

TO: UBCM Members

FROM: **UBCM RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE**  
Mayor Sharon Gaetz, Chair  
Mayor Mary Sjostrom, Vice Chair  
Councillor Barbara Steele  
Mayor Malcolm Brodie  
Mayor Christopher Causton

***POLICY PAPER***  
**#3**

2009 CONVENTION

DATE: September 17, 2009

RE: **UBCM RESOLUTIONS PROCESS:  
DISCUSSION ON SCOPE AND OPTIONS**

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**1. Decision Request**

That the membership authorize the Resolutions Committee to:

- develop options with respect to amending the existing resolutions process for member consideration;
- seek feedback and direction from members at the 2010 Area Association meetings on the options; and
- based on feedback from members, as necessary, prepare recommendations to be brought forward for full member consideration at the 2010 UBCM Convention to amend the existing resolutions process.

**2. Introduction**

The purpose of this policy paper is to respond to the feedback from members on the resolutions process. The catalyst for the development of this paper was the referral of resolution 2008 - B137 sponsored by the AKBLG Executive, to the UBCM Executive.

The AKBLG resolution reads as follows:

***B137 PRIORITIZING AND TRACKING RESOLUTIONS***

*AKBLG Executive*

*WHEREAS there are hundreds of resolutions being debated and voted on at the annual Union of B.C. Municipalities Convention;*

*AND WHEREAS there is no clear method of tracking the resolutions to determine the outcome of our concerns after our resolutions have been presented to the appropriate party;*

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that each Area Association be requested to prioritize their top five resolutions from within their Area Association for consideration by the UBCM;*

*AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the UBCM Executive bring forward a maximum of 25 resolutions of province-wide importance for debate at the UBCM Convention;*

*AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the UBCM develop a tracking system and report back annually as to the progress made on resolving the concerns brought forward by UBCM member local governments through resolution.*

When B137 was considered by the UBCM Executive during the December 2008 meeting, the following course of action was endorsed:

*That staff draft a policy paper for circulation to Executive members in January 2009 for comments and approval, with the goal of submitting the policy paper to Area Associations beginning in February 2009.*

In light of the fact that November 2008 was a local government election year, the Executive decided to revise its original recommendation for dealing with the AKBLG resolution. Board members realized that it would be challenging for 43% of new local elected officials to provide input and feedback on options for changing the resolutions process when in fact, they had not yet had the opportunity to take part in a UBCM Convention resolutions session. Consequently, instead of putting forward options at the 2009 Area Association meetings, it was decided that this policy paper be prepared for member consideration at the 2009 Convention. This paper is designed to determine the level of comfort from the membership about possible options for amending the existing resolutions process.

What follows in this paper is more of a scoping document that seeks UBCM member support on a direction and process to consider options for possibly amending the resolutions process. This paper considers the proposal put forward by AKBLG as well as feedback from the membership. While considering the information in this paper, members need to identify what they see as the problems with the existing process, consider possible amendments and determine what the priorities are for UBCM.

- Is it to give priority to some resolutions over others? Is it to reduce the number of resolutions submitted to UBCM? If so, does this require a greater role to be played by Area Associations and the UBCM Executive in prioritizing?
- Is it to ensure that resolutions are categorized in a manner that eliminates debate on repeat issues? Are we comfortable not including repeat resolutions in the Resolutions Book? Do we want to continue to admit them to the floor for debate?
- Is it to expand the time at the resolutions policy session to ensure all resolutions get debated on the floor? Are delegates willing to reduce the time allocated for other workshops and sessions to allow for more resolutions debate?
- Is it to develop a better tracking system of endorsed resolutions? What other means can UBCM use besides the on-line tracking system and conveyance of provincial and federal government responses to sponsors, to make members aware of the status of their resolutions?

No matter what priorities are agreed upon, it is imperative that we, as an Executive Committee take the time to consult with the membership. We need to thoroughly discuss options and ensure that whatever approach is decided upon, we have the support of the membership.

### **3. History and Background of the UBCM Resolutions Process**

While the UBCM membership has considered and debated resolutions annually since the organization was founded over 100 years ago, the process for debating and addressing resolutions has evolved and grown with the organization.

