



Committee Report to Council

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Date: February 13, 2025

To: **Mayor and Council.**

Name and title: Councillor Garth Frizzell, Chair, Intergovernmental Affairs Committee

Subject: Resolution Recommendations for the 2025 NCLGA Annual General Meeting

Attachment(s): None

Recommendation(s):

THAT Council ENDORSES resolutions number 1, 2 and 3 as proposed within the report dated February 13, 2025 from the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs titled, "Resolution Recommendations for the 2025 NCLGA Annual General Meeting"; and DIRECTS staff to submit these resolutions to the 2025 NCLGA Annual General Meeting for consideration.

Purpose:

This report supports Council conversation on draft 2025 North Central Local Government Association (NCLGA) resolution submissions and communicates committee support.

Background:

The 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.

The committee received directions through Council resolutions to consider two topics, the addition of conservation officers in the region and advocating for a regional psychiatric care facility. A third item introduced at the committee on library funding is also included.

Each resolution below has a background section, this is language that will be used in explaining the rationale for the resolution, and the formal resolution comprised of a preamble (whereas clauses) and an enactment clause (therefore be it resolved). Some discretion has been exercised to ensure that resolutions meet submission standards (two whereas clauses as example) while honoring the intent of the conversation at previous council and committee meetings.

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”.

While the committee appreciates that further investment has been made by the province since the time of this original resolution, the committee remains convinced that there is a rationale for further staffing and resources.

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. We believe further investment is needed to ensure British Columbia’s treasured environment is well looked after.

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;

AND 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

The Provincial government has announced that it intends on taking action to make sure 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, as well as secure treatment within BC Corrections. At a local level Council has made several related motions and has expressed interest in advocating for both increased services and more robust supports for those leaving treatment. With that in mind the following resolution has been drafted:

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

AND 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 with a coordinated plan for both treatment and post care.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that NCLGA advocates to the Provincial Government for the construction of a standalone secure psychiatric care facility, to serve the region, in Prince George.

3: Provincial Funding for Public Libraries

Public Libraries and Library Federations established under the authority of the Library Act are eligible for provincial funding. The Province provides funding to public libraries to support equitable access to information, programs, and services across the province, greater collaboration between libraries, information technology infrastructure, such as library catalogues and websites, province-wide programs such as BC OneCard, interlibrary loans, and the BC Summer Reading Club as examples.

Here in Prince George, the Prince George Public Library is a visible feature of the community and claims to be home to 61,494 cardholders while serving a high volume of people each day between its two branches: Bob Harkins Branch, downtown, and Nechako Branch, in the Hart.

Resolution background:

The City of Prince George encourages NCLGA members to support the BC Public Library Partners and the Association of BC Public Library Directors in requesting the provincial government provide sustainable funding increases for public libraries. In support of this campaign the below resolution language, modeled after language shared by the BC Public Library Partners, is presented.

Draft resolution:

WHEREAS core funding for public libraries in British Columbia has remained unchanged since 2009, despite BC's population growing 29%, limiting their ability to expand and evolve their programming as demand for their services increases;

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 increase core funding for public libraries on a yearly basis in line with inflation and immediately increases annual core funding for libraries to \$30 million as requested by the BC Public Library Partners and recommended by the province's Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services.

Strategic Priorities:

Active participation in the 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 and communicates committee level endorsement for the content herein.

Respectfully submitted:

Councillor Garth Frizzell, Chair, Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs

Prepared by Eric Depenau, Director of Administrative Services

Meeting date: 2025/02/24