

UBCM Provincial Election Priorities

Local governments are providing more and more public services in areas of provincial responsibility without a corresponding growth in revenue. They are increasingly stepping up to meet the needs of a growing population when faced with gaps in provincial services and costly new legislative requirements especially in housing, infrastructure, community safety and climate action.

Local governments have limited options to raise revenue to pay for new pressures and responsibilities. There is an over-reliance on property taxation that never contemplated funding the service delivery and infrastructure gaps that are linked to provincial mandates in areas such as:

- Building new community infrastructure to support legislated housing growth.
- Funding pre-hospital care for those with mental health and addiction issues.
- Subsidizing affordable housing units to tackle housing affordability and homelessness.

These cost pressures are pushing local governments to raise taxes, rely on provincial grants, or divert funds from core local responsibilities.

In the absence of uploading responsibilities back to the Province, local governments require new revenue streams to address the gaps in provincial services, to effectively implement demanding new legislation, and to continue to support the Province in tackling the most critical issues facing communities: infrastructure deficits, housing supply and homelessness, public safety, infrastructure deficits and climate resiliency.

1. HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

All parties commit to an annual transfer of a percentage of the provincial Property Transfer Tax to support local efforts in subsidizing affordable housing supply and homelessness responses.

A dedicated transfer would help offset the costs of local contributions to affordable and supportive housing units including land donations, grants, lost revenue from nominal leases, property tax exemptions, and development cost charge waivers. It would help defray the costs of managing homelessness linked to the absence of deeply affordable shelter – including local first responder, bylaw, and outreach services, as well as temporary shelter and decampment costs.

2. INFRASTRUCTURE

All parties commit to an annual allocation-based transfer equivalent to the doubling of Canada Community-Building Fund funding to support local capital and operating infrastructure priorities.

Annual infrastructure funding would support cost-effective, long-term planning while providing the flexibility to meet the unique needs of each community. It would help address the existing core infrastructure deficit, as well as fund new pressures linked to senior government environmental regulatory requirements, legislated housing growth, and increased extreme weather events.

3. CLIMATE ACTION & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

All parties commit to transferring annually a percentage of the growth in the provincial carbon tax to support local climate action projects and emergency management planning and responses.

A dedicated transfer would provide the financial certainty for local governments to prioritize climate action, undertake hazard mitigation planning and risk assessments, implement new emergency management requirements, and continue to support provincial responses to extreme weather events.

