

# Strengthening Community Councils:

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## Task Force Recommendations Report – July 2012

This Task Force Report focuses on how the working relationship between Community Councils and CLBC can be improved. The Report makes key recommendations for the CLBC Board's consideration in three specific areas:

1. Improving the communication and collaboration between Community Councils, the Provincial Advisory Committee, and CLBC Board and staff.
2. Supporting Community Councils to be successful in achieving their goals.
3. Enhancing the sustainability of Community Councils.

### Task Force Members:

Russ Keil – Advisory Committee Member; Chair, Central Upper Island Community Council  
Lisa Bourget – CLBC Community Planning & Development Manager, Central Okanagan  
Norah Flaherty – CLBC Board Member; Chair, Quality & Service Committee  
Bill Hustler – CLBC Community Council Member, South Island Council  
Ross Spina – Chair, CLBC Provincial Advisory Committee; CLBC Community Council Member,  
Thompson Cariboo Council  
Peter Swayne – CLBC Community Council Member, Vancouver Council  
Sylvie Zebroff – CLBC Family Partnership Advisor



## **Background – The Purpose of the Task Force**

To move forward on the issues and directions that emerged at the annual joint meeting of Community Living BC (CLBC) Provincial Advisory Committee Members, CLBC Community Council Chairs and the CLBC Board of Directors and Management team held a full day workshop on April 14, 2012 in Vancouver; specifically, focusing on how the working relationship between Community Councils and CLBC can be improved. The Task Force was asked to review the reported results of the April 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, and make recommendations for the CLBC Board’s consideration in three specific areas:

1. Improving the communication and collaboration between Community Councils, the Provincial Advisory Committee, and CLBC Board and staff.
2. Supporting Community Councils to be successful in achieving their goals.
3. Enhancing the sustainability of Community Councils.

## **Task Force Meetings**

The Task Force met for an all-day session on Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, at CLBC Headquarters in Vancouver. All Task Force members had been present for the April 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, and had reviewed the “Annual Joint Meeting: Summary of Proceedings Report” circulated prior to the session. After brief discussion it was determined that Russ Keil would serve as Chair of the Task Force. The meeting began with a thorough round-table dialogue, with each Task Force member taking a turn to contribute their understandings of the key issues identified at the April 14<sup>th</sup> meeting and providing feedback on identifying how the working relationship between Community Councils and CLBC can be improved. After an extensive and wide-ranging discussion, specific consideration turned to the development of Task Force recommendations regarding the three identified areas of focus.

It was determined that a draft report document, based on the meeting outcomes would be prepared by Sylvie Zebroff, and circulated for review and discussion by Task Force members. Subsequent draft report review meetings were held via conference call with the Task Force on June 13<sup>th</sup> and June 19<sup>th</sup>. The final draft report was distributed by the Task Force Chair, Russ Keil, to all Community Council Chairs and PAC members, for their individual and/or collective review and comment by July 7, 2012. On July 11<sup>th</sup> the feedback and input received from the Community Council and PAC members was carefully reviewed, given due consideration and incorporated into the report as determined by the Task Force. The final version of the Task Force Recommendations Report is being submitted to the Quality and Service Committee of the CLBC Board, and subsequently, for CLBC Board Review in Fall 2012.



## Executive Summary of Task Force Recommendations

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive and timely communication plan to improve communication(s) between the Board, Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC) and Community Councils. (For rationale and suggested strategies for implementation see page 4)
2. Assign responsibility and accountability to regional directors and local managers to support and encourage Community Councils in fulfilling their Terms of Reference. (For rationale and suggested strategies for implementation see page 5)
3. Amend the Terms of Reference of Community Councils to include: "Community Councils are encouraged to act in an informative/advisory role at the local and regional levels." (For rationale and suggested strategies for implementation see page 6)
4. Develop and implement strategies to sustain Community Councils based on "best practices" throughout the province. (For rationale and suggested strategies for implementation see page 7)
5. Immediately implement a one-time, one year term extension for individual Community Council members for those Councils facing hardship in membership recruitment. (For rationale and suggested strategies for implementation see page 7)



## IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

### Recommendation

**Develop and implement a comprehensive and timely communication plan to improve communication between the Board, PAC, and Community Councils.**

### Rationale

Community Councils have expressed a great appetite to know about their fellow Community Councils' region-specific projects, and to learn from other Councils about their best practices. In essence CLBC needs to support more communications between the Councils, PAC and the Board.

