in effect where regional orders are in place, including Fraser East and part of Northern and Interior Health regions. More information on provincial and regional restrictions can be found [here](#).

Local governments are not required to obtain proof of vaccination from individuals attending meetings or engaging in essential local government business – including at council/board meetings and public hearings. This means that individuals are not required to show a vaccine card to attend these essential functions. However, local governments must continue to follow their communicable disease plans and applicable provisions of Provincial and Local Orders on Gatherings and Events to ensure health and safety in respect of meetings. In addition, the proof of vaccination requirements for many [non-essential indoor recreational activities](#) remain in place.

While capacity limits no longer apply to council/board meetings or public hearings, local governments may choose to place limits on specific spaces based on their own communicable disease plans. Local governments that place capacity limits on meeting spaces must continue to ensure they are meeting legislated open meeting requirements.

The new legislative framework providing local governments with the authority to authorize electronic regular and committee meetings in their procedure bylaws came into force on September 29. The electronic meetings framework requires local governments to provide a place for the public to attend to hear or watch meetings held electronically to support the principles of accessibility and transparency.

Local governments who want to continue to meet electronically must go through the process of amending their procedure bylaw. The ministry has produced [guidance](#) to assist local governments to understand the new rules and process for amending procedure bylaws.

Note that electronic public hearings are not the same as electronic meetings. Procedures for public hearings are not required in a local government procedure bylaw; however, those local governments that have included public hearing procedures in their procedure bylaw are encouraged to review and update it as necessary to accommodate the new authorities.

Keep watching [BC's Response to COVID-19](#) website for updates, and please encourage your residents to do the same. We will continue to work with you, so that you have the support and information you need to move forward based on the Provincial Health Officer and Medical Health Officer's most recent Orders.

Vaccine mandates for local government elected officials and staff

There is no public health order requiring proof of vaccination for employees outside of health care settings. Local governments may choose to adopt their own corporate vaccination policies for local government employees and elected officials, taking into consideration the labour and legal contexts within which they operate, including workplace safety, privacy law and employment law.

Several B.C. local governments have implemented policies for staff requiring proof of vaccination by a specific date as a condition of employment (e.g., Victoria, Kamloops, Vancouver, and the Capital Regional District). Other local governments have put in place policies recommending vaccination and in a few cases the vaccination policies implemented by council also apply to locally elected officials (e.g., Penticton). Some councils have "self-declared" that all members are vaccinated (e.g., Victoria, Saanich) where a vaccination mandate policy only applies to employees.

We welcome these employers' leadership, and I would encourage you to connect with your colleagues in communities that have implemented vaccination policies to learn more about the approach they have taken and advice they have received.

2021 UBCM Convention

Minister Osborne would like to thank the UBCM team for putting on another excellent convention this year. Key topics identified at Convention included the Financial Resiliency Report, responsible conduct, and modernizing forest practices -- which are all of interest to both the province and local governments.

Premier Horgan announced at Convention that the Province will work with UBCM to establish an MOU to review the local government finance system in BC and he has asked Minister Osborne and Minister of Finance, Selina Robinson, to direct respective ministry staff to undertake this work. Work on the MOU is underway, and we will keep you updated in the process.

Infrastructure Funding

The governments of Canada and B.C. are committing up to \$270 million towards the third and final intake of the Environmental Quality (EQ) Program, under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP), which was announced on October 8. Program information can be found [here](#). The third intake of the EQ Program is now open, and the **application deadline is January 26th, 2022, 4:00 pm PST**.

The Environmental Quality Program is focused on infrastructure that will support quality and management improvements for drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater. It will also support projects that remediate contaminated sites and divert solid waste from landfill. Applicants are encouraged to consider projects that add value around environmental protection, resource recovery and reuse, climate change adaptation and mitigation and energy efficiency, generation, and recovery. A water conservation plan is a requirement for any drinking water and wastewater projects.

Please email infra@gov.bc.ca to get connected to a program team member who can respond to your questions.

Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act (No. 2), 2021 – Bill 26

The Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act (No. 2), 2021, [Bill 26](#), was introduced by Minister Osborne in the B.C. Legislature on October 26, 2021 and passed 3rd reading on November 3, 2021. Upon receiving Royal Assent in the coming weeks, the bill will officially come into effect. Bill 26 proposes amendments to various pieces of provincial legislation including the *Community Charter* and the *Local Government Act* among other Acts. Progress of Bill 26 in the B.C. Legislature can be tracked [here](#).

The amendments address a variety of topics including new tools to help local governments support housing supply by streamlining their development approval processes, modernized public notice requirements, the requirement for councils and boards to consider codes of conduct, and community specific amendments including allowing the dissolution of the Jumbo Glacier Mountain Resort Municipality.

Together, the changes in this bill will have meaningful impact by providing authorities that support efficient and effective local government operations. These amendments address issues not contemplated by existing legislation, and they will enable local governments to respond to circumstances in their community and provide new tools to increase the efficiency and timelines of housing development, allowing for more homes to be built, faster.

I sent a more detailed communication regarding Bill 26 to you on October 26, 2021 and a circular with further technical details on the amendments to local government Chief Administrative Officers and Corporate Officers on October 29, 2021.

If you have any questions regarding the proposed amendments to public notice provisions or the new requirement to consider a code of conduct, please contact our Governance and Structure Branch. You

can reach the Governance and Structure Branch by phone or email at: 250 387-4020 or LGGovernance@gov.bc.ca.

If you have any questions about the proposed changes to public hearings and delegation of development variance permits, please contact our Planning and Land Use Management Branch. You can reach the Planning and Land Use Management Branch by phone or email at: 250 387- 3394 or PLUM@gov.bc.ca.

Forestry Announcement

On November 2, the Province [announced](#) its intention to work in partnership with First Nations to defer the harvest of ancient, rare and priority large stands of old growth within 2.6 million hectares of BC's most at risk old-growth forests.

These logging deferrals are a temporary measure – recommended by 2020's Old Growth Strategic Review – to prevent irreversible biodiversity loss while the Province, First Nations, and other partners, including local governments, develop a new approach to sustainable forest management that prioritizes ecosystem health and community prosperity throughout British Columbia.

At the same time, the Province is listening to communities, understanding their concerns, and working for them to find the best, feasible, long-term solutions. On November 8, the Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development held regional calls with local governments in forestry regions to share details of the announcement, listen to community concerns and answer questions about the deferral process.

The Province is bringing together strategically co-ordinated and comprehensive support to offset job and economic impacts that may follow the new harvest restrictions and has committed to working in collaboration with First Nations, local governments, and industry to provide people and communities affected by the upcoming temporary old-growth deferrals with a comprehensive suite of supports.

Programs include for example:

- An employment program aimed at creating short-term employment opportunities for workers
- Skills training and educational opportunities to support workers for new careers
- Supporting forestry workers 55 and older interested in bridging to retirement
- A community rapid response team that will provide in-community support and will co-ordinate with ministries and organizations to ensure supports are in place for individuals and communities
- Supports for job creation in rural British Columbia through value-added forestry and other manufacturing
- Supports for infrastructure and economic development projects that promote diversification and resilience in communities

Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development staff will reach out to communities once specific deferrals are identified to find the best feasible solutions as the Province recognizes that local governments are important partners in sustainable forest management and will benefit from secure, innovative forestry for generations to come.

The next regional meetings with Municipal Affairs will be in December and Minister Rankin will join Minister Osborne to talk about Indigenous relationships and reconciliation. Minister Osborne's office will be in touch about the December date, time, and meeting information. If you are unable to attend the minister's meeting, please feel free to send an alternate elected official or staff member to attend on your behalf.

Sincerely,

Tara Faganello
Assistant Deputy Minister

pc: Chief Administrative Officers
Laurey-Anne Roodenburg, President, UBCM
Gary MacIsaac, Executive Director, UBCM
Nancy Taylor, Executive Director, LGMA
Todd Pugh, Executive Director, CivicInfo BC