



UNION OF BC MUNICIPALITIES

COUNCIL & BOARD REMUNERATION GUIDE

FIRST EDITION
SEPTEMBER, 2019

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INTRODUCTION

In British Columbia, local governments are responsible for providing a broad range of local services to address infrastructure needs, regulate land use, move people and goods, tackle challenging social issues, promote active living, protect the natural environment, and deal with a host of other issues. The elected officials that sit on the municipal councils and regional district boards collectively make, and accept responsibility for, the funding, policy, and service delivery decisions that are required in order for local government to work. Local elected officials also have responsibility for ensuring that the councils and regional district boards themselves function effectively as democratic, representative governing bodies.

Effective governance requires the elected officials to make decisions regarding the structure and operation of the governing bodies. One of the more difficult decisions that must be made by the officials involves the setting of their own remuneration.

Local elected officials in BC endorsed a resolution at the 2018 Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Convention that tasked UBCM with developing a resource to support local decision makers in the development of remuneration packages that are defensible and fair. This *Council & Board Remuneration Guide* presents best practices for local governments to consider.

Development of Guide

The *Guide* was developed through a five-stage process:

- > *Stage 1: Background Research* — Research was conducted to identify and understand the challenges faced by local governments in setting remuneration levels for council members and board directors. Remuneration approaches for elected officials in other orders of government were briefly explored as part of the research.
- > *Stage 2: Survey* — A survey was sent to every municipality and regional district in the province to understand elected official remuneration policies and practices in place today, to learn about approaches that appear to work well, and to understand lessons learned. A total of 75 local governments responded to the survey, which translates into a response rate of 39%. Included in the list of respondents were eleven of the twenty largest municipalities (by population), five

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY

The best practices set out in the Guide recognize that local governments have autonomy to develop approaches to remuneration that reflect local needs and circumstances. The Guide offers practical advice, based on research findings and the experiences of municipalities and regional districts, for local governments to consider. Each local government will need to determine, based on its own review of the information, its preferred course of action.

of the smallest municipalities, and twelve regional districts. All regions of the province were well represented (see sidebar).

- > *Stage 3: Interviews* — Approximately twenty follow-up interviews were conducted with a subset of the municipalities and regional districts that responded to the survey. Written materials from these local governments were obtained and reviewed; materials from other places identified through the research were also reviewed.
- > *Stage 4: Best Practices* — Based on the background research, survey results, and discussions with individual local governments, a set of best practices was developed for the *Guide*.
- > *Stage 5: Guide* — The UBCM Executive approved the scope and approach for the *Guide*. The final draft, complete with recommended best practices, was reviewed by UBCM's Presidents Committee. Input provided by the Presidents Committee was used to finalize the document.

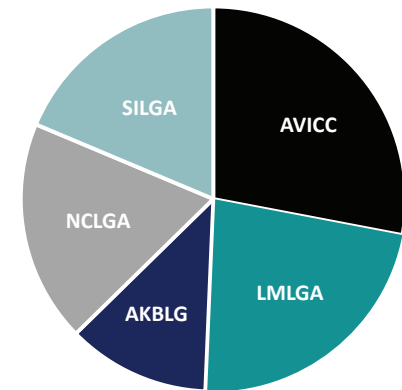
Organization of Guide

The *Council & Board Remuneration Guide* is organized into six separate sections. Section 1 sets the stage by exploring why remuneration for elected officials is important, and why local governments need to review remuneration levels periodically. Sections 2, 3, and 4 then focus on remuneration reviews themselves. Section 2 begins by considering who should conduct such reviews. Three options are identified and assessed. Section 3 addresses the question of "when" — specifically, when to review remuneration, and when to implement the results of a review. The distinction between a full review and an adjustment is explained in this section. Section 4 examines how to conduct a review. The development of comparison groups, the collection of data, and the use of simple formulas are all topics that are addressed the text. Advice on expenses and benefits is also provided. Section 5 addresses the importance of communication. Information to communicate, audiences to reach, and methods of communication to consider are outlined.

Best practices for local governments to consider in addressing remuneration for elected officials are presented throughout the *Guide*. Section 6 brings the practices together into one summary table.

SURVEY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

In total, 75 municipalities and regional districts participated in the survey on elected official remuneration. As illustrated in the accompanying chart, all regions of the province (identified using UBCM Area Associations) were represented.



Use by Local Governments

It is important to emphasize that the *Guide* does not prescribe or suggest specific levels of remuneration or particular expense and benefits packages for local elected officials. The *Guide* is focused, instead, on helping local governments develop approaches that can be used by decision-makers to establish compensation programs that are fair both for elected officials and local taxpayers.

It should be noted, as well, that the *Guide* recognizes the autonomy of local governments in the development of approaches that reflect local needs and circumstances. The *Guide* offers practical advice for local governments to consider, based on research findings and the experiences of municipalities and regional districts around the province. Each local government, however, will need to determine, based on its own review of the information, its preferred course of action.

On a related note, the *Guide* recognizes that there is significant variability among local governments in British Columbia. Considerable differences in population, area, scope of services, size of administration, location, growth rate, local economy, and other factors mean that local governments will need to apply the best practices in ways that respond to local needs and are sensitive to local conditions. To assist local governments in this task, care has been taken to provide advice that can be applied in a variety of local settings.

Key Terms

Certain terms are used repeatedly throughout the *Guide*. Key terms and their meanings are presented in Figure I.1 in alphabetical order.

VARIABILITY AMONG LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Considerable differences among local governments in population, area, scope of services, size of administration, location, economy, growth rate, and other factors mean that jurisdictions will need to apply the best practices in ways that respond to local needs and are sensitive to local conditions. Care has been taken to provide advice that can be applied in a variety of local settings.

**Figure I.1
Key Terms in the Guide**

Term	Meaning
Benefits	Benefits are the incentives, services and protections provided to local government elected officials during their time in office.
Expenses	Expenses are charges incurred by local government officials in the course of their duties, and are necessary in order to perform their duties.
Local Governments	Local governments include municipalities, governed by councils, and regional districts, governed by boards of directors.
Local Government Elected Officials	Local government elected officials include members of municipal councils, and directors of regional district boards. Members of council include mayors and councillors. Regional district directors include chairs and vice chairs.
Remuneration	In a narrow sense, the term remuneration in the <i>Guide</i> refers specifically to money that is paid to local elected officials as compensation for the duties they perform. Remuneration in this sense includes base salaries, but also supplemental payments that typically take the form of per-meeting stipends. Remuneration is also used in a broader sense to include expenses and benefits packages, in addition to money. The exact usage of the term throughout the text is context-specific.
Remuneration Adjustment	This term refers to increases that are automatically applied, usually on an annual basis, to an elected official's base salary. The level of adjustment is determined by a pre-determined index (e.g., consumer price index), or combination of indices.
Remuneration Review	A remuneration review is a formal assessment of existing remuneration provided to elected officials. In most cases, reviews include a consideration of pay, expenses, and benefits.

SECTION 1

IMPORTANCE OF REMUNERATION

Most people who seek election to a municipal council or regional district board are driven, first and foremost, by a strong sense of public service and a desire to make their communities better. Remuneration is not, in most cases, an important motivating factor. Individuals who do make the commitment to serve as local elected officials, however, should be able to expect fair and reasonable compensation. This section of the *Guide* explains why remuneration is both warranted and important.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Time Commitment

Local government elected officials are expected to commit considerable time (and energy) to their roles on municipal councils and regional district boards. In larger municipalities and in some regional districts, the roles of mayor and chair are full-time positions in which incumbents typically work more than full-time hours. Even in places where such positions are part-time in nature, the time requirements can be significant, as they are for councillors and directors. Time must be spent reviewing comprehensive agenda packages, attending council or board meetings and public hearings, engaging with residents, participating in civic events, and handling a variety of other tasks. For elected officials who serve on more than one governing body, on committees and commissions, and as appointees to external agencies and associations, the time commitment is even greater.

Councils and boards need people who are willing and able to commit the time needed to serve. Remuneration reflects and compensates individuals for the time they must spend to do the job.

Employment and Financial Impacts

The time required to serve on a municipal council or regional district board will reduce the amount of time available to spend on other paid work. For individuals who are mid-career, this reality can negatively impact their current employment situation, as well as their total earned income. In some cases the impact may extend to affect future career development and earning potential, since time spent on a council or board translates into less time available to apply to building a career path.

