



January 21, 2025

Honourable Ravi Kahlon
Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs
HMA.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Kahlon,

RE: Request for In-Person Meeting on Respectful Conduct in Governance

The Association of Kootenay & Boundary Local Governments (AKBLG) congratulates you on your recent election and cabinet appointment.

AKBLG represents municipalities and electoral areas across southeastern British Columbia, including the Regional Districts of Kootenay Boundary (RDKB), Central Kootenay (RDCK), East Kootenay (RDEK), the Town of Golden, and the Village of Valemount. Our member communities are small and rural by urban standards, with the largest city having a population of approximately 21,000. Our mission is to address issues impacting the economy, environment, and social well-being of southeastern BC.

As the new legislature begins its work, we believe it is critical to address the growing concerns around Respectful Conduct in Governance, an issue that has been repeatedly prioritized by our members. We are requesting an in-person meeting with your office to discuss actionable solutions to this pressing challenge.

Key Priorities on Respectful Conduct in Governance

Since 2021, our membership has endorsed the following resolutions to improve governance and address uncivil behavior:

1. 2023-EB69: Called on the Province to establish shared local government ethics commissioner offices to implement Code of Conduct policies more effectively.
2. 2022-B77: Proposed the creation of an Office of the Municipal Ethics Commissioner within the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.
3. 2021-2020 NR1: Recommended establishing an Independent Office of Integrity to serve the public, elected officials, and local government officials.

In ongoing engagements with Provincial and UBCM staff, we have consistently highlighted the urgent need for increased support for local governments to address these challenges.

Proposed Solutions

To advance this critical issue, we propose:

- Expanding the role of area associations, such as AKBLG, in professional development and conflict resolution.
- Establishing a legislative duty for the Province to consult with area associations on matters of conduct within their regions.
- Facilitating the creation of regional or sub-regional integrity commissioners to provide accessible and context-sensitive support.
- Enacting mandatory education for local government elected officials through legislative changes to ensure consistent standards of conduct.

In-Person Meeting Request

To ensure meaningful progress on these issues, we kindly request an in-person meeting with you prior to the summer break this year. This meeting will allow us to share region-specific feedback and collaborate on practical solutions tailored to rural and remote communities like those we represent.

Why This Meeting Matters

Uncivil behavior and governance challenges undermine the effective functioning of local governments and erode public trust. Addressing these issues is essential for maintaining democratic integrity and ensuring the well-being of communities across southeastern BC. AKBLG is committed to being a proactive partner in resolving these challenges, and your leadership is vital in driving the necessary reforms.

We look forward to working together to strengthen governance standards and support the communities we collectively serve.

Sincerely,



Kevin McIsaac
President
AKBLG



Aidan McLaren-Caux
AKBLG Vice President
Chair, AKBLG Advocacy Committee

cc Honourable Brittny Anderson
 Minister of State for Local Governments and Rural Communities