

Summerland Council puts forward five SILGA resolutions

by Doug Holmes

Local government has an important voice in federal and provincial policymaking through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). Both organizations are directed by elected local representatives and actively deal with federal and provincial governments on matters of local importance.

Resolutions debated and passed at FCM and UBCM conventions provide the main opportunity for local governments of all sizes to express concerns, share experiences, and take a united position.

Resolutions have a better chance of being endorsed by FCM and UBCM delegates if they are first approved at the regional level. For Okanagan communities, the process begins at the Southern Interior Local Government Association (SILGA) annual convention.

Summerland Council is putting forward five resolutions for debate at this year's SILGA convention, which is being held in Kamloops from April 30 to May 3. They include:

Grant processing timelines

Local governments are required to meet tight deadlines when applying for provincial and federal grants but are then left waiting indefinitely for adjudication and approval, affecting our ability to plan with certainty and financial accuracy. We are therefore asking senior levels of government to establish and adhere to processing timelines for all their grant programs.

Referendum questions

Referendum ballots in the form of a 'yes' or 'no' question can sometimes be too restrictive, create interpretation challenges, discourage compromise and polarise public debate. We are therefore putting forward a resolution to ask the provincial government to amend the Local Government Act to allow alternative ballot options beyond a binary choice.

Servicing ALR properties

While the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) plays a critical role in ensuring food security for all BC residents, the cost of servicing farm land falls unfairly on residential taxpayers within agricultural communities such as Summerland. Distances between agricultural parcels makes the cost of maintaining infrastructure to those properties disproportionately expensive and it cannot be recovered from farm-class property taxes. We are therefore putting forward a motion for the UBCM to work with the provincial government to develop a program to help local governments adequately service ALR lands.

One Hectare Limit for Septic

The provincial government requires a minimum of one hectare of land for installing a septic field, an arbitrary number that doesn't necessarily relate to the ability of a location to support a septic system. We are asking the provincial government to review and implement a new policy concerning where septic fields may be located.

Produce stickers in organic composting facilities

The federal and provincial governments together with local governments and First Nations have recently invested \$30m to keep organic waste out of landfills and increase composting capacity in BC yet the composting process is hindered by non-biodegradable plastic fruit and vegetable stickers that inevitably end up in curbside collection bins. We are asking senior governments to ban the use of non-biodegradable produce stickers and approve alternative methods for displaying price codes.

All resolutions approved at the SILGA convention will be automatically submitted to the UBCM convention in September for consideration at the provincial level. For resolutions not approved by SILGA delegates, municipal councils have the option of submitting them directly to UBCM.

Doug Holmes is mayor of Summerland