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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development

### **Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development addresses UBCM convention**

WHISTLER – The Government of British Columbia is committed to building strong communities by supporting collaborative, innovative, fiscally-responsible programs, Community, Sport and Cultural Development Minister Coralee Oakes told B.C. local governments at the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) annual convention today.

Oakes cited the renewed \$2.76 billion federal Gas Tax Agreement, administered on behalf of the Province by UBCM, to support community infrastructure – and the first significant update of local election campaign finance in B.C., supported by UBCM, as accomplishments that will help sustain strong local communities and strong local democracy in British Columbia.

In her speech to convention delegates, Oakes made four announcements:

- Small Communities Fund – part of the New Building Canada Plan
  - Investing more than \$327 million over the next 10 years for communities with populations under 100,000, government is moving ahead with the first intake. As a cost-sharing program between the provincial, federal and local government, there will be a strong focus on drinking water, wastewater and other green infrastructure projects. The fund will be launched and open for applications by the end of October.
- Expense limits for the 2018 local government elections
  - Government will seek approval of the Legislative Assembly to appoint a Special Committee this fall to make recommendations on establishing expense limits in local government elections. The committee will be encouraged to consult with key stakeholders, including with UBCM. The joint B.C.-UBCM Local Government Elections Task Force recommended establishment of expense limits in local government elections. Supported by UBCM, B.C. took a two-phased approach to modernising local elections by implementing new campaign finance rules in 2014 and expense limits in time for local government elections in the fall of 2018.
- Support to help youth learn about B.C.'s democratic heritage
  - Government will support a pilot program to bring young British Columbians from communities around the province to Victoria this fall for an enhanced educational experience focused on B.C.'s democratic heritage, the importance of democracy and citizen engagement. Participants will share their knowledge with their peers and citizens in their home communities.
- \$1.5 million for asset management
  - The B.C. government is establishing a new asset management fund administered by UBCM. Local governments can apply to the fund to support cost-effective planning for their public infrastructure, including water systems and local roads, to

be ready to make the most of economic opportunities that lay ahead for British Columbia. Leading-edge asset management will help ensure that local taxpayers get value for their infrastructure investments.

Oakes also announced that Terrace, Fort St. John and Quesnel will host the 2015 Canada Winter Games Regional Community Torch Celebrations. The 2015 Canada Winter Games will be the largest multi-sport and cultural event ever held in Prince George and northern B.C. with a forecasted economic impact between \$70 million and \$90 million.

**Quote:**

**Community, Sport and Cultural Development Minister Coralee Oakes –**

“I commend UBCM on the theme of “Leading Edge” for the 2014 convention. In order to build strong communities in a challenging, competitive world, local governments need to be on the leading edge of best practices and responsible stewardship. We will continue to work with UBCM to help British Columbia’s diverse communities, urban and rural, succeed in maximizing economic opportunities and providing an excellent quality of life for families and citizens.”

**Learn More:**

- Check out the Government of British Columbia’s role in supporting communities, sport and arts and culture through the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development at: <http://www.gov.bc.ca/cscd>

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