TIME COMMITMENT

“Municipal politics is different than the rest in that Council members are always on the clock. Businesses close at the end of a day, people go home from work and provincial and federal politicians have staff and deputies to assist with their very demanding schedules. City Council members are on their own and take ownership of all issues and concerns from the community. They are never off the clock.”

*Remuneration Task Force
City of Kamloops*

Remuneration for local elected officials will not fully offset the employment and financial impacts experienced in every case. In keeping with the public service motivation of people who choose to run for local office, there is arguably a tacit acceptance by those in office of some level of sacrifice. Remuneration should, however, be fair as well as sufficient in order to mitigate any sacrifice required. Unfair and insufficient remuneration may render elected office off-limits to a variety of prospective candidates.

Responsibility

Municipal councils and regional district boards are responsible for increasingly broad and complex portfolios of local government services. The elected officials who sit on these governing bodies contribute to and accept responsibility for funding, policy, and service delivery decisions that are taken to meet infrastructure needs, promote land use goals, tackle social issues, provide opportunities for sport and recreation, protect sensitive environments, regulate activities, and deal with a host of other issues. These decisions, which even in small jurisdictions can be weighty and contentious, affect the lives of residents and the long-term prosperity of communities. Fair remuneration for persons who are willing to accept such responsibility is warranted.

Representative Government

As representative governing bodies, it is important that municipal councils and regional district boards reflect, to the extent possible, the diversity of the communities they serve. Inadequate remuneration, either in terms of pay and/or benefits, stands as a potential barrier to participation for people who are without other sources of income. Fair remuneration is important in helping to reduce barriers, and in attracting capable people from a variety of backgrounds, demographic groups, socio-economic classes, and employment types.

IMPORTANCE OF REVIEWS

The factors outlined thus far help to explain why remuneration for local government elected officials is both warranted and important. The factors also highlight the need for local governments to regularly review their elected official remuneration programs in order to ensure that they remain fair over time as expectations and circumstances change. Remuneration levels that are left static in the face of changing circumstances, including shifts in the cost-of-living, risk becoming barriers to participation.

GOVERNING BODY DIVERSITY

Municipal councils and regional district boards are representative governing bodies. Their legitimacy is strengthened when they reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. Inadequate remuneration is a potential barrier to participation for individuals who may wish to serve, but who lack other sources of income and/or benefits. In these cases, diversity in the membership of local governing bodies may be difficult to achieve.

SECTION 2

WHO SHOULD CONDUCT REVIEWS?

In an effort to ensure that remuneration levels for local elected officials remain fair over time, local governments undertake remuneration reviews. Reviews are the focus of Sections 2, 3, and 4 of the *Guide*. Section 2 — this section — begins by exploring who should conduct a review.

OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

In some jurisdictions, elected official remuneration is reviewed by the municipal council or regional district board itself, or by a committee of the council or board. In most places, however, reviews are assigned to other parties in order to relieve elected officials from the difficult task of having to develop their own levels and terms of compensation. The three most common options are local government staff, an independent task force, and experienced consultants.

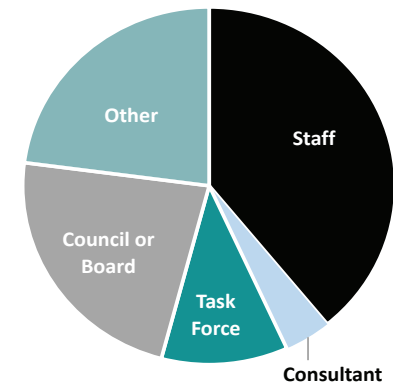
- > *Local Government Staff* — According to the survey of local governments that was conducted for the *Guide*, the use of local government staff to review elected official remuneration is the most popular option.¹ Most of the jurisdictions that reported using their own staff, it is worth noting, are small in size.
- > *Experienced Consultant* — This decision to assign a review to an outside, external consultant is less common, but is used in certain communities. Under the approach, a consultant is hired to conduct the relevant research, examine options, and recommend remuneration and benefit levels.
- > *Independent Task Force* — This option of an independent task force, comprised largely or entirely of local residents, is used by some local governments across the province, including large cities, small villages and towns, and regional districts.² The size and composition of the task force are important points to consider; so, too, is the mandate of the committee, its methodology, and the support it is provided.

¹ In all, 39% of responding local governments reported using local government staff to conduct reviews.

² The body is referred to as a Working Group, Advisory Group, Panel, Task Force, or Committee.

ASSIGNMENT OF REVIEWS

The accompanying chart based on the survey results shows that many jurisdictions today assign local elected official remuneration reviews to local government staff.



Pros & Cons

The choice of option may be informed by past experiences, and by local expectations and views regarding elected official compensation. The choice will also be influenced, however, by an assessment of the pros and cons that are associated with each of the alternatives. Figure 2.1 presents some of the key pros and cons that local governments may wish to consider.

Figure 2.1
Options to Consider

Options	Pros	Cons
Local Government Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > understand roles, responsibilities, and workload of elected officials > understand local context > easy access to data from other communities, particularly where benchmark group exists > cost effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > perceived as being less-than-independent from governing body > may be perceived or actual conflict of interest in cases where linkage (formal or informal) between elected official and staff remuneration
Experienced Consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > independent from elected officials > familiar with use of data and metrics, and with local government practices > option enables decision-makers to point to and rely on expert advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > may not understand or be sensitive to local context > may be costly
Independent Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > independent from elected officials > places in hands of community (members from community) > understands local context > cost effective > different perspectives involved > potential to raise profile of local government, and importance of remuneration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > may lack understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and workload of elected officials > relies on credibility of committee members > governing body may have difficulty rejecting recommendations

INDEPENDENT TASK FORCE

The use of an independent task force provides for a high degree of separation for elected officials from the development of their own remuneration packages.

PREFERRED APPROACH

The independent task force emerges in Figure 2.1 as the preferred option for undertaking elected official remuneration reviews. The task force's independence from decision-makers, as well as staff, enables it to operate in a way that is free of local government involvement and — more importantly — *perceived* to be free of such involvement. This freedom adds to the credibility of recommendations that come forward, and protects elected officials and their staff from conflict of interest issues and other controversies. The independence also allows the task force to speak to the roles, responsibilities and expectations of elected officials, and the importance of appropriate remuneration, in ways that the elected officials and staff would find difficult to do.

It is worth noting that the use of independent task forces and panels to determine elected official remuneration is widespread at the provincial and federal government levels in Canada. These jurisdictions recognize the value of the approach in protecting elected officials from challenges related to conflict of interest that inevitably arise in the development of their own remuneration.

SUCCESS FACTORS

The choice of the independent task force option will not, on its own, guarantee a successful outcome. Careful attention needs to be given to the appointment of members to the task force, the development of task force terms of reference, and the provision of support to the task force's work.

Membership

To the extent possible, diversity in the membership of the task force is important. A common practice is to include, at a minimum, representation from the local business community, as well as the non-profit or public sector. Many governments also find the appointment of an individual with past experience in local government as an elected official or senior staff person to be advantageous. These individuals bring a local government perspective, and can help ensure a clear understanding on the task force of the roles and responsibilities of elected officials. Individuals with human resources experience or a legal background are considered to add value in some places. Citizens-at-large are included on many task forces.

SUCCESS FACTORS

The choice of the independent task force option will not, on its own, guarantee a successful outcome. Careful attention needs to be given to the appointment of members to the task force, the development of task force terms of reference, and the provision of support to the task force's work.

Other considerations related to membership are as follows:

- > *Size* — Some places (e.g., Tofino, Metro Vancouver, Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District) limit the number of members to three; others (e.g., Abbotsford) allow for a maximum of five; still others (e.g., Kamloops) appoint seven. Larger bodies allow for greater diversity and a broader range of perspectives; smaller groups may be more nimble and able to reach consensus more easily. In relatively small jurisdictions, smaller task forces may be more practical to assemble given the smaller number of candidates relative to the situation in larger centres.
- > *Appointment* — In most jurisdictions that use independent task forces, members are appointed by the Chief Administrative Officer of the local government. This approach reinforces the group's independence from the governing body whose remuneration the task force is reviewing.