Since the early 1970s, the Executive has played a role in categorizing resolutions submitted to conventions. In 1982, members endorsed a special resolution that formally adopted the use of Sections "A", "B" and "C" that continues to this day. Over the years amendments and modifications, as well as additional policies and guidelines, for categorizing and handling resolutions have been added but there have been few changes to the resolutions process since the mid-1980s.

As the policies and procedures for dealing with resolutions evolved, the number of resolutions submitted annually to UBCM for consideration at Convention has increased. The average number of resolutions submitted during the 1970s was 142, compared to an average of 198 between 2000 to the present. It is relevant to note that in 2008 and in 2009, members submitted 226 resolutions.

### **4. Member Feedback on the UBCM Resolutions Process**

After each UBCM Convention, delegates are sent an evaluation form and asked to rate and comment on various aspects of the convention. As part of the research work for this paper, an analysis of delegate feedback on the resolutions process was undertaken over the period of 2003-2008. The results of this feedback indicate a trend in the types of comments received.

- *Number of Resolutions Considered and / or Conveyed*

Consistently, delegates have indicated that too many resolutions come up for consideration at Convention, and subsequently for conveyance to the provincial and federal governments and other organizations. Some delegates go further and question the relevance of many resolutions to communities across the province, or they point out that some resolutions duplicate existing UBCM policy or policy directions.

The consideration of large numbers of resolutions, including resolutions that re-state existing policy, brings some delegates to question the quality of discussion and debate that takes place during policy sessions at Convention. Others suggest admitting or selecting only a fixed number of resolutions for consideration and debate.

- *Repeat Resolutions or Topics*

Related to the question of the number of resolutions considered and conveyed is the issue of repeat resolutions or topics. Where possible, the Resolutions Committee attempts to indicate in its comments and recommendations whether an issue has already been addressed, and whether further action might be required.

However, this does not address situations in which UBCM member local governments feel that their concerns on particular issues have not been addressed. Local governments may also be dissatisfied by the way in which an issue has been addressed, or they may question the pace at which change or solutions are being implemented. In all of these cases, it seems that members submit similar resolutions for consideration, year after year, as one way to express dissatisfaction with a lack of response. In fact there have been instances where resolutions have been consistently endorsed for over 10 years before provincial action is taken (ie. traffic fine revenue sharing).

- *Member Communication on Endorsed Resolutions*

Additional feedback has noted that there needs to be better communication of what happens to resolutions once endorsed at UBCM, and that this might go towards addressing the issue of repeat resolutions. If local governments have a sense that issues are moving forward, or at least that work is being done, then they might be less likely to submit resolutions that duplicate existing policy positions. This also speaks to the last enactment clause noted in the AKBLG resolution which seeks the establishment of a tracking process that would report out on the progress or lack thereof of endorsed resolutions.

- *Time Allocated to Policy Sessions*

Each year delegates provide UBCM with extensive feedback and very divided opinions on whether enough, or too much time is allocated to policy sessions. A great number of delegates expressed the need for more time to be allotted to policy sessions, to allow for better debate and to ensure that each resolution receives careful consideration. Others alluded to the tension between the time allotted to policy sessions and the number of resolutions to be considered, and suggested that either more time should be allotted or the number of resolutions be reduced.

Some delegates made the general observation that the time scheduled for policy sessions is fairly limited, when considered in the context of the overall Convention program. A common suggestion has been to devote one entire day of Convention to resolutions, with no other events or meetings scheduled during that time. A variant on this is the suggestion to have one long policy session, of unspecified length. Others favour more firm and granular scheduling of specific resolutions, policy papers or blocks of resolutions for consideration within the policy sessions. This would involve setting firm time periods for specific (possibly smaller) blocks of resolutions and when they will come up for discussion.

Each year, delegates point out that they juggle competing interests, between attending meetings with ministers and provincial staff, and attending policy sessions. Some have suggested that delegates and provincial ministers / staff should not be allowed to schedule meetings during policy sessions, and that the Convention program and procedures should be adjusted to make sure that the policy sessions are the priority and the sole event, whenever they appear in the schedule. This would also encompass the existing practice of closing the tradeshow during policy sessions.

