

Report

City of Merritt
REGULAR Council Meeting
February 11, 2025

File Number: XXXX

To: Cynthia White, Chief Administrative Officer
From: Linda Brick, Director of Corporate Services
Date: February 7, 2025
Subject: 2025 SILGA Resolutions

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council forward the attached resolutions to SILGA for consideration at the 2025 SILGA Conference.

Background:

Municipalities in the Southern Interior annually submit resolutions in February to the Southern Interior Local Government Association (SILGA) which are considered at the SILGA conference in May which, if endorsed, are submitted to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) for province wide endorsement. The purpose of these resolutions is to raise awareness of regional and provincial issues faced by municipalities which can be advocated on as a collective at the provincial level.

The three proposed resolutions are derived from topics Council has expressed interest in addressing regionally throughout the year.

- 1) Burden of Delinquent Property Taxes – Council has raised this issue with ministers at the UBCM in 2024 and received support from a number of municipalities who are facing similar issues with property taxes falling into arrears for three years with a burden on the general tax levy in a significantly negative impact.
- 2) Modernize RCMP Funding Model – Costs for RCMP services have increased substantially in recent years. UBCM has considered resolutions regarding this issue in 2016, 2019 and 2024.

- 3) Reimbursing Local Governments for Medical Services Provided By Local Government Fire and Rescue Services – communities have seen an increase in response calls for service for medical emergencies by their fire departments. UBCM has considered resolutions regarding this matter in 2023 and 2024.
- 4) Small Community Transit Service Fund – The City is requesting that a separate and distinct fund be created by the provincial government to assist with funding of transit in small and rural communities.
- 5) Funding for Victim Services – The City currently pays \$35,000 annually to fund Victim Services programs in the City of Merritt. This is a provincial program that is vastly underfunded and critical to communities with the rise in crime that is seen across the province.

Funding of Victim Services programs has been considered at UBCM multiple times going back to 2009 and most recently in 2024.

The proposed resolutions are attached, Council may comment on the resolutions and adjust as required. The deadline for submission of resolutions for the 2025 SILGA Conference is February 21, 2025.

Options / discussion

1. Council can make comment on the drafts and request any changes or alterations;
2. Council could endorse the resolutions and instruct that they be sent to SILGA; or,
3. Council can receive this report for information.

Attachments:

SILGA Resolutions

Respectfully submitted,

**Linda Brick
Director of Corporate Services**

SILGA RESOLUTION #1:**Burden of Delinquent Property Taxes**

WHEREAS municipalities are burdened by the current *Community Charter* allowance for taxpayers to become delinquent on their property taxes over a period of three years;

AND WHEREAS property tax arrears significantly impact the operating capability of municipalities which are forced to significantly increase taxes or limit essential services;

AND WHEREAS this burden is aggravated by the fact that municipalities have limited enforcement tools to hold taxpayers accountable, and cannot continue to subsidize non-payment of property taxes;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT UBCM request the Provincial Government relieve this unfair burden on municipalities by:

- 1) Revising the *Community Charter* by reducing the number of years a property can be in arrears on their property tax;
- 2) Assign a dedicated contact for municipalities to assist in dealing with properties that have escheated to the Crown and help remove them from property tax rolls expeditiously; and,
- 3) Implement a province-wide, cost-effective solution for municipalities to recover taxes owed by mobile homes.

SILGA RESOLUTION #2

Modernize the Police Cost Sharing Formulas

WHEREAS inflation, rising equipment costs, and increasing officer salaries have made the existing cost sharing formulas and RCMP costs unsustainable for local governments;

AND WHEREAS municipalities have no ability to negotiate or regulate the rising costs;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT UBCM ask the Province to work with local governments to develop a new RCMP funding framework that gradually increases the cost-share rate for local governments.

SILGA RESOLUTION #3

Reimbursing Local Governments for Medical Services Provided By Local Government Fire and Rescue Services

WHEREAS communities across BC are facing significant increase in calls to respond to emergency medical incidents;

AND WHEREAS this increase in calls can be directly attributed to the prehospital patient care provided by fire departments in response to the opioid crisis and limited resources of the Provincial BC Ambulance Service;

AND WHEREAS many first responder agencies have signed agreements to provide this service without any financial funding to support the increased service requests required in their communities;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT UBCM ask the provincial government to develop a funding model to compensate local governments who provide emergency medical services through their fire and rescue services fulfilling the responsibility of the provincial government with consideration given to community population and the fire departments authorized level of emergency medical response.

SILGA RESOLUTION #4

Small Community Transit Service Fund

WHEREAS transit costs in small communities for the operation and leasing of vehicles continues to rise at a rate that is unaffordable for maintaining systems with smaller population bases;

AND WHEREAS the transit riders in rural and small communities rely on the systems to attend appointments in larger urban centres and to commute to places of employment;

AND WHEREAS rural and small communities have limited tax bases to draw on to pay for increased costs they are facing reductions in transit services to limited routes;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT UBCM ask the provincial government to develop a funding model for a small community transit service fund in addition to the small community transfer tax to support continuation of the vital links between and within smaller communities for those with limited means of transportation.

SILGA RESOLUTION #5**Victim Services Program Funding**

WHEREAS Victim Service Programs provide support and assistance to victims of crime;

AND WHEREAS a variety of agencies and local governments deliver Victim Services Programs in different communities, with varying degrees of expertise and resources;

AND WHEREAS the funding formula for Victim Services is built around population it does not take into consideration the absence of a Community Based Program resulting in the responsibility falling on local police based programs along with additional responsibilities of committees, such as being the facilitator for Integrated Case Assessment Teams (ICAT);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT UBCM ask the Provincial government to fully fund all victim services programs in British Columbia.