Terms of Reference

As with any advisory body, formal terms of reference for the task force are important. Task force terms should set out:

- > the purpose of the task force
- > the task force's membership, including number and qualifications of members, and the designation of a chair
- > the method and term of appointment
- > the task force's mandate, or scope of review, including the specific items (e.g., base remuneration, expenses, benefits, annual adjustments) on which the task force is expected to provide recommendations
- > a methodology to guide the task force, including any specific factors, bases of comparison, and criteria for the task force to consider in developing its recommendations
- > expectations regarding consultation, including consultation with the public
- > the expected number of task force meetings, and the meeting procedures to follow
- > support resources available to the task force in conducting its work
- > the task force's reporting schedule

GUIDANCE TO TASK FORCE

Even when task forces are free to choose their own approaches, it is useful for jurisdictions to provide guidance on methodology, and identify specific items for task forces to consider in their work.

The terms of reference for Abbotsford's Council Remuneration Citizen Task Force state that "the Task Force will research and consider all aspects of compensation that it believes are relevant to making its recommendations, but will specifically consider [certain] matters..."

- > policies, bylaws, and other documents of the local government that govern the task force's work and conduct

To underscore the importance of autonomy, some jurisdictions allow their task forces to themselves choose the data, factors, and criteria to use in developing recommendations. Even in these cases, however, jurisdictions will provide guidance on methodology or, more commonly, identify specific items for task forces to consider in addition to any others that the task forces determine to use.

Task Force Support

The primary value of a remuneration task force is its independence from the local government. The elected officials who receive and who are affected by the task force's recommendations benefit from this independence. The task force is not expected, however, to conduct its work completely on its own, without assistance from the organization. Indeed, for the task force to succeed, it must be able to rely on staff to collect and analyze data, organize meetings, conduct research, and draft the task force's report. It is important for local governments to assign a senior manager as a liaison to the task force, and sufficient staff resources to give the task force the support it needs to fulfill its mandate.

Another form of support for the task force is education. To make meaningful recommendations that reflect the duties, workload, and expectations of elected officials, task force members need to have a good understanding of local government, and of the roles and responsibilities of mayors/chairs, and councillors/directors. Local government staff can assist by providing an orientation to task force members at the beginning of their mandate. Alternatively, or in addition, task force members can be given reference materials such as the booklet available online at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, titled *Thinking About Running for Local Office?*

BEST PRACTICE

- > *Local governments should consider establishing an independent task force to conduct reviews of elected official remuneration.*

TASK FORCE SUPPORT

"The District Chief Administrative Officer and Director of Financial Services shall serve as non-voting resources to the [citizen] Advisory Group."

*Council Remuneration
Advisory Group
District of Tofino*

SECTION 3

TIMING AND FREQUENCY OF REVIEWS

Local governments interviewed for the *Guide* highlighted the need to consider timing and frequency in the review of elected official remuneration. These issues are explored in this section of the text. Also explored is the question of timing as it relates to the implementation of the outcomes of reviews.

TIMING OF REVIEWS

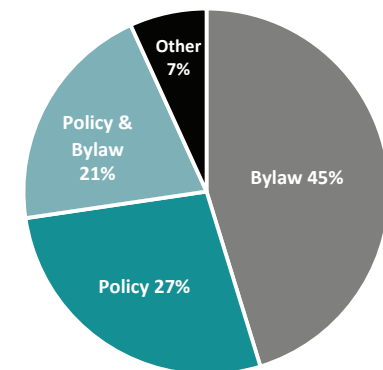
Local governments do not follow a single common practice with respect to the timing of remuneration reviews. An examination of existing approaches over the past decade shows that some councils and boards (e.g., Vancouver) have conducted reviews early in their terms, whereas others (e.g., Comox Valley Regional District, Oak Bay, Esquimalt, Prince George) wait until the final year of their mandate. Some local governments (e.g., Kamloops, Abbotsford, Metro Vancouver) initiate reviews closer to the middle of their terms. In general, most councils and boards that undertake reviews initiate them in the second half of their terms.

The preferred timing for a review will depend on a number of factors, including local economic conditions, reliance on established policy, the election cycle, and tax system changes over which local governments have no control. Each of these points is considered, as follows:

- > *Local Conditions* — In all of their initiatives, remuneration reviews included, councils and boards need to be sensitive to local economic conditions. Elected officials' compensation and benefits, it is important to remember, are paid for by local taxpayers. In times of economic growth and optimism, when local employment is strong and consumer confidence is high, news of a remuneration review for elected officials will be greeted much differently than during periods of economic stress. A council or board would be well-advised, for example, to postpone a review, no matter how warranted one may be, in a single-industry community that is dealing with the loss of a major employer.
- > *Established Policy* — The survey conducted for the *Guide* found that 27% of responding local governments have a formal policy in place on elected official remuneration, 45% have a remuneration bylaw, and 21% have both (see sidebar). Several of these policies and bylaws

ESTABLISHED POLICY

Most local governments that responded to the survey have either a formal policy in place on elected official remuneration, a bylaw, or both. Several policies and some bylaws address the timing and frequency of reviews.



speak to the timing of future remuneration reviews. When such schedules are applied consistently, local governments are perceived to have less discretion over the question of when to review. The issue of timing in these cases tends to attract less attention than it would otherwise.

- > *Election Cycle* — Change to elected officials' remuneration is an item of interest and discussion in many communities across the province. It is important for local governments to recognize remuneration as a legitimate issue for scrutiny and discussion, and to allow opportunities for discussion to occur. It may not be useful, however, for remuneration to dominate public discourse, particularly in the lead-up to an election when other important issues also deserve attention. To avoid this situation, local governments should consider conducting reviews, and reporting results, at least one year before the next election.
- > *Tax System Changes* — Changes to the *Federal Income Tax Act* were introduced by the federal government in 2017 to eliminate a long-standing federal tax exemption for local government elected officials, effective January 1, 2019. This change resulted in substantial changes to the after-tax income for elected officials, and prompted many local governments to adjust elected officials' 2019 pre-tax compensation in order to maintain after-tax 2018 remuneration. The need to review remuneration and change base amounts to maintain after-tax compensation was driven by changes that were beyond local government control. The timing of the review to initiate the changes was also driven by events outside of local government.

BEST PRACTICE

- > *Local governments should consider conducting remuneration reviews, and reporting the results, at least one year before the next election.*

FREQUENCY OF REVIEWS

Regular reviews of elected official remuneration levels should be undertaken in order to ensure that remuneration remains fair over time as job conditions, expectations, and circumstances change.

ELECTION CYCLE

Change to elected officials' remuneration is a legitimate issue for public scrutiny and discussion. To avoid having remuneration dominate public discourse in the lead-up to elections, however, at the expense of other important issues, local governments should consider conducting reviews, and reporting results, at least one year before the next election.

Failure to do so may undervalue the time spent by elected officials, and the level of responsibility associated with the job. Failure could also result in remuneration becoming a barrier to participation, and make it difficult for a diverse range of individuals to stand for election.

As noted earlier, several local governments that responded to the survey have policies or bylaws that set out schedules for formal reviews of base remuneration levels. In some of these documents the frequency of reviews is set out — once-per-term appears to be the most commonly prescribed schedule in these documents. Regular adherence to these schedules ensures that reviews happen on a regular basis, and helps to ensure that remuneration does not become a barrier to elected office. Local governments with policies and/or bylaws that do not identify a specific frequency typically experience longer intervals between reviews.

Relying on policies and bylaws to automatically trigger a review, in keeping with a prescribed frequency, is a useful practice to follow. It relieves councils and boards — as well as their individual members — from having to take the politically-difficult decision to request a review.

BEST PRACTICES

- > *Local governments should consider conducting remuneration reviews once per term.*
- > *Local governments should consider setting out the timing for subsequent reviews in remuneration policies or bylaws.*

Annual Adjustments

Local governments undertake remuneration reviews to assess the fairness of elected officials' pay, expenses, and benefit packages. When done properly, reviews take time, energy, and other resources to complete. A best practice, identified earlier, is to conduct a full review once per term — it is neither necessary nor reasonable to schedule reviews more frequently.

In the years between reviews, it is common for councils and boards with policies and/or bylaws in place to automatically adjust elected official pay to reflect changes in the cost of living. In almost

ANNUAL ADJUSTMENTS

It is common for municipalities and regional districts with policies and/or bylaws in place to automatically adjust remuneration to reflect changes in the cost of living. The year-over-year change to the consumer price index is the default adjustment factor.

every case, the previous year's Consumer Price Index (CPI) for British Columbia, Vancouver, or Victoria is the adjustment factor applied by local governments, depending on their location within the province.³ Automatic adjustments, defined and set out in policies and/or bylaws, ensure that the real value of elected officials' remuneration remains stable between formal reviews, and can help to reduce the need for more significant increases at the time of review. Failure to make annual adjustments may place a burden on future councils and boards to address remuneration levels that have been left to stagnate in the face of regular cost-of-living increases. For these reasons, annual adjustments using a CPI index is a best practice.

