



January 13, 2022

Ref: 269202

Mayors and Regional District Chairs of British Columbia

Attendees of the December 2021 Regional Meetings with Minister Josie Osborne and Minister Murray Rankin

Dear Mayors and Chairs:

Happy New Year 2022!

Thank you for taking the time to join Minister Josie Osborne and Minister Murray Rankin for the December 2021 regional meetings. As Minister Osborne and Minister Rankin said, these meetings continue to be a great opportunity to hear from you about key issues and initiatives in your communities.

The December meetings were focused on Indigenous relations and reconciliation. We very much appreciated the opportunity to hear from local governments about all the great work that is taking place to advance reconciliation and build meaningful and lasting partnerships with Indigenous communities.

Many local governments shared examples of collaboration including working together on cultural, arts and heritage projects, developing service agreements and MOUs, and incorporating Indigenous languages into signage and public spaces, to name a few. The Province acknowledges and supports the work local governments are doing to build relationships with Indigenous peoples and looks forward to hearing about future initiatives in this regard.

Inclusive Regional Governance

In the province's Draft Action Plan on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs has committed to supporting inclusive regional governance by advancing Indigenous participation in regional district boards. Interest on this has been building for some time and several regional districts and First Nations are keen to see this advance. We are looking forward to engaging on this in the near future.

Other actions to support reconciliation

Given the feedback on the draft plan, government is considering other possible actions to add, to support reconciliation at the local level. The idea of working on new approaches and practices to local government name changes, in those circumstances of negative colonial context, is one of many ideas under consideration.

Finally, we heard clearly that local governments have questions on their role in supporting the implementation of the articles of the UN Declaration and the TRC calls to action, on their responsibilities with respect to DRIPA, and what that means for their evolving relationships with First Nations and Indigenous people. We are working on new guidance and encouraging the sharing of best practices you are already undertaking. We will continue to collaborate with UBCM.

Please share examples of recent initiatives or resources in your community for building relations with First Nations and Indigenous people by emailing relations@civicinfo.bc.ca to have the resources or news releases of them added to the Joint Indigenous and Local Government Initiatives and Relations library to inspire and support other local governments.

Provincial State of Emergency – catastrophic flooding

The Provincial State of Emergency with respect to catastrophic flooding has been extended until end of day **January 18, 2022** due to the continued need for public safety measures under the *Emergency Program Act* and ongoing repairs to critical infrastructure.

[Travel restrictions](#) are currently still in place, including on Highway 1, Highway 5 (Coquihalla), and Highway 99. Note that the [DriveBC](#) home page is the most current source of highway conditions.

COVID 19 – Update

PHO Gatherings and Events Order – application to local governments

The December 22, 2021 Provincial Health Officer (PHO) [Gatherings and Events Order](#) exempts local governments (including meetings and public hearings) from the Order. It is our understanding that there is no intention for any additional restrictions for local government meetings, including restricting in-person attendance at open meetings. Accordingly, local governments can decide whether to hold electronic meetings if it is authorized in their procedure bylaw.

Local governments' decisions around electronic or in-person public attendance will depend on the unique circumstances in each community. Based on individual community needs, this could include a hybrid of virtual and in-person attendance at meetings. Local governments are encouraged to review their meeting rules and update them accordingly.

With the end of the Provincial State of Emergency, and expiration of the previous exceptional orders made under *Emergency Program Act*, no legislative authority exists to allow the Minister to issue a Ministerial Order (or any other legislative tool) to override public presence at open meetings (including providing a place for the public when electronic meetings are held). Local governments that choose to

have electronic meetings as authorized in their procedure bylaw are therefore required to provide a place for the public to attend to hear or watch meetings.

I would encourage local governments to consider enhanced safety measures where in-person attendance is required to support the health and safety of staff and the public.

COVID-19 Safety Plans

On January 7, 2022 Dr. Bonnie Henry announced an order requiring employers to re-activate their COVID-19 Safety Plans to reduce the spread of the highly transmissible Omicron variant of the COVID-19 virus. WorkSafe BC has provided guidance on reactivation or development of these plans and further information can be found [here](#).

The Provincial Health Office has confirmed that a new written Workplace Safety Order will be available shortly and I will provide you with an update as soon as the new order is posted. Vaccination continues to be our primary protective measure. [Masks](#) continue to be mandatory for all indoor public spaces.

COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Doses

Starting in January 2022, people 18 years and older will get a booking invitation 6 months after the date of their second dose for a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Please encourage your residents to get a booster dose as this is helping to protect your communities from COVID-19.

Keep watching [BC's Response to COVID-19](#) website for updates, and please encourage your residents to do the same.

Infrastructure Funding

As a reminder, the intake for the ICIP Environmental Quality Program closes on **January 26, 2022**. Program information can be found at: www.gov.bc.ca/Investing-in-Canada-Infrastructure-Program

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.

MO 84/2020 – Local Authorities and Essential Goods and Supplies (COVID-19) Order

On December 15, 2021 [MO 84/2020](#) under the *COVID-19 Related Measures Act* (CRMA) was amended to repeal certain sections that are no longer necessary for current pandemic response actions and change the repeal date for the remaining sections from December 31, 2021 to December 31, 2022. Note that the sunset date for CRMA also has been extended to December 31, 2022. These changes reflect the ongoing and evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic.

See the following summary table for the current status of sections under the Order:

Section	Application	Status
Section 1	Definitions	Extended to Dec 2022
Section 2	Application of Order	Extended to Dec 2022
Section 3	Local emergency plans	Repealed in July 2020
Section 4	Declarations of SOLE and orders set aside	Repealed in July 2020
Section 5	<i>Emergency powers of Local Authorities (LAs)</i> Requires LAs to obtain ministerial approval to declare a SOLE under section 12 (1) of the Emergency Program Act (EPA) or to use a power under the EPA in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic.	Extended to Dec 2022
Section 6	<i>LA resources and plans</i> LAs are no longer obligated to identify resources and facilities for COVID response or identify critical supplies and services.	Repealed in Dec 2021
Section 7	<i>Continuity of LA services</i> LAs are no longer required to ensure that certain services are maintained.	Repealed in Dec 2021
Section 8	<i>Critical services and essential goods and supplies</i> LAs are no longer required to provide assistance to ensure delivery of supplies to services and facilities that serve vulnerable populations.	Repealed in Dec 2021
Section 9	<i>Secondary selling prohibited</i> The minister may no longer direct limits on quantities of certain goods and services that may be purchased, and secondary selling of essential goods and supplies is no longer prohibited.	Repealed in Dec 2021
Section 10	<i>BC Ferry Services</i>	Repealed in July 2020 and July 2021
Section 11	<i>Delivery of essential goods and supplies</i> The Minister is no longer authorized to coordinate measures to ensure delivery of essential goods and supplies.	Repealed in Dec 2021

I appreciate you communicating back information from the province to your councils and boards, to your local government staff and to your communities.

The next regional meetings with Municipal Affairs will be in early February 2022. Minister of Citizens' Services Lisa Beare will join Minister Osborne to give an update on connectivity. Minister Osborne's office will be in touch with you in the upcoming week about the February date, time, and meeting information. If you are unable to attend a minister's meeting, please feel free to send an alternate elected official or a staff member to attend on your behalf.

I hope you were be able to take some time for yourself and to celebrate with your families during the holiday season. I continue to be humbled and impressed by the flexibility and resilience of you and your staff during these difficult times. The new year will hold its own challenges, however, I know that by working together, we will be able to tackle whatever comes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Faganello", written in a cursive style.

Tara Faganello
Assistant Deputy Minister

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