

Date: January 27, 2025

To: **Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs**

Name and title: Councillor Garth Frizzell, Chair

Subject: Conversation on 2025 NCLGA Resolutions

Attachment(s): None

Recommendation(s):

That the Committee RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report titled, "Conversation on 2025 NCLGA Resolutions" from the Chair, dated January 27, 2025.

Purpose:

This report supports committee conversation on draft 2025 North Central Local Government Association (NCLGA) resolution submissions. The deadline for submission of resolutions is March 14, 2025.

Background:

NCLGA and the communities of the City of Prince Rupert, the District of Port Edward and the North Coast Regional District will be co-hosting the NCLGA's Annual General Meeting and Convention in Prince Rupert, BC on May 12-15, 2025. To focus efforts, staff would suggest submitting three or fewer resolutions to the annual convention for delegate consideration.

At present, staff have received directions to prepare draft resolutions on two topics, the addition of conservation officers in the region and advocating for a regional psychiatric care facility. A third draft resolution regarding public library funding has also been included. Draft content for these topics is provided below for discussion:

1: Conservation Officer Advocacy

The language of this draft resolution largely mirrors a successful 2018 UBCM motion submitted by Princeton. At the time the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy responded to UBCM, stating that, "*the B.C. government recognizes the need for additional conservation officers to help protect the provinces natural resources and lessen human-wildlife conflicts. In April 2018, the Province announced the addition of 20 new conservation officers, which included 12 new positions being added to locations with the highest need. The 12 new positions were made available due to additional funding in the 2018/19 budget. The Conservation Officer Service uses the zone deployment model to increase effectiveness. This model enables conservation officers to work*

remotely from their patrol vehicles and provide response anywhere in the zone depending on the priority of the call”.

Resolution Background: A provincial government webpage, last updated in 2023, on Conservation Officer career information states, “there are over 69,000 law enforcement officers in Canada, and only 150 of them can be B.C. Conservation Officers”. Having only 150 officers on the front lines of environmental law enforcement in British Columbia does not meet the need our vast geography requires.

Draft resolution:

WHEREAS the provincial government is responsible for managing the conservation service, with few officers covering a geographically vast region, which has a negative impact on the ability of the BC Conservation Officer Service to meet the needs of the communities served;

WHEREAS the British Columbia Conservation Officer Service needs additional resources to adequately address public safety, focus on natural resource law enforcement, off road vehicle enforcement, illegal dumping, human wildlife conflicts prevention, and respond to wildlife human conflict:

THEREFORE, be it resolved that NCLGA advocates that the provincial government be required to provide adequate funding, offices and staffing to fully support the BC Conservation Officer Service to be more active and proactive in effectively managing conservation services.

2: Regional Secure Psychiatric Care Facility

Resolution Background: The Province of British Columbia has committed to taking action to ensure people with long-term concurrent mental-health and addiction challenges get secure and dignified care by opening highly secure facilities for people under the Mental Health Act throughout the province. Prince George is well positioned to host such a facility for the region and seeks NCLGAs support in advocating for the expedient establishment of such resources.

Draft resolution:

WHEREAS the provincial government has stated an interest in establishing throughout the province beds under the Mental Health Act at highly secure regional facilities, where people will receive long-term care and housing that is secure, safe and dignified.

WHEREAS the provincial government has stated they are working on legislation, supported by expert consultation, that would support involuntary admittance to these specialized, compassionate care facilities.

WHEREAS the City of Prince George recognizes its role as a regional service hub for these types of facilities.

THEREFORE, be it resolved that NCLGA advocates to the Provincial Government the construction of a standalone secure psychiatric care facility, to serve the region, in Prince George.

3: Provincial Funding for Public Libraries

Resolution background: The BC Public Library Partners and the Association of BC Public Library Directors is requesting support from municipal councils in BC to advocate for the provincial government to provide sustainable funding increases for public libraries. As part of this campaign, they are requesting that the Prince George municipal council adopt a resolution for submission to the North Central Local Government Association, to be presented at the 2025 NCLGA AGM & Convention. The BC Public Library Partners have drafted sample resolution language.

WHEREAS core funding for public libraries in British Columbia has remained unchanged since 2009, limiting their ability to expand and evolve their programming as demand for their services increases;

And WHEREAS in the past 15 years, BC's population has grown 29% while public libraries have continued to rely on stagnant funding to provide services in increasingly challenging circumstances, including addressing the province's important goals of enhancing economic growth, reducing costs for families, and making communities safer;

And WHEREAS public libraries continue to meet these goals by supporting the economic and social health of their communities, providing information and services for consumers, individuals seeking employment and career enhancement, entrepreneurs and small businesses, providing critical locations of refuge during emergencies, and supporting the process of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples;

And WHEREAS the operational requirements of public libraries increasingly require significant and diverse resources to provide front-line community services, including supporting patrons with mental health and addiction issues as well as barriers to housing, providing critical locations of refuge during extreme weather events, providing services to new Canadians, and supporting the process of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples:

THEREFORE be it resolved that UBCM call on the provincial government to recognize the evolving and challenging situation for public libraries as well as their unique role as community spaces, and increase annual core funding for libraries to \$30 million in keeping with the request made by the BC Public Library Partners and the recommendation of the province's Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services;

And be it further resolved that core funding for public libraries be increased on a yearly basis in keeping with cost of living and inflationary pressures.

Strategic Priorities:

Active participation in NCLGA may have a link to each of the Council strategic priorities depending on topic.

Summary and conclusion:

This report provides draft content to aid in conversation on possible 2025 NCLGA resolutions.

Respectfully submitted:

Councillor Garth Frizzell, Chair

Prepared by Eric Depenau, Director, Administrative Services

Approved:
Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting date: 2025/02/04