- Having Community Council achievements acknowledged and profiled in a more CLBC-wide and public way will contribute to overall Council effectiveness, member retention and volunteer recruitment. The communication plan should be developed in such a way that staff is assigned responsibilities to communicate Community Council successes to the broader public.
- The CLBC Board should make a commitment to a reciprocal communication schedule with PAC and with Community Councils on a regularly scheduled basis (e.g. 3x/annum).
- The Board will specifically:
  - Provide authentic, timely, and comprehensive feedback to individual Community Council issues or specific project initiatives, as appropriate;
  - Demonstrate directly to Community Councils how the information that the Councils provide to PAC and the CLBC Board was utilized; and,
  - Clarify expectations of Community Councils, given that they are a voluntary cohort, time constraints, regional and transportation issues, etc.
- In their regional advisory role, Community Councils could learn about CLBC initiatives within the community in a timely fashion. Councils could support CLBC initiatives publicly and more frequently if Councils were more promptly informed and/or involved in these initiatives.
- Through the PAC representative and CLBC Management communication roles, Community Councils could promptly share their best practices and project successes with the Board on a regularly scheduled basis.

### Suggested Strategies for Implementation

- ❖ Considered scheduling and alignment of Community Councils, PAC, and Board meeting dates would be very useful to effectively ensure *timely communication* between the Councils, PAC reps, CLBC Management, and the Board. A holistic review of meeting dates could result in more efficient advisory opportunities at the local, regional, and provincial level.



- ❖ Formalization of a reciprocal communication tree or flow from the Community Councils through to the Board and back again (i.e. Council to PAC rep, PAC rep to PAC, PAC to Board, Board to PAC, PAC to PAC rep, PAC rep to Council) is strongly recommended.
- ❖ There should be a mechanism created whereby Council Chairs are directly contacted to relay information to the Councils, particularly when they are not designated as PAC representatives. Presently PAC representatives are the primary link from the Community Councils to the Board.
- ❖ CLBC staff liaison between the Board and PAC is not seen as necessary to the communication process.
- ❖ A PAC member, or designated individual Community Council member, may be invited to attend a Board meeting, if and when a specific local or regional issue of consideration has been identified.
- ❖ Each Board member be assigned to a specific number of Community Councils and have a (quarterly) check in (phone chat or email exchange, etc.) to facilitate the two-way communication and relationship building with individual Councils.
- ❖ The CLBC Citizen newsletter should be used regularly as a vehicle to promote Community Council projects, and publicize recruitment or participation opportunities in specific regions of the province.
- ❖ CLBC, in partnership with the Community Councils, produces a one-page information sheet/flyer on the roles of Community Councils and their members. This CLBC document should be clear, straightforward and written in plain language. A section of the information sheet can address the issue of volunteer commitment and role of members. Development of this information sheet makes for a uniform initial introduction to would-be participants and can provide an initial orientation tool for new Council members about the best practices of Councils.
- ❖ CLBC establish a user-friendly electronic forum for Community Council members across regions to share best practices (e.g. Facebook platform).
- ❖ CLBC Board and PAC meeting minutes are regularly shared with Community Council members via email.
- ❖ A CLBC staff member should be designated the assignment of working with Community Councils to ensure Community Councils websites are kept up to date.
- ❖ Community Council members should be regularly informed of new CLBC or sector-specific acronyms that are contained in CLBC Board, PAC, or regional/local manager correspondence.

## **SUPPORTING COMMUNITY COUNCILS TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN ACHIEVING GOALS**

### **Recommendation**

**Assign responsibility and accountability to regional directors and local managers to support and encourage Community Councils in fulfilling their Terms of Reference.**

### **Rationale**

Community Councils are all over the map on how much support the local managers and regional directors provide Councils across the province. There should be more consistent and



reliable responsibility delineation for local managers with regard to Community Council support. HQ responsibility for the Councils could be reallocated to the regional level, with an HQ liaison, to ensure that Councils are fulfilling their Terms of Reference, and that Community Councils are participating in regular communication regarding regional issues and projects to PAC members and the CLBC Board.

### **Suggested Strategies for Implementation**

- ❖ Management at local, regional, and provincial levels should be asked to take responsibility for *inviting* Councils to specifically support CLBC initiatives. Examples could include:
  - WOWCLBC Campaign
  - IncludeMe! Quality of Life Initiative
  - Start with Hi

The key word is *invite*, to prevent overwhelming the Councils with meetings and work. Don't bypass the council for feedback on CLBC community initiatives. Invite the Chairs to represent their areas.