Apart from those who want to amend the convention program to ensure that delegates focus their time on policy sessions there is another portion of the membership that consistently suggests that too much time is already allocated to policy sessions at Convention; that these sessions are too long; and that the amount of time scheduled for policy sessions should be reduced.

While the above reflects the predominant issues raised, the following identifies other matters that have also been expressed by delegates:

- resolutions dealt with as a block – some are concerned that individual debate is stifled while others would prefer that repeat resolutions do not get admitted to the floor for debate at all.
- resolutions off the floor – concerns have been raised that resolutions off the floor bypass the normal resolutions process. However, it is important to note that whether or not a resolution is admitted off the floor is truly in the delegates hands. The bylaws provide that a three-fifths majority of the members must support a motion to permit a resolution to come off the floor.
- chairing – while some have commended chairs on trying to keep the debate moving, others have expressed concern that not enough debate has been permitted by chairs to address what are deemed to be controversial issues.

## **5. Resolutions Processes in Other Jurisdictions**

As part of this scoping exercise, we looked to our provincial counterparts to compare resolutions processes. While most other associations have somewhat similar processes for submitting resolutions, the variation is evident in how the resolutions are processed once received by the associations. The following highlights some of these variations between three associations.

At the extreme end of the spectrum is the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO). AMO does not have a resolutions session at their Annual Conference. Resolutions submitted to AMO are either referred to the relevant Task Force (if within their policy portfolio) or to the Executive (no Task Force for a policy issue). Resolutions that are referred to the AMO Executive are considered by board members at regular board meetings. There is no Resolutions Committee, however at the Convention each of the Task Forces present reports to delegates providing them with status reports on specific policy portfolios.

When a resolution is in keeping with existing AMO policy, no action is taken, as advocacy is already underway and the sponsoring local government is so advised. If a resolution is regional or local in nature in scope, staff works to establish communication between the sponsor and the relevant ministry or agency. In the case where a resolution addresses a new issue or requests a change to existing policy, staff prepares a report for consideration and decision by the Executive. This staff report would include member feedback and relevant Task Force comments where appropriate. The Executive decides on the course of action – if it is endorsed it becomes part of the policy advocacy agenda for the coming year, if it is not endorsed then no action is taken.

Somewhat similar to AMO, the FCM board considers resolutions at their March and September meetings, or if specifically requested by the sponsor, at the Annual Conference. Relevant standing committees provide comments on the resolutions and determine if the resolution is compatible with existing policy. It is during the March meeting that standing committees will recommend which resolutions should be submitted to Annual Conference – based on their national municipal significance. Then the full board must concur that the resolution should be submitted to the Annual Conference. Select resolutions are packaged by Standing Committees in a “Consent Agenda” which is voted on as a single item. Once adopted, all resolutions contained in the Consent Agenda become FCM policy.

In Alberta, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) empowers its Municipal Governance Committee (Resolutions Committee) to review resolutions and recommend to the Executive that resolutions consistent with previously endorsed policy be returned to sponsors with the appropriate explanation. As well, the same Committee assesses each endorsed resolution following Convention in the context of existing AUMA policy and then recommends to the Executive which resolutions it should focus on as priority issues. Endorsed resolutions are considered to have an active life of 3 years.

These are just a few comparisons from other jurisdictions that help to put our resolutions process in a broader national context.

## **6. Options for Consideration**

Based on the requests put forward in the AKBLG Executive resolution, feedback from delegates attending UBCM resolutions sessions and the practices in other jurisdictions, below are some sample options that will be explored with members during the spring Area Association meetings. For ease of reference the same categories as those employed in section 4 of this paper have been used.

### **A. Number of Resolutions Considered and / or Conveyed**

#### **A1. Prioritize Resolutions**

One option would envision a greater role for the Area Associations and the UBCM Executive in prioritizing resolutions in an effort to limit the number of resolutions to be debated at Convention. In the proposal by the AKBLG Executive, the request is to have each of the Area Associations only submit 5 resolutions and the UBCM Executive to pick 25 resolutions. This would see a total of 50 resolutions brought forward for consideration at a UBCM Convention, approximately one-quarter of the resolutions that are presently received by UBCM each year. If the AKBLG resolution had been endorsed at the UBCM Convention last year, the Executive would have been faced with advising Area Associations to only submit 5 resolutions and for the UBCM Executive to pick 25 resolutions to go forward for debate at this 2009 Convention. Would this have been viewed as fair?

