

CITY OF KELOWNA

JUN - 3 2008

ADMINISTRATION
DEPARTMENT



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

MAY 29 2008

Her Worship Mayor Sharon Shepherd
City of Kelowna
1435 Water Street
Kelowna, BC V1Y 1J4

Dear Mayor Shepherd:

I am writing with regard to your report – Regional Governance in the Okanagan–Similkameen Valleys, presented to me on March 28, 2008. Local governments in the Okanagan are facing the challenges of climate change, water supply, traffic management, air quality and emergency preparedness. As a pilot project, I asked you to examine potential alternative regional governance approaches for the Okanagan to ensure that we can effectively manage growth, provide for critical area-wide services and maximize the region's economic potential.

In response, you set up the Okanagan Regional Governance Task Force (Task Force). I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, again, for your participation on the Task Force, and the contribution you have made to the process and the Task Force report. I also want to acknowledge the input of all locally elected officials from throughout the Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys. I have heard from many of you that this process has been a positive one as it has provided you with the opportunity to examine the Okanagan as a whole and the issues that transcend local government boundaries.

The purpose of the Task Force was to engage locally elected officials in municipalities and regional districts regarding their views on the potential for a governance change to address Okanagan-wide issues. Although the Task Force did not engage in consultations with First Nations during this focussed local government review process, it was acknowledged by all elected officials that engaging First Nations in any future discussion of issues affecting the valleys, and a potential governance structure to address the issues on this scale, is imperative.

.../2

BC 150 YEARS
The Best Place on Earth

Ministry of Community Services
and Minister Responsible for
Seniors' and Women's Issues

Office of the Minister

Mailing Address:
PO Box 9056 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2
Phone: 250 387-2283
Fax: 250 387-4312

Location:
Room 323
Parliament Buildings
Victoria
www.gov.bc.ca/cserv

I have now had an opportunity to review the Task Force report. I note that although the Task Force chose not to address sub-regional challenges directly, the report indicated that such issues are a concern and need to be addressed, particularly as there can be significantly different urban and rural perspectives on issues of common interest. I have also had the opportunity to hear directly from many locally elected officials in the Okanagan and Similkameen, representing both urban and rural areas.

At this time, I have decided it would not be possible to effectively make any change to the current governance structure. The Task Force report has been helpful in identifying issues that need to be addressed and that require further analysis. I understand the many complexities that can arise when one takes a close look at regional governance approaches that differ from that which is familiar to us. There are a number of items that require follow-up and the Ministry of Community Services (Ministry) will continue to monitor this matter. However, I am not going to request that the Task Force undertake any further study, as I do not want to consume your time with this in the lead up to the local government elections in November.

In a meeting I recently had with electoral area representatives from across the Okanagan, I asked for input on what rural values are important and need to be protected in any new governance structure. The representatives needed time to provide that input. The mayors from the four largest municipalities have announced that they are working toward a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to address significant issues facing their urban areas throughout the Okanagan. I am interested to see how this works out, considering that these municipalities represent approximately 75 percent of the population in the valley. The service disputes continue in the Greater Vernon area and although progress is being made, I want to see what the outcomes are for service provision in this area.

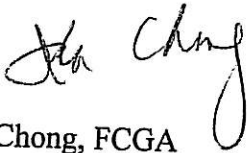
Follow-up work is also required by the Ministry, as I am still interested in a governance model that works for the Okanagan and Similkameen areas as a whole. Therefore, over the next several months, the Ministry will be undertaking work to analyze the costs and benefits of alternative governance structures, representation and voting structure, financial authority including sources of revenue, and authority to make and implement critical decisions. The Ministry acknowledges that any further analysis of regional governance undertaken to address key issues of water supply, air quality and transportation must also include consideration of how more localized sub-regional issues, facing municipalities and electoral areas, can be addressed.

Her Worship Mayor Sharon Shepherd
Page 3

Once I have received input from the electoral areas on rural values, reviewed the progress of the MOU, seen the outcomes from the Greater Vernon service reviews, and the Ministry has had a chance to complete its analysis, I will be consulting with the new municipal and regional district elected officials. Engaging First Nations will also be an important element of future consultations regarding any potential governance change. In addition, there needs to be a venue for public input and the opportunity for the public to ask questions in an effort to move forward.

Thank you, again, for your participation in the work to date on the Okanagan regional governance review.

Sincerely,



Ida Chong, FCGA
Minister

pc: Ms. Sindi Hawkins, MLA
Kelowna-Mission

Honourable Tom Christensen, MLA
Okanagan-Vernon

Honourable Rick Thorpe, MLA
Okanagan-Westside

Honourable Bill Barisoff, MLA
Penticton-Okanagan Valley

Honourable George Abbott, MLA
Shuswap