

**MODEL RECOMMENDATION AND REPORT:
ADVOCACY FOR PROVINCIAL ACTION FOR BIODIVERSITY**

Submitted by: *[Council Member Name]*

Date: *[Date]*

Subject: **Advocacy for Provincial Action for Biodiversity**

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council *[the Board]* request that the Mayor *[Chair]* write to the Premier, copying the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy and the Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, as well as Members of the Legislative Assembly representing constituencies in this regional district:

1. Indicating the Council's *[Board's]* appreciation for the Province moving forward with establishment of the Conservation Financing Mechanism to facilitate Indigenous-led conservation measures, and the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation between Canada, British Columbia, and the First Nations Leadership Council;
2. Stating the Council's *[Board's]* support for establishment of a Local Natural Areas Protection Fund and enactment of a provincial law for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health — consistent with Resolutions EB32 and NR38 adopted at the 2022 and 2023 UBCM conventions; and
3. Requesting an update on Provincial actions to implement these resolutions in partnership with local governments.

That Council *[the Board]* receive the attached draft letter for information, to inform the Mayor's *[Chair's]* letter to the Premier, Ministers and MLAs.

And that Council direct the Corporate Secretary to forward the adopted resolution to local governments in the regional district for their favourable consideration.

BACKGROUND:

In September 2023, delegates at the Union of BC Municipalities (“UBCM”) annual convention voted in favour of Resolution EB32, calling on the Province to work with local governments and First Nations “to support the protection and restoration of biological diversity in local communities by establishing a Local Natural Areas Protection Fund and other legislative and promotional measures to support local efforts to acquire land for biodiversity and ecosystem health.”

This built on delegates' adoption of Resolution NR38 at the 2022 UBCM convention, which called on the Province of British Columbia to develop "new legislation to protect and restore biological diversity and ecosystem health, in a manner consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and with the involvement of local governments, civil society groups, Indigenous Knowledge Holders, scientists, and members of the public."

Protecting and restoring biological diversity ("biodiversity") is consistent with Canada and BC's commitments in the recently announced Tripartite Nature Agreement, with the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, enacted in 1993, and with British Columbia's commitments in the *Together for Wildlife* Strategy. These actions also align with commitments in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and BC's *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

Acting now to protect and restore biodiversity contributes toward more resilient and healthy local communities – improving community health while securing the health of local waterways, watersheds, airsheds, and plant and animal species. Action to protect and restore biodiversity also makes financial sense, helping to contain emergency management and infrastructure costs in the context of climate change.

In October 2023, the Province took a positive step in the direction of conservation financing, announcing the \$150-million contribution from the Province and a \$150-million contribution from the BC Parks Foundation, to fund new Indigenous-led conservation measures. In November 2023, the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation by the First Nations Leadership Council, the Government of British Columbia, and the Government of Canada was announced bringing the total to \$1.1 billion towards conservation. These are major positive steps.

Sub-section 12.3 of the Nature Agreement commits Canada and BC to "engage with local governments and stakeholders on opportunities for input and involvement in the implementation of the Agreement." Municipalities and regional districts are in need of funding to protect and restore natural areas to ensure greater climate resiliency in areas where many residents are at risk of the health impacts of climate change. A funding mechanism such as a Local Natural Areas Protection Fund is essential to ensuring the wellbeing of communities.

Based on the foregoing, it is recommended that Council [*the Board*] direct the Mayor [*Chair*] to write to the Premier, (1) expressing appreciation for the Province's action in establishing the Conservation Financing Mechanism and Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation, (2) urging the Province to implement Resolutions EB32 and NR38, by establishing the Local Natural Areas Protection Fund and moving forward with enactment of an overarching provincial law to protect biodiversity and ecosystem health, and (3) requesting an update on Provincial actions to implement resolutions EB32 and NR38. A draft letter to the Premier is attached to this report, along with supporting information.

