



Advocacy Workshop Report and Recommendations

Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC) | December 10, 2021

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Introduction

The AVICC Executive identified the value of considering the role the Association should play regarding advocacy. The Executive is taking its recommendations to the Membership at convention.

Approach

Executive members completed a pre-workshop survey to identify key principles and areas of opportunity and risk around different options. These survey results were considered and discussed in detail by the Executive.

In addition to advocacy, the Executive was asked about options for funding new initiatives (if supported), the roles and expectations of Executive members, their view of what Members expect and the relationship between AVICC and UBCM.

Recommendation to the Membership

The Executive is recommending to the Membership that in addition to continuing with Core Member Advocacy initiatives (convention, resolution assistance, letter writing on behalf of Members, and meetings with ministers and ministry staff) that AVICC be more proactive in acting as a 'facilitator' or 'advocacy incubator' for initiatives that would benefit from more dialogue and education.

The Executive did not feel AVICC should be leading ongoing initiatives or running programs.

The Executive spent significant time exploring the pros and cons of a higher degree of involvement in advocacy.

While there is a desire by certain Members to have AVICC play a more significant role in advocacy, the risks to AVICC (and its Members) were fully explored.

The key risks identified were:

- Challenges with funding new initiatives, and ensuring a fair model of funding
- Potential conflict between the advocacy goals of Members
- Creating overlap and confusion between Member priorities and those the UBCM might be advancing.
- Inability to extricate AVICC out of initiatives if others aren't willing to participate or assume responsibility

These options are discussed in more detail below.

Core Advocacy Support to Members

AVICC plays a key role in supporting its members (both large and small) through a range of advocacy initiatives.

The following are examples of some of the ongoing advocacy work that AVICC undertakes on behalf of Members. These are separate to the project work and committee work that are carried out as longer-term advocacy initiatives.

Advocacy Letters

The President sends letters to provincial and federal ministers and to other agencies to advise of relevant resolutions that have been passed by AVICC members. The letters explain the changes in legislation, funding, etc. that are being requested by the membership through the resolutions, and sets out specific requests for action.

Minister Meetings

AVICC sets up and coordinates meetings with various provincial ministers on topics that have the support of the membership. These meetings have been held both during the UBCM Convention and at other times of the year. AVICC staff have assisted with preparing the materials and briefing notes for these meetings.

Ministry Meetings and Input

AVICC Executive and staff attend meetings and webinars with provincial and federal ministry staff to provide input on new government programs and policy, and to ensure this information is communicated to AVICC member local governments. AVICC strives to ensure that local government interests are represented.

Representation on External Committees

AVICC Executive Committee members are appointed to sit on external committees to represent the memberships' interests and act as an information link back to the Executive and members. AVICC also appoints non-Executive members to represent AVICC on government committees.

Member Resolutions and Executive Resolutions

AVICC reviews the resolutions sent in by local government members, and works with the resolution sponsors to ensure the “ask” in the resolutions can be clearly understood with specific policy requests for action. AVICC collects and distributes background information on the resolutions to the membership. The AVICC Executive also proposes resolutions for member vote at the Convention that go forward as Executive Resolutions.

Delegations

The AVICC Executive Committee regularly receives delegations at its meetings from both government and non-government groups. Sometimes the delegations have been invited by the

Executive in order to provide information on policy issues that were identified by the membership. In other instances, the delegations appear with requests for AVICC to take action on an issue, or to provide letters of support for an initiative.

Media Enquiries

The President is the recognized spokesperson for the AVICC, and media enquiries seeking the official position or reaction of AVICC are referred to the President.

Convention

The value of networking and education that occurs at Convention is core to Association (and Member) success with advocacy. The opportunity to both formally and informally learn from experts and other Members as well as educating on issues of importance allows for some momentum and support to be obtained on more complex issues.

The Executive is not recommending any change to these services, as they are recognized by Members as being valued, and are provided within the current Dues structure.

Should the AVICC act as a 'facilitator' of regional initiatives?

An example of this 'Facilitator' role would be when AVICC had workshops and meeting space at previous conventions for the climate and social procurement initiatives. AVICC was acting in the role of a regional connector of members and ideas, and could do more throughout the year on this using virtual platforms.

The Executive felt this was a role that provided a sort of an 'incubator' of advocacy ideas through education and connection. It allows Members (both small and large) to create momentum around matters of importance.

It could take the form of virtual educational options (recognizing the disparity in costs associated with travel to live events) or arranging 'lunch and learns' or meetings between parties with a shared interest in the issue.