BEST PRACTICE

- > *Local governments should consider including in their policies or bylaws provision for an automatic cost-of-living adjustment, using the CPI, to elected officials' base remuneration.*

IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGES

When considering the issue of timing as it relates to the implementation of changes, it is important to distinguish among the types of changes being put forward. The three key types include: changes to base remuneration that emerge from full reviews; changes that are prompted by shifts in the tax system; and annual adjustments to reflect increases in the cost of living.

- > *Base Remuneration* — Councils and boards have full control over the timing of their remuneration reviews, even in cases where timing is prescribed by policy and/or bylaw. Similarly, councils and boards have full authority to choose when to implement any changes that emerge from reviews. In general, it is preferable to have such changes take effect at the beginning of the following term. This best practice is particularly important to follow when reviews conclude that significant increases to base pay and/or benefit packages are warranted. A decision to implement changes immediately, or even during the existing term, can create perceived conflicts of interest.

³ Other indices include annual increases to general wages in BC, and increases to unionized or exempt staff wages.

IMPLEMENTATION

It is preferable for councils and boards to implement the outcomes of remuneration reviews at the beginning of the following council or board term. A decision to implement changes earlier, during the existing term, can easily create perceived conflicts of interest.

There will be some cases where implementation during the existing council or board term is considered necessary, perceptions of conflict notwithstanding. Consider the situation in which a council or board entered office following an election in which stagnant compensation was portrayed as a barrier to participation. The council or board could decide that implementation of changes that emerged from a review conducted early in the new term is necessary.

- > *Tax System* — Councils and boards have no control over changes to the income tax system — the elimination of the federal tax exemption for local government elected officials that took effect on January 1, 2019, is an example of one such change. In anticipation of this change — it was announced in 2017 — some local governments designed remedies, before the 2018 local general election, to take effect on January 1, 2019, in the new term. Several local governments, however, delayed taking action until after the federal tax change came into force. Immediate implementation of changes designed to protect elected officials from financial loss is considered reasonable and defensible by most.

- > *Annual Adjustments* — As explained earlier, annual adjustments to remuneration are designed to protect base rates from erosion as a result of inflation. These adjustments, which result in nominal rather than real increases, are expected to be implemented immediately.

BEST PRACTICES

- > *Local governments should consider having changes to base levels, determined through remuneration reviews, take effect at the beginning of the following term.*
- > *Local governments should consider allowing for immediate implementation of changes to remuneration that are designed to protect elected officials from financial loss that would otherwise occur as a result of tax system shifts.*
- > *Local governments should consider allowing for immediate implementation of annual cost-of-living adjustments.*

FEDERAL TAX SYSTEM

Local governments have no control over shifts in the federal income tax system. Offsetting changes to base remuneration levels that are designed to protect council and board members from financial loss are reasonable. Local governments should consider implementing such changes immediately.

SECTION 4

SETTING REMUNERATION

On a regular or periodic basis, local governments undertake remuneration reviews to determine the remuneration, expense payments, and benefits to provide to elected officials. The previous two sections of the *Guide* tackled a number of issues related to remuneration reviews, including:

- > who should conduct the reviews
- > when, during an elected body's term of office, reviews should be initiated
- > how frequently reviews should occur
- > when changes to remuneration that result from reviews should be implemented

This section of *Guide* — Section 4 — explores the factors that local governments should consider using in their reviews to determine remuneration levels that are fair and defensible. The text deals separately with the three main components of a complete remuneration package, namely remuneration (i.e., pay), expenses, and benefits.

REMUNERATION

Remuneration consists, first and foremost, of a base amount of pay for mayors, board chairs, councilors, municipal directors, and electoral area directors. Base amounts are intended to reflect the expectations and duties associated with the specific roles, and for that reason are expected to differ by role. Remuneration also includes any payments that are made to elected officials, on top of base pay, for attending different types of meetings, leading committees, sitting as appointees on external bodies, performing the roles of deputy mayor or deputy chair, and undertaking other duties. These supplemental payments, where offered, recognize differences in workload and responsibility among elected officials in the same role.

Bases of Comparison

For many jobs in our economy, wages and salaries are set through a process of comparison — that is, a process that takes into account remuneration associated with other jobs that are deemed to be comparable. The approach to setting remuneration for local elected officials is no different. The most common basis of comparison used by local governments across the province is remuneration paid to

elected officials in other, similar local governments. Some councils and boards, however, look to additional bases for guidance. Four bases to consider, including remuneration paid in similar jurisdictions, are as follows:

- > *Similar Jurisdictions* — Remuneration levels paid to elected officials across a set of other, similar local governments can be used to approximate an "industry rate". The use of comparable remuneration data, as noted, is widespread across municipalities and regional districts, and is considered a defensible approach. The challenge faced by those who use the approach, however, comes in choosing jurisdictions that are truly comparable. Population, the most common factor, goes some way toward establishing similarity, but may not be adequate on its own. Other factors may need to be combined with population to establish a more valid comparison group. Such factors could include location, geographic size, scope of services provided, growth rate, the urban (vs. suburban or rural) nature of a jurisdiction, economic make-up, tax base, average house price, size of operating budget, and number of staff (full-time equivalents).
- > *Local Labour Force* — A few jurisdictions in the province determine remuneration for council and board members using local earnings data collected by Statistics Canada — specifically, the average employment income earned by individuals aged 15 and over, who work year-round and full-time.
- > *Provincial MLAs* — Only one of the local governments in the survey pointed to remuneration paid to Members of the Legislative Assembly as a basis for determining local elected official pay. A few other jurisdictions, however, believe the comparison may be useful.
- > *Local Government Staff* — Changes to staff pay are used in some jurisdictions as an index to adjust council and board pay each year. Base pay for staff, however, is not generally used to help set elected official pay.

Each of the four bases identified here — as well as others not identified — has both strengths and shortcomings. Figure 4.1 highlights some of the pros and cons.

COLLECTING DATA

It is important to ensure that data on other local governments are comparable. Care must be taken to confirm that data have been collected using similar methodologies, and that data sets measure the same factors. Sources of data include CivicStats (accessed through CivicInfo), and Statistics Canada. Direct contact with comparison group local governments may be warranted in some cases to produce "apples to apples" comparisons.

**Figure 4.1
Pros and Cons of Alternative Bases**

Alternative Bases	Pros	Cons
Similar Jurisdictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > jobs of local elected officials in similar jurisdictions, while not identical, are comparable ("apples to apples") > large enough comparison set can neutralize outliers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > difficult to establish truly comparable set of jurisdictions (may be subject to accusations of "cherry picking") > potential for salary escalation if other places in comparison set initiate significant increases
Local Labour Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > attempts to create strong linkage to local community that pays elected body's remuneration > sensitive to local economic conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > jobs of elected officials not comparable to majority of other jobs in the community in terms of time commitment, duties, responsibility > not clear that average salary of entire workforce reflects value of elected officials' work
Provincial MLAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > remuneration reflects need in both orders of government to attract diversity of people to serve in elected office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > role of MLA considerably different than roles of mayor and chair (much different than councillor/director) > invites linkage to full MLA remuneration and benefits package
Local Government Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > both groups (elected officials and staff) involved in same organization > comparison to staff used in other orders of government to help set elected official remuneration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > roles of staff considerably different than roles of elected officials > perceived conflict on part of elected officials who approve staff salaries > invites linkage to full staff remuneration and benefits package

Arguably, there may be no single best basis of comparison to use in setting council and board remuneration. As suggested in Figure 4.1, however, some bases are better than others.

Remuneration levels paid to elected officials in similar local government jurisdictions represents the preferred basis, and the best practice for local governments.