With respect to this option, delegates would need to consider if they are comfortable with this new role to be played by their Area Association and the UBCM Executive. Are 50 resolutions enough? Does the membership have a comfort level in asking their Area Association to pick 5 and the UBCM Executive to pick 25 resolutions? What implications would this have for the Resolutions Book? Would all resolutions get printed and only 50 be recommended for debate?

### **A2. Limit the Number of Resolutions Submitted to UBCM**

Another option might be to advise members that they are only permitted to submit one resolution per year. This would limit the number of resolutions to the number of members. We note that while this may not reduce the number of resolutions drastically, there are members that do not submit resolutions while others consistently submit between 5-10 resolutions every year. The role of the Area Associations would need to be considered in this option. Presently UBCM accepts resolutions from members as well as Area Associations based on what is endorsed at the Area Association conferences. Would UBCM continue to accept resolutions from Area Associations? Or could the Area Associations be used to vet members individual resolutions at their Annual Meetings with their recommendations noted in the UBCM Resolutions Book - as is present practice - but not allow them to submit resolutions for inclusion in the Resolutions Book? Another consideration is resolutions sponsored from Area Association Executives. Under this option, that too, would not be permitted.

### **A3. No Resolutions Debate at Convention**

At the extreme would be an option to follow the lead from AMO and not hold resolutions sessions at the annual conference. AMO receives resolutions from members throughout the year that are referred to specific Task Forces or the Executive for their consideration. These Task Forces then bring forward policy papers to the Convention that would contain specific policy directions based on the resolutions received from the membership throughout the year and whether or not these resolutions are consistent with existing policy. In keeping with this process of no resolutions, AMO does not entertain resolutions off the floor. Would our membership be comfortable empowering UBCM's Executive Committees reviewing resolutions; dealing with resolutions year round; and no resolutions debate at Convention?

## **B. Repeat Resolutions or Topics**

### **B1. Previously Endorsed Resolutions Not Debated**

One option would be to return to the procedures in place in 1972 which put previously endorsed resolutions into an addendum within the Resolutions Book with the recommendation to not admit for debate. Presently B1 resolutions are considered as a block, but this block continues to go to the floor for consideration, and there still is the opportunity for a delegate to pull a resolution from the block for individual consideration.

## **B2. Previously Endorsed Resolutions Referred to Relevant Committee**

Another option might be to not include previously endorsed resolutions in the Resolutions Book but refer them to the relevant UBCM Committee or the Executive for consideration and possible endorsement if they are in keeping with existing policy. This option would limit member's ability to speak to their resolutions and garner attention to an issue that might legitimately be creating a continued problem for many communities.

### **C. Member Communication**

#### **C1. Tracking Endorsed Resolutions**

The AKBLG Executive resolution that seeks the establishment of a tracking process that would report out on the progress or lack thereof of endorsed resolutions. Presently, following Conventions all endorsed resolutions are conveyed to the provincial or federal government, FCM or relevant association or organization for a response. Each sponsor is provided with a copy of the responses to their resolutions. In the case of Province, the Ministry of Community and Rural Development receives all resolutions, coordinates the various provincial ministry responses and UBCM receives an extensive report in early spring from the Minister, which is shared with the members and posted on-line.

As well, UBCM maintains a resolutions database that is publicly accessible on our website. The database contains resolutions dating back to 1985. Each resolution record identifies if the resolution was endorsed and the relevant provincial and/or federal response to the resolution. There are over 3500 records on this database. With respect to this option, we would seek feedback on how we could better track endorsed resolutions. With over 3500 records, how would it be possible to appropriately staff the follow up required to track each resolution?

It is also important to note that this database needs to be viewed as more than just a tracking mechanism for determining if the Province has responded to our endorsed resolutions. The database is what allows us to define ourselves as a policy-driven organization. It is used internally by staff on a consistent basis to assist us in identifying where our membership stands on a variety of policy matters and assists us in our day-to-day enquiries not only from government staff but the membership and public as well.