Staff anticipates that this could be done at a modest cost as much can be done virtually and we recommend that a costing model be attached to this recommendation.

The Executive is recommending to the Members that the AVICC continue to provide (and expand) this facilitative role, and formalize what that role would look like.

Should there be AVICC led committees?

These would be AVICC led committees that connect members and help them develop legislation like new bylaws, fees, public communication (e.g Solid Waste Committee).

In weighing this option the Executive discussed the challenges in getting full engagement and support from Member Boards and Councils as well as the Provincial Government. There is also a significant demand on scarce AVICC resources with risks around communication and direction to and from AVICC staff.

This option could not be provided without new resourcing. Even if Contractors were engaged, there is AVICC staff time that would be required and properly allocating the funding impacts is a challenge.

The Executive is NOT recommending that AVICC expand its services to provide this role. If an initiative has been supported through the "facilitator" role above, it would need a Member sponsor to take the lead at this stage.

Should AVICC be an organization that develops policy papers?

An example would be the financial review of the Island Corridor Foundation, or the BC Ferries Fare review.

Policy work is a very important aspect of what the UBCM provides. AVICC could provide this service but it would result in increased costs and is not an area of core AVICC competency. Without strong support from a Member local government that would take the lead, or a Member-led committee, this could result in significant AVICC resource impacts.

The Executive is NOT recommending that AVICC expand its services to provide this role. Policy work would be best served by being undertaken by a formal Member led committee, a Member directly or by UBCM.

Should AVICC be an organization that operates programs?

An example of that would be what AVICC was initially asked to take to run the social procurement initiative such as providing office space, collecting fees, hiring consultants, maintaining a web page, etc.

There are other groups (ad hoc committees, Regional Districts or individual Members) who are more suited to host and administer ongoing programs.

Of all of the options, this is the one with the most risk and was not supported by the Executive, particularly as the requirement of ongoing funding and expanded staffing that would have to be funded by Members.

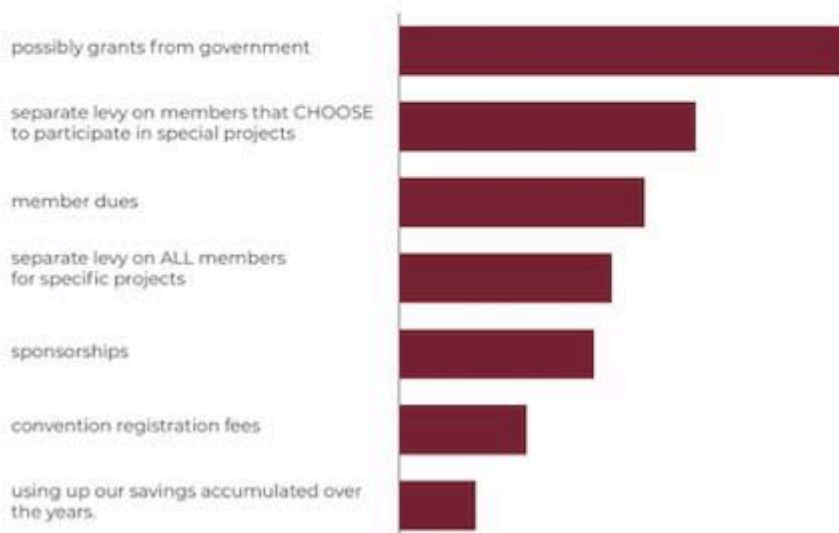
Funding Options

The Executive discussed different models to fund an expansion of advocacy services, and the following represents the input of the Executive in the pre-session survey. It was recognized that in terms of grant funding, the AVICC would potentially be competing against Members. The challenges of sponsorships were also discussed, as these could mean contributions from private sector entities that are impacted (positively or negatively) by advocacy initiatives.

Dues funding is the current model for advocacy funding and upon a review of the dues in other regions of the province, the current member dues are low with AVICC for the services provided.

Funding

IF AVICC decides to undertake additional advocacy work, please rank the following in order from best to worst option (note a combination would be likely, this is for discussion purposes only):



Relationship with UBCM

The Executive recognized that AVICC has had a productive and collaborative relationship with UBCM and that this relationship (and the unique shared staffing structure) has benefitted AVICC Members. Particular recognition was given to the extraordinary staff support the AVICC has received from Ms. Cookson.

SUMMARY

The following summarizes the Executive's recommendation to the Membership:

