

TO: RDN Board of Directors

DATE: March 22, 2024

FROM: Elizabeth J. Hughes, Manager, Strategy and Intergovernmental Services

SUBJECT: Update on Legislative Reform Initiative

Background

The Legislative Reform Initiative began in 2021, led by the RDN, and envisions mobilizing a collective intergovernmental effort to update and modernize the *Local Government Act*.

Concerns with the dated *Local Government Act* include restrictions on taxation and revenue sources, complexities in establishing services, and the lack of provisions in comparison with Section 8 of the *Community Charter* which gives municipalities powers to regulate, prohibit, and impose requirements by bylaw without provincial approval or establishing bylaws. Regional districts are limited in their legislative authority in several areas such as business licensing authority (which the province is now addressing as part of its efforts around short-term rental housing), subdivision approval, regulation of fireworks discharge, parking enforcement, tree management, and taxation and funding models. Social, political, and economic environments that local governments operate within continue to evolve in areas such as climate change, environmental stewardship, and a recognition of the importance of First Nations' participation in governance. These realities should be reflected in a modernized legislative framework.

Actions Taken

Since 2021, discussions of the Legislative Reform Initiative have been held with three Ministers of Municipal Affairs. The RDN has hosted or co-hosted 8 panel sessions or presentations about this initiative at AVICC, UBCM, and several Chair/CAO Forums, including an upcoming session at the Regional District Chair/CAO Forum on March 26, 2024. Chair Vanessa Craig and CAO Douglas Holmes have been invited to present an update on the initiative at the Electoral Area Directors Forum at AVICC on April 12, 2024.

Most recently, at the panel session on legislative reform at UBCM in September 2023, co-hosted by the RDN, Fraser Valley Regional District (City of Chilliwack), Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, and Don Lidstone, K.C., session attendees expressed support for asking UBCM to lead the initiative and establish a working group to steer the process. The proposed working group would include representatives from municipalities, regional districts, First Nations, UBCM, and ministerial staff, and would conduct research and policy work to develop a framework for reviewing and modernizing the *Local Government Act*.

Following the September 2023 UBCM panel session, the RDN drafted a "What We Heard" document (attached) and circulated it to UBCM members, summarizing the session discussion and next steps, and requesting letters of support for a UBCM working group on comprehensive legislative reform and modernization.

Current Status

Letters of support are being received from regional districts and municipalities and are being provided to directors in weekly Board correspondence. While UBCM has not come to a decision about including the legislative reform initiative in its work plan, UBCM leadership has held several discussions about the initiative and is gathering further information. This is long term project will likely take several years to unfold and come to fruition.