#### **C2. Annual Reporting on Resolutions**

The AKBLG resolution also speaks to reporting *"back annually as to the progress made on resolving the concerns brought forward by UBCM member local governments through resolution."* Each year the UBCM distributes to the membership an Annual Report and Resolutions Book. This book is designed to update the membership on the status of a variety of policy matters that have been addressed by the Executive and its relevant committees over the past year. This Annual report provides an overview of both provincial and federal policy advocacy work that has been undertaken. As well the Resolutions Committee report within the Annual Report does highlight where progress

has been made (amendments to legislation or regulation) to address a request that has been put forward by UBCM members through the resolutions process.

This is an area where the Executive Committee would welcome further feedback and comment from the membership. Beyond the existing process for tracking, it is not clear what other actions we could take with the existing staff resources to enhance the tracking process.

#### ***D. Time Allocated to Policy Sessions***

##### **D1. Add more time for resolutions debate**

##### **D2. Reduce time allocated for resolutions debate**

Each year at the UBCM Convention, there are 6 – 7 hours dedicated to resolutions debate. This time allocation has remained fairly consistent despite the fact that the number of resolutions has continued to increase. The Convention Committee reviews the program elements each year but the challenge is to ensure that there continues to be adequate time for workshops, keynote addresses and speeches that have become part of the established UBCM Convention program. We note that the bylaws provide for a three day Convention, Wednesday to Friday, so the Committee must ensure that the business sessions (Annual meeting, resolutions /policy sessions) occur within those three days. Would delegates prefer to see full day-long resolutions sessions as has been suggested in some of the feedback? Are delegates willing to forego other learning opportunities (workshops, clinics) for extended resolutions debate time?

As noted, some members feel that too much time is taken on resolutions sessions. Members have referenced that repeat debate on previously endorsed policy positions, wastes time and would prefer that debate be focused on new resolutions. The debate around how much time is allocated to resolutions sessions is directly linked to the outcome of the discussions on the previous options. For instance, if there is direction from the membership to have the Area Associations and Executive prioritize resolutions as proposed then we would not need 6-7 hours to debate 50 resolutions.

## **7. Implications of Change**

The previous section has highlighted some options that members may wish to consider when UBCM undertakes to consult with delegates at the 2010 Area Association Meetings. However, we recognize that there are other ideas and options that members may wish to explore and we are open to your suggestions. It is also important to consider the broader implications of changing the resolutions process in the overall context of how UBCM operates and what it means to be a member of UBCM.

For example, one of the privileges of UBCM membership is that members can sponsor and bring forward a resolution to the UBCM for consideration at the UBCM Convention. If as a result of this process, the decision is made to provide more authority to the Area Associations and Executive to prioritize resolutions or to limit the number of resolutions that a member can submit, are we removing one of the fundamental privileges of UBCM membership? The UBCM Convention provides a

huge media opportunity for some communities to raise the profile and get the attention that they are looking for to get action on issues that are impacting them.

UBCM is very fortunate to also have a good working relationship with the Ministry of Community and Rural Development. This relationship allows us the ability to convey all our resolutions to the Minister who is then responsible for pulling together the responses from the various ministries over a period of six months. This task is becoming harder and harder to accomplish within the designated time frame as the number of resolutions continues to grow. It has also been noted that UBCM is the only provincial association that has this type of formalized relationship with their provincial government. The question is how long can UBCM continue to expect the Province to respond to all of our resolutions, when will capacity be reached? Would it make sense to limit and prioritize the number of resolutions sent to the Province and concentrate on getting results on a few, instead of responses to all with possibly limited success?

As with any process, there are pros and cons to change. With respect to the UBCM resolutions process we must carefully weigh them in the context of the benefits that we have with the existing process. Could the existing process be better? Probably yes, but we need to identify how much we can change without jeopardizing some of the basic principles associated with being a UBCM member. As noted, the purpose of this paper is to generate discussion and seek direction to move forward and identify some potential options for amending the present UBCM resolutions process. This paper is the first step. The Committee will be bringing forward more detailed options in the spring and will be seeking your guidance and direction.

## **8. Recommendations**

That the membership endorse the proposed course of action that will see the development of options for amending the resolutions process to be presented at the 2010 Area Associations for feedback and direction; and

That based on the direction from the membership, recommendations may be forthcoming to the 2010 UBCM Convention to amend the UBCM resolutions process.