- ❖ To reduce the bureaucracy involving Community Councils appointments and operations, new member appointment should fall to the Council and the manager, as opposed to waiting for Board approval. Simplify and decentralize the council recruitment approval process.
- ❖ The requirement of three weeks' notice for Councils to put forward PAC recommendations extends the length of time over which concerns can be addressed.
- ❖ There has to be clarity for CLBC staff at the local and regional levels around the role of PAC with the Board and Councils. Specifically, when regional issues are brought to Councils to the regional manager there should be some follow-up reporting process whereby Community Councils are informed about how these issues were addressed.

### **Recommendation**

Amend the Terms of Reference of Community Councils to include: "Community Councils are encouraged to act in an informative/advisory role at the local and regional levels."

### **Rationale**

PAC receives issues and updates from the Community Councils that have a Provincial scope only. It is imperative that the Terms of Reference allow and include local and regional issues to be heard. Local managers could seek advice or feedback from their respective Councils regarding their regional work plans. Community Councils can serve as an excellent sounding board regarding regional concerns and initiatives. This amendment to the TOR would add clarity and alignment across regions.

### **Suggested Strategies for Implementation**

Consider changes to the Terms of Reference so that they include a role for the Council in gathering information around key community and regional issues from a grassroots level. The Community Councils would then have a responsibility to pass this type of information on to the provincial level through PAC, as well as to share the information with CLBC and regional



management on the local level. This would convey a strong sense to Councils that they are having an impact on how things are happening in the province, from the bottom up.

## **ENHANCING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

### **Recommendation**

Develop and implement strategies to sustain Community Councils based on “best practices” throughout the province.

### **Rationale**

Internal consistency in practices is needed, across the Community Councils in all regions of the Province; specifically with regards to the following:

1. Provide ongoing training to Community Councils, and assign local/regional management responsibility with respect to strategic planning of Council goals, and continuous recruitment of volunteer council members to build Community Council sustainability and succession;
2. Provide standardized definitions of management roles and expectations for supporting Community Councils with succession planning;
3. CLBC make a concerted investment in the development of standardized orientation and Terms of Reference training for individual Council members, issuing regular acknowledgements of hard work (members receive letter of thanks for participation), and regularly and publicly celebrating and/or profiling Council successes.

Community Councils support CLBC initiatives and develop initiatives that align with local needs. Their very existence creates a positive CLBC profile in community. Councils provide essential grassroots feedback on community-mapping and capacity-building opportunities on a local and regional level. It is incumbent on CLBC to invest some resources (training, administrative/managerial support) to assist Community Councils to develop successful succession and recruitment strategies.

### **Suggested Strategies for Implementation**

- ❖ A standardized orientation and Terms of Reference training be developed for all new Community Council members to complete upon their selection to a Council. This will include outlining Council responsibilities and explaining the role of PAC and the reporting process.
- ❖ In the discussion of the Terms of Reference with new Council members, it is important that the expectations of participation be clearly communicated and that Councils formally seek commitment from Council members to embrace the prescribed role.
- ❖ Local area-specific Community Council orientation is conducted by the local Community Planning and Development (CPD) manager and Community Council Chair for all new members. This local orientation will outline local and regional initiatives.
- ❖ The Citizen newsletter is used as a recruiting tool for future Community Council members.





- ❖ A CLBC staff person be specifically assigned in supporting the provincial efforts to coordinate recruitment/succession strategies for Community Councils.
- ❖ A user-friendly software platform be identified that can allow for greater communication with PAC and Councils, with a repository for posting information, minutes of Councils and PAC, and chat forums for sharing best practices and seeking help in resolution to local issues.
- ❖ A concerted and more formalized effort be exercised to examine and create strategies for having Aboriginal representation on the Community Councils. A member of the Aboriginal Advisory Committee be asked to sit on PAC.
- ❖ Council composition should strive to represent the cultural and ethnic diversity of the local communities they represent.
- ❖ A certificate of appreciation, signed by the CEO and Board Chair, will be provided to outgoing Council members to thank them for their service and dedication. This process will be initiated by the local manager upon receipt of a resignation from the Council member.

### **Recommendation**

Immediately implement a one-time one year term extension for individual Community Council members for those Councils facing hardship in membership recruitment.

### **Rationale**

A revised strategy must be considered for the impending crisis of current terms expiring for existing Council members across the Province, where no succession planning is yet in place. The Task force recommends that the CLBC Board immediately create a one-time term extension process for individual Community Council members, where absolutely needed. This term extension would be for a period of one year only. To expedite the process the Task Force suggests that DROs or Regional Managers be given authority to approve these exceptional one year term extensions, as necessary, until a formalized succession planning process for Community Council membership is in place.