BEST PRACTICE

- > *Local governments should consider using base remuneration paid to elected officials in similar local government jurisdictions as the preferred basis for determining remuneration.*

Comparison Group

In establishing a valid comparison group of similar jurisdictions, local governments will need to give careful thought to the most important measures to use. Population is a good starting point in every case — it is a useful proxy for elected official workload, and is easy to explain. As well, data on population are easy to obtain. Other measures can be combined with population to make the comparison set more defensible. Factors that influence elected officials' workload and level of responsibility are particularly useful to consider. The list of such factors will vary by jurisdiction, but may include:

- > location
- > geographic size
- > scope of services
- > growth rate
- > operating budget

Finally, local governments will need to give some thought to the number of jurisdictions to include in the comparison set. Larger sets will allow for a more robust comparison, and will make it easier to neutralize the impact of outliers (i.e., jurisdictions that have significantly high or low pay levels, relative to those of other places). If the set is too large, however, it may be difficult to obtain the necessary comparative data, especially in cases where a range of measures, in addition to population, are used. Given these points, a practicable and defensible minimum size is five to seven jurisdictions. The maximum size will depend on the number of factors being considered, and the capacity of the body conducting the remuneration review. Comparison set sizes vary considerably across local

SIZE OF COMPARISON GROUP

The size of comparison groups that are used to help determine elected official remuneration varies considerably across local governments. The City of Prince George uses a peer review group of ten municipalities for the purposes of its quadrennial review. The group includes cities with similar populations — Chilliwack, Kelowna, Saanich, Langley Township, Delta, Kamloops, North Vancouver District, Nanaimo, Victoria, and Coquitlam.

governments. Kamloops has used 14 municipalities; Comox Valley Regional District recently used nine. Metro Vancouver bases the salary of its Chair on the median salary of mayors in 21 municipalities (all Metro municipal jurisdictions).

BEST PRACTICE

- > *Local governments should consider establishing comparison groups using population, combined — as deemed necessary — with other factors that influence elected official workload and level of responsibility.*
- > *Local governments should consider including at least five jurisdictions (preferably more) in the comparison groups.*

Using the Data

Once the remuneration data from comparable jurisdictions have been obtained, local governments need to determine how to best use the data to determine pay levels for the range of elected officials in place. It is useful at this stage to make the exercise as straightforward as possible so that it can be undertaken easily (and relatively quickly), and so that it is easy to explain and understand. Simple formulas can be effective in meeting these goals.

For municipal councils, the following formula-based approach — or variations of it — is used in a number of places:

- > Set the salary for the mayor as the median value of all mayors' salaries from the comparison set of municipalities. Calculate the salary for councillors as a percentage (e.g., 40%) of the mayor's salary to reflect the part-time nature of the councillor position, as well as its lower workload and level of responsibility relative to those of the mayor.

Figure 4.2 illustrates, using hypothetical data from a comparison set of seven municipalities, how this formula works in practice. To be clear, all numbers, including the percentage factor, are hypothetical examples only, presented solely for the purpose of illustration.

SIMPLICITY

When determining how to use comparison data to calculate remuneration levels, it is preferable to apply simple formulas. Formulas allow the exercise to be undertaken easily and relatively quickly. Approaches based on formulas are easy to explain, easy to understand, and defensible.

Figure 4.2
Sample Formula for Municipal Elected Officials

Comparison Set		Subject Municipality		
Mayors	Median Value	Mayor's Salary	%	Councillor Salary
\$ 101,000	\$ 92,000	\$ 92,000	40	\$ 36,800
\$ 92,000				
\$ 100,500				
\$ 90,000				
\$ 72,500				
\$ 93,000				
\$ 83,000				

In applying the formula, local governments should consider the following points:

- > *Percentage Factor* — The percentage factor that is applied to identify an appropriate councillor salary needs to be set after careful consideration of the position's workload, time commitment, and level of responsibility relative to those of the mayor. In municipalities where the mayor's role is full-time (or greater), the difference between the positions may be greater, and the percentage factor may be lower than 40%. Jurisdictions that use this formula (or variations of it) tend to apply percentages that range from 30% to 50%, depending on local conditions. Forty percent is a reasonable starting point.
- > *Median Value* — The median value effectively neutralizes low and high outliers, and is therefore preferable to the average value.
- > *Applying the Outcome* — It is possible, particularly if a new comparison set is used, that the resulting, recommended salaries for mayor and councillor will be lower than the actual salaries being paid. If the difference is significant, local governments may choose to "red circle" existing salaries for a period of time. In the calculated salaries are higher than those being paid, either a one-time adjustment, or a phased increase may be required.

- > *Alternative Percentile* — The median value represents the 50th percentile in the comparison set. Some local governments may determine, based on local circumstances, that remuneration should be set higher — for example, at the 75th percentile. In this situation, careful thought would need to be given to the rationale for such an approach.

While less common among regional districts, formulas may be just as useful in providing a relatively simple, easy to understand, defensible approach. In developing a formula for regional boards, provision needs to be made for a greater number of elected roles. In most cases, four specific roles should be considered, including the chair, vice chair, electoral area director, and municipal director. The distinction between electoral area and municipal directors is particularly important to recognize. Regional districts are the local government for electoral areas, responsible for providing all basic local services. Electoral area directors are accountable directly to their local electors, and are expected to consult directly with electors on local service and other topics. Many electoral area directors represent vast geographic areas, often with numerous small communities or settlements to serve. The time commitment required to provide proper contact and representation can be considerable. Electoral area directors' full local government salary comes from their regional districts.

The role of municipal director is also important and can be demanding. Municipal directors, however, are accountable to their councils and do not face the same expectations as their electoral area counterparts regarding consultation with residents on regional district matters. Residents of municipalities receive most of their local services from their municipal councils. Municipal directors sit on these councils, and are paid separately as council members to perform municipal duties.

A reasonable formula that takes into account the differences between electoral area and municipal directors, as well as the unique duties, expectations, and responsibilities of the chair and vice chair, is as follows:

- > Set the salary for municipal director based on the median value of all municipal directors' salaries from the comparison set of regional districts. Calculate the salary for electoral area director by applying a multiplier (e.g., 2.0). Calculate a stipend for the chair by applying a multiplier (e.g., 2.5) to the municipal director salary. Use a separate multiplier (e.g., 0.5) to determine a stipend for vice chair.

Figure 4.3 illustrates how this formula works in practice, using hypothetical data for a comparison set of seven regional districts. All numbers, including the multipliers, are examples only.

Figure 4.3
Sample Formula for Regional District Elected Officials

Comparison Set		Subject Regional District				
Municipal Director	Median Value	Mun Director Base Salary	X	EA Director Base Salary	Chair Stipend*	Vice Chair Stipend*
\$ 17,000	\$ 12,500	\$ 12,500	2.0	\$ 25,000	\$ 31,250	\$ 6,250
\$ 11,000						
\$ 12,200						
\$ 9,000						
\$ 12,500						
\$ 15,000						
\$ 16,500						

* These stipends would be paid in addition to the base director pay.

The considerations raised for municipal council remuneration formulas regarding percentage factor, median value, applying the outcome, and alternative percentile apply to the regional board formula as well. In addition, it is important in the regional district context to consider the need for supplemental payments, over and above the base salary amounts.

BEST PRACTICE

- > *Local governments should consider using simple formulas that make the calculation of remuneration levels as straightforward as possible, easy to explain, and easy to understand...*

Regional District Supplemental Payments

On a municipal council, the expectations on a councillor in terms of workload, time commitment, and responsibilities, are, in general, the same for all councillors. Almost all councils, as a consequence, pay councillors the same base salary without additional payments for committee meetings. Supplemental fees may be paid in some cases to councillors who participate in external agencies on behalf of council; however, these payments are the exception rather than the rule. Approximately 25% of municipalities that responded to the survey pay stipends to council members for time spent as deputy mayor or acting mayor. In most cases, these stipends tend to be nominal in value.

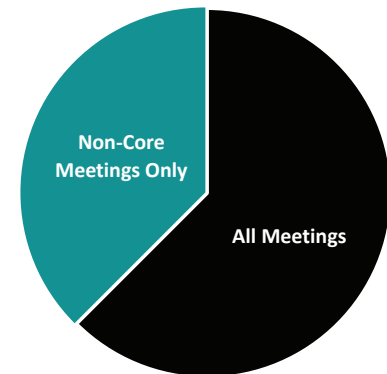
The situation for regional district directors is different. As noted already, the base remuneration for role of electoral area director is typically greater than the base remuneration paid to the municipal director role — the gap is intended to reflect the inherent differences in the roles. Differences in workload, time commitment, and level of responsibility, and level of interest also exist, however, among individual directors. Some directors may represent large jurisdictions that participate in a broad range of regional district services, some of which may have committees or commissions in place. These directors may be compelled to play, or be interested in playing, an especially active role in regional district service governance. Other directors will represent jurisdictions that are less involved in, or reliant on, their regional districts. These directors may not be involved in regional district matters to the same degree as others.

