

Staff Report to Council

Planning & Development

FILE: 01-0400-20/25

REPORT DATE: February 17, 2025

MEETING DATE:

February 25, 2025

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Michelle Baski, Manager – Agriculture & Environment

SUBJECT: Proposed UBCM Resolution for Increased Ministry Funding for Agriculture

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW/APPROVAL:



RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Council:

- A. Endorse the proposed resolution and background document for Increased Ministry Funding for Agriculture [Attachments A and B], as presented at the February 25, 2025 Council Meeting; AND
- B. Direct staff to forward the proposed resolution and background document to the Lower Mainland Local Government Association for consideration at its 2025 Conference; OR
- C. Other.

PURPOSE

To present to Council a proposed resolution and background document for increased Ministry funding for agriculture to forward on to the Lower Mainland Local Government Association (LMLGA) for endorsement for the 2025 Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Conference and Annual General Meeting (AGM).

☐ Information Report

☐ Decision Report

☒ Direction Report

DISCUSSION

Background:

In BC Agricultural Council's (BCAC) [BC Agriculture Sector Strategic Priorities](#) (released in 2024), the five year average of public spending as a portion of agriculture's contribution to Gross

Domestic Product (GDP) was reviewed for each province, and BC was last in provincial investment in agriculture, at approximately 2.5%. The Canada-wide historical average of direct investment in agriculture is approximately 12%. Addressing this investment gap in BC would help level the playing field for BC producers and help to keep them in BC, rather than being attracted to other provinces where agriculture is prioritized. An increase in provincial agricultural funding could be invested in much needed programs and support, such as:

- Regional water sustainability plans, agricultural water reserves, and upgrades to water infrastructure storage to help alleviate the increasing water shortages brought on by climate change;
- Emergency management programs and training for agricultural liaisons during emergency events, which are becoming more frequent due to climate change;
- Programs to provide immediate economic relief for producers who have experienced adverse climate and emergency events;
- Incentives, funding programs, and tax exemptions to enhance the viability of the agricultural sector;
- Programs for wage subsidies for farm workers to ensure a stable labour force; and
- Additional Ministry staffing to support the above-mentioned programs and improve much needed regulatory enforcement.

The items above include priorities identified in the City's Agricultural Viability Strategy, and have been noted as priorities by the City's Agricultural Advisory Committee, the BC Agriculture Council, and the City-hosted inter-municipal agricultural roundtable.

The proposed resolution (see Attachments A and B) is calling to increase the amount of provincial funding invested into supporting agriculture, to help keep producers in BC, keep the sector viable, and protect local food security.

Proposed Resolution – Increased Ministry Funding for Agriculture

WHEREAS provincial funding for agriculture in British Columbia (BC) as a percentage of the sector's contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the lowest in Canada;

AND WHEREAS an increase to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's budget would demonstrate the province's commitment to food security and the sustainability of agriculture;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that UBCM call on the Provincial government to raise agriculture funding in BC to the national average to support much-needed investments in the agricultural sector.

Relevant Policy, Bylaw or Legislation:

The Agricultural Viability Strategy is comprehensive agricultural planning document that identifies opportunities to strengthen the local agriculture and agri-food sector and contribute to its long-term sustainability. Advocacy to the Province of BC for increased support for agriculture is aligned with goals, strategies, and actions in the Strategy.

Analysis:

The proposed UBCM resolution is related to advocating for increased provincial resources to support agriculture, which could be used in a variety of ways, as noted above. Advocacy through the UBCM is appropriate for resolutions that are provincial in nature and relevant to other local governments.

Agricultural Advisory Committee Feedback:

The Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) engaged in a ‘brainstorming discussion’ on potential 2025 UBCM resolutions at its November 2024 meeting. The proposed UBCM resolution was presented to the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) on February 13, 2025. Through a motion that was carried unanimously, the AAC supported the resolution as presented in this report. Comments from the AAC indicated that more support is needed for agriculture, and funding is a critical component of that support.

Next Steps:

Should Council adopted the recommended motions, staff will forward the proposed resolution and background document to the Lower Mainland Local Government Association (LMLGA) for consideration at its 2025 conference (scheduled April 29 – May 1). The deadline to submit resolutions to the LMLGA is March 5. If the City’s resolution is endorsed by the LMLGA, it will automatically be forwarded to the UBCM convention (scheduled September 22 – 26).

COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

- ☐ Principled Governance ☒ Balanced Economic Prosperity ☐ Infrastructure
☐ Community Spirit & Wellbeing ☐ Corporate Pride ☐ Public Safety
☐ Not Applicable

Agriculture – Advocate for the viability of the agricultural industry and food security through innovation and reducing regulatory barriers.

WORKPLAN IMPLICATIONS

- ☒ Already accounted for in department workplan / no adjustments required
☐ Emergent issue / will require deferral of other priority(ies)
☐ Other
-

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- ☒ None ☐ Budget Previously Approved ☐ Referral to Business Planning
☐ Other

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- ☒ Inform ☒ Consult ☒ Involve ☐ Collaborate ☐ Empower

The proposed resolution was brought to the Agricultural Advisory Committee on February 13, 2025, as noted in this report.

KATZIE FIRST NATION CONSIDERATIONS

Referral ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Other

SIGN-OFFS**Written by:**

Michelle Baski,
Manager – Agriculture & Environment

Reviewed by:

Patrick Ward,
Director of Planning & Development

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Backgrounder for Proposed UBCM Resolution: Increased Ministry Funding for Agriculture
- B. UBCM Resolution presented to the AAC on February 13, 2025