Respectfully submitted by,

[insert signature here]

Councillor / Mayor / Director *[last name]*

Attachments:

1. Draft Letter to the Premier regarding Local Natural Areas Protection Fund and Provincial Biodiversity Law
2. Provincial Government Response to UBCM Resolution NR38, February 2023
3. Conversation Primer on Declaration for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health, November 2022
4. *Action for Healthy Communities* Report, 2022

ATTACHMENT 1:

**DRAFT LETTER TO THE PREMIER, MINISTERS AND MLAS REGARDING
LOCAL NATURAL AREAS PROTECTION FUND AND BIODIVERSITY LAW**

Mayor *[firstname lastname]*
[municipality]
[street address]
[email]

[month date, 2024]

Premier David Eby
PO BOX 9041 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1
Email. premier@gov.bc.ca

SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear Premier Eby:

**Implementation of UBCM Resolutions EB32 and NR38: Establishment of
Local Natural Areas Protection Fund and Provincial Biodiversity Law**

I am writing on behalf of my Council *[Board]* to indicate the *[City/Town/District]* of *[Municipality / Regional District]*'s strong support for the Province moving forward with UBCM Resolutions EB32 and NR38, as adopted by delegates at the 2023 and 2022 conventions, respectively.

Let me begin by expressing appreciation for the Province's leadership in establishing the Conservation Financing Mechanism and Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation, which will provide valuable support for Indigenous-led conservation measures and advance Canada and BC's commitments to protect at least 30 per cent of BC's land by 2030.

We now write to encourage the Province to continue with this important work by establishing a Local Natural Areas Protection Fund, as endorsed by UBCM delegates, and enacting an overarching provincial law to protect biodiversity and ecosystem health.

Benefits of a Local Natural Areas Protection Fund include:

- Supporting the goal of Canada, British Columbia and local communities to protect 30% of the land base by 2030 (the "30 by 30" target, arising from Canada's commitments under the UN Convention on Biodiversity);

- Protecting biodiversity, wildlife habitat and ecosystem function, to keep our communities resilient and safe in the context of our changing climate;
- Expanding opportunities for low-impact outdoor recreation by residents and visitors, contributing toward public health and local economic development; and
- Creating a framework for partnership between the Province and local communities to protect the natural environment, leveraging local contributions and philanthropy with Provincial support.

Terms of Reference for a Local Natural Areas Protection Fund could include:

- a. Establishment of a permanent fund, to be administered by the BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs, with input from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy and Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship;
- b. Municipalities and regional districts are eligible to apply for grants from the fund;
- c. Grants of up to \$4-million per acquisition, subject to local contributions of 20% of total acquisition costs for communities with populations of 10,000 or more, and local contributions of 10% of total acquisition costs for communities with populations below 10,000;
- d. Funds will be transferred from the Province to the local entity after a covenant has been registered on the land title securing the property in perpetuity as a natural area, with ownership vested in the municipality, regional district, First Nation or a non-profit conservation partner;
- e. Allocation of start-up funding of \$100-million in the 2024 Provincial budget; and
- f. Allocation of annual top-up funding of \$50-million from the Provincial treasury in each year's budget until 2030.

In addition to creation of the Local Natural Areas Protection Fund, we urge the Province to move forward with other actions to safeguard biodiversity, including enacting an overarching provincial law to protect biological diversity and ecosystem health. As you are aware, enactment of this legislation was recommended by the Old Growth Strategic Review (2020) and has been endorsed by resolutions of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs in 2021 and UBCM in 2022.

In our opinion, the new provincial law should replace the current framework of fragmented decision-making and cumulative impacts with a coherent, overarching legislative framework that (1) prioritizes biological diversity and ecosystem health; (2) recognizes Indigenous jurisdiction and perspectives; (3) adopts a definition of ecosystem health that includes restoring ecological integrity, maintaining fully functioning ecosystems and managing for resilience, and (4) is accompanied by resources to alleviate economic impacts of ecosystem protection on Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

In closing, we express appreciation for the Province's leadership in establishing the Conservation Financing Mechanism, and the Tripartite Nature Agreement, and we encourage the Province to continue this important work by establishing the Local Natural Areas Protection Fund and enacting the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Law in a timely manner. We welcome an update on the Province's actions in this regard.

Sincerely,

[signed]

Mayor *[Chair] [firstname lastname]*
[municipality]

cc. George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Nathan Cullen, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
MLA *[names of MLAs in the regional district]*