To account for differences among individual directors, regional districts may choose to provide supplemental payments, over and above base remuneration levels. Where provided, payments take the form of per-meeting stipends that are paid to directors who attend specified regional district meetings, as well as external meetings to which directors are sent to represent their local governments. The amounts of the supplemental payments vary; most regional districts, however, pay between \$75 and \$200 per meeting.⁴

⁴ An exception is Metro Vancouver, which pays \$397 to each director for every board, committee and other approved meeting attended. For all Metro Vancouver directors other than the (sole) electoral area director, board chair, board vice chair, committee chairs, and committee vice-chairs, however, the meeting stipend constitutes the entire remuneration (i.e., there is no base amount). Central Coast Regional District and Peace River Regional District also pay higher per-meeting rates in lieu of base salaries for directors.

SUPPLEMENTAL PAYMENTS

Fifteen of the 24 regional districts that pay base remuneration to directors also provide supplemental payments for board, committee of the whole, and all other meetings. Nine of the regional districts provide supplemental payments for non-core meetings only.



The use of supplemental, per-meeting payments is not uniform across regional districts. A review of the 24 regional districts in the province that pay base remuneration to directors shows that, while almost all provide payments to attend meetings of external agencies, 15 of the 24 also provide payments to attend board and committee of the whole meetings. Nine (9) regional districts provide no supplemental payments for these "core" regional district meetings — remuneration for attendance at these meetings is included in the directors' base salaries.⁵

Supplemental payments are intended to reflect workload differences among individual directors. It is not clear that such payments are also intended, however, to provide additional compensation to directors for attending core regional district meetings of the board, including committee of the whole meetings. Indeed, it may be argued that all board members are expected to attend these meetings as a basic requirement of their roles as directors.

In setting regional district board remuneration, careful attention needs to be given to the use of supplemental payments. Regional districts may wish to consider targeting such payments to non-core meetings, and structuring base levels to include attendance at board, committee of the whole, and any other core meetings.

BEST PRACTICE

- > *Local governments should consider targeting supplemental payments to non-core meetings, and structuring base remuneration levels to include attendance at board and committee of the whole meetings.*

Alternate Directors

It is important to note that all regional districts use per-meeting payments to remunerate alternate directors for attendance at all meetings, including core meetings, that the director would normally

⁵ Travel expenses for all meetings are paid (see later).

attend. These payments are the only form of remuneration for alternate directors; alternates do not receive a base salary.

EXPENSES

Local government elected officials regularly incur expenses to travel to meetings, attend conferences and sanctioned events, communicate with residents and the local government office, and deal with the broad variety of other duties associated with the job. It is both important and legitimate that expenses which are incurred by council and board members on the job, and in order to do the job, be reimbursed by the local government. Policies and bylaws on expenses are used to set out the types of expenses that are eligible for reimbursement, the conditions under which reimbursements will be made, and the procedures that must be followed to obtain reimbursement.

A guiding principle for councils and boards on the matter of expenses is as follows:

- > Local elected officials should not themselves be expected to pay expenses that are incurred in order to perform their roles.

A related principle, however, is that compensation paid to elected officials for expenses incurred on the job should not be viewed as an additional source of remuneration. This point requires local governments, first, to identify the specific types of expenses for which elected officials can expect reimbursement.

Eligible Expenses

Local governments have similar, but not identical, lists of expenses that are eligible for reimbursement. In the case of municipalities, expenses that are reimbursed by councils tend to be limited to those that are incurred by members on out-of-town business. Such expenses include:

- > travel by personal automobile (paid as a rate per kilometre) to out-of-town meetings
- > travel by taxi, bus, train, ferry, rental car, or air to out-of-town meetings
- > accommodation
- > conference fees
- > per diem payments for meals and incidentals

GUIDING PRINCIPLES (EXPENSES)

Local elected officials should not themselves be expected to pay expenses that are incurred in order to perform their roles. Compensation paid to elected officials for expenses incurred on the job should not, however, be considered or pursued as an additional source of remuneration.

Some councils also provide funding for a smartphone, tablet, and/or computer (or provide the hardware itself), and the associated communications plan. Some will provide transportation costs within the municipality, including a mileage rate for personal car use, taxi and/or transit fees, and parking. Monthly car allowances for mayors are common; similar allowances for councillors are less common but do exist in some centres.

Regional district boards, similar to councils, reimburse members for smartphones and for attendance at out-of-town meetings. Most regional districts also, however, pay for travel, travel time, meals, and accommodation for attendance regional district board and committee meetings. These additional items reflect the large geographic size of many regional districts, and the need for directors to spend considerable time to travel to core meetings. Monthly transportation allowances provided by some regional districts to electoral area directors also reflect geographic realities.

Most local governments provide additional expense amounts for their mayors or chairs. A monthly car allowance, noted earlier, is standard for mayors and is becoming common for chairs. Hosting allowances are also recognized by several jurisdictions.

Regional district expense policies should anticipate and provide special direction to municipal directors to avoid instance of "double dipping". In some cases, expenses that are incurred by municipal directors can and should be reimbursed by the directors' municipal councils, not charged to the regional district. An example of such an expense is attendance at the UBCM annual conference. Council members who serve as municipal directors attend the annual conference, first and foremost, as representatives of their municipalities.

Local Considerations

Lists of eligible expenses are common across most jurisdictions, as noted earlier. When developing expense policies and bylaws for a specific local government, however, it may be important to explore particular types of expenses that, while less widespread, are appropriate given the local context. Some regional districts (e.g., Squamish Lillooet) provide differential mileage rates to account for travel on unpaved roads. Others (e.g., Cariboo) provide reimbursement to replace car windshields that are damaged during regional district travel on winter roads. Parking in many urban centres is expensive.

FEDERAL TAX SYSTEM

Changes to the Federal Income Tax Act were introduced by the federal government in 2017 to eliminate a long-standing federal tax exemption for local government elected officials, effective January 1, 2019. The exemption was in place to recognize that, in the course of their duties, elected officials incur various expenses for which they may not be reimbursed (e.g., home office costs, meals while meeting with constituents, etc.). This change resulted in substantial changes to the after-tax income for elected officials, and prompted many local governments to adjust elected officials' 2019 pre-tax compensation in order to maintain after-tax 2018 remuneration.

Municipalities and regional districts in these centres may feel it necessary to reimburse parking costs to elected officials.

Evolving Lists

Finally, local governments should not view eligible expense lists as static documents. Indeed, in order to ensure that costs do not become barriers to participation, it is incumbent on local governments to periodically consult elected officials and review eligibility considerations. One potential expense that stands out is childcare. Councils and boards that have, or that seek to attract, young parents as members may find it both fair and necessary to reimburse child care expenses that are incurred to attend council and board meetings.

BEST PRACTICES

- > *Local governments should provide clarity in regional district expense policies/bylaws to ensure that municipal expenses incurred by municipal directors are reimbursed by the appropriate municipal governments.*
- > *Local governments should consider including in their expense policies and/or bylaws the principle that elected officials should not themselves be expected to pay expenses that are incurred in order to perform their roles.*
- > *Local governments should recognize that the range of legitimate expenses incurred to perform the roles of mayor and board chair will be greater than that incurred to perform the roles of councillor and board director.*
- > *Local governments should ensure that lists of eligible expenses reflect unique local conditions.*
- > *Local governments should periodically re-examine decisions on eligibility to ensure that lists of eligible expenses evolve to reflect changing needs and to reduce barriers to participation.*

BENEFITS

Medical services plan premiums, extended health and dental plans, employee and family assistance programs, and life and accidental death insurance are common examples of benefits that local governments may choose to make available to all or some of their elected officials. Current practices across the province vary with respect to the provision of benefits. Some local governments provide full benefits to all elected officials at no cost to the members. In a number of places, benefits are made available only to the mayor, since this position is the only one considered full-time. Councillors and directors in some of these places may opt-in to packages, but only at their own cost, or on a cost-share basis with the municipality. Certain regional districts provide benefit packages at the local government's cost to electoral area directors, but require municipal directors to pay all premiums. Other regional districts pay 50% of the cost of packages for all directors who opt-in. Family members of elected officials are entitled to join benefit programs in some jurisdictions, but must pay the full cost. Almost all local governments provide personal accident insurance to elected officials who are traveling on local government business.

Provision of Benefits

The provision of benefits to elected officials is becoming an increasingly important topic of consideration in local governments, particularly because of the potential barriers — real or perceived — that a lack of benefits pose for some. In an effort to avoid this situation, local governments may wish to consider making benefits available. Eligibility and responsibility for cost are two factors to include in any such consideration.

- > *Eligibility* — There is a strong rationale for providing benefits to mayors, and to other elected officials who occupy what are considered to be full-time positions. Many individuals who may wish to put their names forward for these positions would need, upon election to office, to leave other full-time employment in which they may receive benefits coverage. The prospect of giving up such coverage, and facing four or more years without replacement benefits, would prevent some from running.

The argument for benefits may not be as strong for elected positions that are structured and paid as part-time roles. In these cases, there is an assumption that individuals with access to benefits through their employment will be able to retain at least some access to those benefits

simply because they will not be need to leave their existing employment entirely. This reasoning fails in cases where existing benefits would be lost as a result of an individual being converted to part-time status with their employer after being elected to office.

An additional point in the discussion on eligibility concerns the position of municipal director on regional district boards. Municipal directors are, first and foremost, municipal councillors. The municipalities, as the local governments to which the councillors are elected to serve, should be responsible for addressing the benefits issue with these elected officials. Electoral area directors, by contrast, are directly elected to the regional district boards. Electoral area directors should look to these bodies for benefits.

- > *Responsibility for Cost* — Local governments should consider paying for elected official benefits on a pro-rated basis. Using this approach, municipalities would pay 100% of the benefit premiums for mayors, and 50% of the premiums for councilors. Regional districts would pay 50% of the cost of benefits for electoral area directors. Regional districts could also choose to pay 100% of the cost of premiums for regional district chairs who are deemed to occupy full-time roles, irrespective of whether the chairs are also electoral area or municipal directors.

In all, the principle governing the provision of benefits is that, in an effort to reduce barriers to participation, local governments should make benefits available to their elected officials, and should contribute to the cost of associated premiums on a pro-rated basis, in accordance with the full- or part-time nature of the positions.

Smaller Jurisdictions

Smaller local governments who wish to provide some level of benefits coverage for their elected officials may have concerns regarding the cost of premiums. In an effort to minimize costs, local governments may consider extending existing staff programs to include elected officials, or joining with other local governments to create larger beneficiary pools. To that end, UBCM offers comprehensive group insurance coverage to all local government elected officials in the province. To join the plan, however, at least three officials from a local government must opt-in to the coverage.

Evolving Range of Benefits

Finally, as with expenses, the list of benefits provided to local elected officials will change over time in response to local needs, societal trends, and other forces. In many jurisdictions today, standard benefits such as extended health and dental coverage, counselling services, and accidental death and dismemberment insurance will address needs. Some other local governments, however, may be under pressure to provide some form of parental leave, RRSP contributions, education allowances, and other benefits that prospective candidates for election receive in their existing careers. In the coming years, the number of local governments that will need to consider these types of benefits is likely to increase. And, to the extent that failure to provide them creates barriers to participation, local governments may need to consider taking action.

► Transition Payments

One specific benefit that may receive greater attention in the coming years is a transition allowance for local elected officials who leave office at the end of a term, either through their own choice, or as the result of an unsuccessful re-election bid. This benefit, which may be referred to as a retirement allowance, a separation payment, a pension, deferred remuneration, or a retraining and adjustment payout, is not offered in many jurisdictions today in the province — indeed, there are only eight municipalities that provide the benefit, and all of them are within Metro Vancouver. The benefit is provided to local elected officials on a broader basis, however, in other parts of Canada, namely Quebec and Ontario.

In some of the BC jurisdictions that offer a transition allowance, the benefit is intended as a bridge to help individuals re-enter the workforce, either in a new occupation, or back into a career that may have been placed on hold. In other cases, the benefit is presented in lieu of pension contributions that would have been paid by an employer if the elected officials had been considered employees and eligible for the existing municipal pension plan. Some transition allowances are intended to achieve both purposes. Consider some current examples:

- > The City of Vancouver provides one week of salary for every year of office served (provided that the departing council member served his or her full term). This benefit translates to 1.9% of the member's annual salary, and is intended to help facilitate the member's return to the workforce.

TRANSITION ALLOWANCES

Elected official transition allowances — referred to in some places as retirement allowances, separation payments, pensions, deferred remuneration, or adjustment payouts — are not common in British Columbia's local government system today. Experiences in other provinces and in the Metro Vancouver area, however, suggest that the benefit may become a matter for greater attention, at least for larger cities, in the coming years. The lack of transition and pension-like benefits could be a barrier to participation for different groups of individuals (e.g., mid-career professionals).

- > The City of Port Coquitlam provides one month of salary for every year in office to the departing mayor (persons who served as councillors are not eligible). The benefit payment is capped at six months.
- > The City of New Westminster provides the equivalent of 10% of the annual indemnity for each year of service, to a maximum of 12 years of service. This benefit is a form of pension.
- > The City of Burnaby structures its benefits as an ongoing, annual payment to service council members. The payments reflect the employer contributions to the municipal pension plan that would be made if the council members were eligible for the plan. Payments can be invested by members as annual RRSP contributions.

Transition allowances may be most relevant and defensible in local governments with elected officials in roles that require a *de facto* full-time commitment (even though some roles may be paid at part-time rates). Individuals in these positions place their existing careers and jobs on hold while in office, and may not, as a consequence, be able to participate in a work-related pension or savings program. Individuals in full-time elected positions may also have more difficulty than others in transitioning back into the workforce following their time in elected office.

Experience in Ontario and Quebec supports the view that such benefits may be of most interest to positions that require significant time commitments. In Ontario, the majority of municipalities with populations over 100,000 offer pensions to elected officials, whereas only 7% of centres with populations under 10,000 provide the benefit.⁶ It is generally the case that elected positions in larger centres are more demanding in terms of time than the same positions in smaller centres. In Quebec, the municipal pension plan is made available to all municipalities; however, local governments in centres with populations under 20,000 may choose to provide the benefit to the position of mayor only — the one position that typically requires a greater time commitment than others.

⁶ Metro Vancouver, *Board Remuneration Review Findings and Recommendations*, Board Remuneration Independent Review Panel, April 17, 2019, Page 9.

This *Guide* does not provide advice to local governments on whether or not to provide a transition allowance to departing, or serving, elected officials. The *Guide* recognizes, however, that the lack of such a benefit may discourage some individuals from considering public office, and may become more of a barrier in future years, at least in some centres. Local governments that wish to explore the development of a transition allowance, may want to consider the following questions:

- > Does the lack of a transition benefit stand as a significant barrier to participation? Which groups of individuals may view the benefit as being particularly important?
- > What is the primary purpose of the benefit? Is it to provide a bridge for departing elected officials to re-enter the workforce? Or is it to provide pension contributions in lieu of contributions that elected officials could earn outside of office?
- > What is a reasonable cap on the benefit, expressed either in terms of benefit paid, or eligible service time?
- > Is there any rationale for regional districts to provide the benefit to municipal directors, or should the issue of transition allowance to municipal elected officials be addressed directly by the local governments (i.e., the municipalities) to which the officials are elected?

BEST PRACTICES

- > Local governments should consider providing access to extended health, dental, vision and insurance benefits to all local elected officials.*
- > Local governments should consider contributing to the cost of benefit premiums on a pro-rated basis, in accordance with the full- or part-time nature of elected positions.*
- > Local governments should consider extending benefits coverage to family members of elected officials, provided that the elected officials themselves pay the full incremental cost of such coverage.*
- > Local governments should periodically re-examine the benefits provided to ensure that benefits programs reflect changing needs, and reduce barriers to participation....*

SECTION 5 COMMUNICATION

Local governments in British Columbia have long recognized the importance of strong communication in local governance. Municipalities and regional districts regularly communicate in proactive ways with their communities on a broad range of public policy, service, and governance matters. Remuneration for elected officials is one additional item on which clear communication is necessary. This section of the *Guide* highlights information that is important to communicate, identifies audiences with which to communicate, and provides advice on how to communicate.

As in all communication efforts, information on elected official remuneration is provided, in part, as a way to report on actions and decisions that are underway or that have been taken. Communication is also undertaken, however, to explain why initiatives are important to take, and to promote transparency in local government.

INFORMATION TO COMMUNICATE

The pieces of information that are important to communicate have been identified in the earlier sections of the *Guide*. In all, the key pieces are as follows:

- > *Nature of Elected Official Roles* — The level of knowledge in communities on the roles of local elected officials is not uniformly high across the province. Information to help residents understand the duties and responsibilities of the roles, the expectations on council members and regional board directors, and the time required to perform the jobs properly may provide important context for reviews of remuneration, and may help to pave the way for broad acceptance of their outcomes.
- > *Purpose of Remuneration* — The reasons for providing remuneration to elected officials, and the factors that inform the setting of remuneration levels, are important to communicate. Residents and prospective candidates, in particular, may find it helpful to understand the importance of representative decision-making bodies, and the need to identify and reduce barriers to participation that some groups in the community may encounter.

EXPLAINING IMPORTANCE

The Cariboo Regional District opens its Directors' Remuneration and Expenses Bylaw with a statement of principles. The statement begins as follows:

"It is important for local governments to ensure their elected official positions are compensated fairly and equitably to attract and encourage a variety of citizens from different economic and demographic backgrounds... to run for office and represent their communities..."

- > *Guiding Principles* — The communication of principles to guide council and board decisions on remuneration can help to speak to the purpose of remuneration, and can also minimize any suggestion of arbitrariness in the remuneration levels selected.
- > *Remuneration Details* — Clear and complete listings of base remuneration levels, supplemental payments, the situations in which supplemental payments are made, annual adjustments, eligible expenses and the process for claiming them, and benefit programs are important to communicate. Such details bolster transparency.
- > *Remuneration Reviews* — Where determined, the process and timing of remuneration reviews, along with any guiding principles for reviews to follow, can help to de-politicize the efforts. Details on reviews underway, as well as the results of such reviews, are also important.
- > *Expenditures Made* — Finally, efforts above and beyond basic statutory reporting requirements to make available information on remuneration received and expenses claimed can enhance transparency and build trust.

AUDIENCES TO REACH

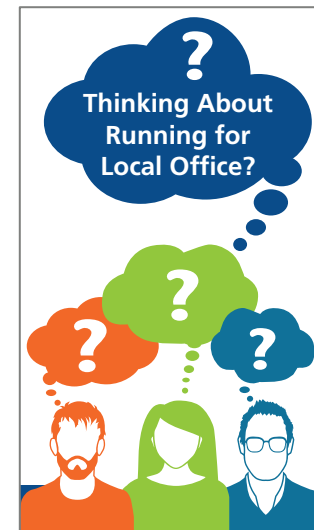
Residents in the community constitute the primary audience for communication efforts on elected official remuneration. Other audiences that may be targeted in communication strategies include ratepayer associations, business associations, and any other defined group that has expressed, or that may express, strong views on remuneration. An additional audience is the pool of prospective candidates for upcoming local government elections. This group should clearly understand the nature and level of the work involved, and the remuneration that is provided for the work.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Many local governments regularly make use of a range of different tools to connect with different audiences. For information on remuneration, councils and boards may find a combination of written materials, presentations, and information meetings to be most effective. Consider the following points:

UNDERSTANDING ROLES

Prospective candidates for local government elected office should clearly understand the nature and level of the work involved, and the remuneration that is provided for the work. Resources such as "Thinking About Running for Local Office?" can help.



- > *Written Materials* — Providing information in writing is a useful way to ensure accuracy of message, and to promote transparency. Written materials can also be made available in a number of formats in order to allow for distribution to various audiences. Examples of written materials to provide include:
 - remuneration policies and bylaws, complete with user-friendly introductions to explain the purpose and contents of the documents
 - information pamphlets on the reasons for, importance of, and principles in place to guide elected official remuneration
 - education booklets on the duties and responsibilities of local elected officials, as well as the time commitment involved
 - terms of reference to guide remuneration reviews
 - reports on the outcomes of remuneration reviews
 - regular disclosure of remuneration and expenses paid

Public surveys represent an additional written item that can be used not only to solicit public views on remuneration, but also to communicate the reasons for remuneration, and the existing remuneration, expense, and benefit programs in place.

- > *Presentations* — Public presentations (i.e., at open council and board meetings) of the results of remuneration reviews are effective communication methods, particularly when reviews have been completed by an independent panel, and presentations are made by the panel chair.
- > *Information Meetings* — Information meetings are used in several local governments to help prospective candidates understand the duties and responsibilities of the elected official jobs. Where not already the case, these meetings could include a component on remuneration. The reasons for remuneration, and the principles guiding remuneration, would be important to communicate in addition to the remuneration levels.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Kamloops' Council Remuneration Task Force solicited input from the public through a carefully-constructed and -implemented engagement program. Five community events were attended by Task Force members. A survey was also provided for all interested residents.

Information meetings can also be used as part of remuneration reviews. Such meetings are held in some centres to educate audiences on elected official remuneration, and to solicit views on appropriate packages to provide.

BEST PRACTICES

- > *Local governments should consider including in their communications programs information on the nature of elected official roles, the purposes of remuneration, principles to guide the setting of remuneration, details on remuneration levels, remuneration reviews, and expenditures made.*
- > *Local governments should consider using a range of tools to communicate information, including written materials, presentations, and information meetings.*

SECTION 6

BEST PRACTICES SUMMARY

This *Guide* has presented a series of best practices to assist local governments in setting elected official remuneration. Figure 6.1 pulls the best practices together into one table.

Figure 6.1
Remuneration Best Practices

Section	Topic	Best Practices
Section 2: Conducting Reviews	Independent Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Local governments should consider establishing an independent task force to conduct reviews of elected official remuneration.
Section 3: Timing and Frequency	Timing of Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Local governments should consider conducting remuneration reviews, and reporting the results, at least one year before the next election.
	Frequency of Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Local governments should consider conducting remuneration reviews once per term. > Local governments should consider setting out the timing for subsequent reviews in remuneration policies or bylaws.
	Annual Adjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Local governments should consider including in their policies or bylaws provision for an automatic cost-of-living adjustment, using the CPI, to elected officials' base remuneration.
	Implementation of Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Local governments should consider having changes to base levels, determined through remuneration reviews, take effect at the beginning of the following term. > Local governments should consider allowing for immediate implementation of changes to remuneration that are designed to protect elected officials from financial loss that would otherwise occur as a result of tax system shifts.

Section	Topic	Best Practices
Section 3: Timing and Frequency	Implementation of Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Local governments should consider allowing for immediate implementation of annual cost-of-living adjustments.
Section 4: Setting Remuneration	Bases of Comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Local governments should consider using remuneration paid to elected officials in similar local government jurisdictions as the preferred basis for determining remuneration.
	Comparison Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Local governments should consider establishing comparison groups using population, combined — as deemed necessary — with other factors that influence elected official workload and level of responsibility. > Local governments should consider including at least five jurisdictions (preferably more) in the comparison groups.
	Using the Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Local governments should consider using simple formulas that make the calculation of remuneration levels as straightforward as possible, easy to explain, and easy to understand.
	Regional District Supplemental Payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Local governments should consider targeting supplemental payments to non-core meetings, and structuring base remuneration levels to include attendance at board and committee of the whole meetings.
	Eligible Expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Local governments should consider including in their expense policies and/or bylaws the principle that elected officials should not themselves be expected to pay expenses that are incurred in order to perform their roles. > Local governments should recognize that the range of legitimate expenses incurred to perform the roles of mayor and board chair will be greater than that incurred to perform the roles of councillor and board director.

Section	Topic	Best Practices
Section 4: Setting Remuneration	Eligible Expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Local governments should provide clarity in regional district expense policies/bylaws to ensure that municipal expenses incurred by municipal directors are reimbursed by the appropriate municipal governments. > Local governments should ensure that lists of eligible expenses reflect unique local conditions. > Local governments should periodically re-examine decisions on eligibility to ensure that lists of eligible expenses evolve to reflect changing needs and to reduce barriers to participation...
	Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Local governments should consider providing access to extended health, dental, vision and insurance to all local elected officials. > Local governments should consider contributing to the cost of benefit premiums on a pro-rated basis, in accordance with the full- or part-time nature of elected positions. > Local governments should consider extending benefits to family members of elected officials, provided that the elected officials themselves pay the full incremental cost of such coverage. > Local governments should periodically re-examine the range of benefits provided to ensure that benefits programs reflect changing needs, and reduce barriers to participation...
Section 5: Communications	Information to Communicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Local governments should consider including in their communications programs information on the nature of elected official roles, the purposes of remuneration, principles to guide the setting of remuneration, details on remuneration levels, remuneration reviews, and expenditures made.
	Methods of Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Local governments should consider using a range of tools to communicate information, including written materials, presentations, and information meetings.