
RURAL ADVISORY COUNCIL TERMS OF REFERENCE

December 12, 2014

In September 2014, government released its report entitled *Supporting Rural Development: Creating a Voice for Rural British Columbia*. In the report, the Province commits to creating a Rural Advisory Council. The Terms of Reference for the Council are outlined below.

1.0 Mandate

- a. The mandate of the Council is to provide independent and impartial input and advice to the government of B.C. on matters related to rural development in the province, strengthening rural economies, and supporting rural prosperity and thriving rural communities across B.C.

2.0 Objectives

The objectives of the Council are to:

- a. Provide recommendations to the Premier, the Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Development that will help develop new ideas, opportunities, actions, policies and legislation that will further support rural business owners, leaders, workers and families in the province, drive new economic activity and job creation, reduce barriers facing rural communities, and improve the well-being of rural constituents.
- b. Provide advice on how government can work more collaboratively with rural organizations with the goal of creating more rural growth and opportunities. The initial focus of the Council will be to provide advice on:
 - Avenues to support greater rural access to capital;
 - Stronger business development support for rural entrepreneurs and businesses;
 - Moving forward on the Rural Dividend.
- c. Consult with organizations, business owners, First Nations and local government contacts throughout rural BC for feedback on key government initiatives with respect to supporting rural communities.

3.0 Membership

- a. Council members will be appointed by the Premier in consultation with the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary.
- b. The Parliamentary Secretary will serve as the Chair of the Council.
- c. The Council will optimally consist of 14 members from rural BC, but may operate within a range of a minimum of 10 to a maximum of 18 members.

- d. Membership will aim to achieve a diversity of perspectives (demographic, geographic). However, no explicit requirement will be prescribed.
- e. Members will be appointed as individuals, not as representatives of their organization/business, or municipality/region.

4.0 Appointment Terms

- a. The initial intake of Council members will consist of one and two year appointments in order to allow for continuity as members transition on and off the Council.
- b. Thereafter, Council members will be appointed for two-year terms.
- c. Members may be re-appointed to a second term, but will be limited to a maximum of two consecutive terms.
- d. The Vice-Chair will be appointed for a one year term.
- e. The Vice-Chair may be re-appointed to a second term, but will be limited to a maximum of two consecutive terms.
- f. The Council secretariat will track members, the date of their appointments, number of terms, and their proposed and actual retirement.

5.0 Council Meetings

- a. Meetings will be held on a quarterly basis.
- b. The Minister will be invited to attend meetings. The Premier invited to attend at least one of the meetings annually.
- c. The Council may meet with other Ministers as requested, and upon their availability.
- d. The Council may seek expertise as needed from subject matter experts and will have the authority to have specific issues meetings.
- e. Delegates or substitutes will not be permitted to attend meetings or teleconferences on behalf of members.
- f. A quorum for all meetings shall be the Chair and one more than half of the remaining total of Council members.

6.0 Roles and Responsibilities

- a. The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operation is responsible for:
 - Providing secretariat support to the Council, including budget for members' travel costs.
 - Providing strategic support to the Council in achieving its mandate.

- Consulting other ministers and ministries on matters pertaining to the Council mandate and priorities.
 - Identification of prospective candidates for Council, and administration of selection process to appoint new members to the Council as and when required.
 - Reporting to the Premier on Council progress and advice.
 - Providing public communications and reporting out on the Council's progress.
 - Ensuring that the legislative and fiscal implications of the advice brought forward by the Council is fully reviewed and clearly articulated.
- b. The Chair is responsible for:
- Providing strategic direction for Council, in consultation with the Minister.
 - Determining meeting dates, agendas and chairing meetings.
 - Appointing a Vice-Chair.
 - Approving and monitoring the activities of the Council.
 - Liaising and providing advice to government on rural development.
- c. The Vice-Chair is responsible for:
- Assisting the Chair in carrying out the Chair's duties.
 - Assuming the specific responsibilities of the Chair in the absence of the Chair, and when requested by the Chair.
 - Performing other duties and responsibilities as may be assigned by the Chair.
- d. The Council members are responsible for:
- Attending meetings of the Council.
 - Reviewing materials in advance of the meetings.
 - Supporting and participating in the meetings and activities of the Council, and actively contributing to discussions and providing advice.
 - Providing advice on matters relating to the Council's mandate.
- e. The Council as a whole is responsible for:
- Providing an annual report to the Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, or as requested.

7.0 Remuneration and Expenses

- a. Council membership will be voluntary. Members will assume their responsibilities without salary or remuneration for their time associated with meeting their duties.

- b. Council members are eligible to claim reimbursement for their travel expenses as per the approved B.C. government expense guidelines, unless expenses are otherwise covered.

8.0 Confidentiality

- a. All business of the Council is confidential. In accepting an appointment to the Council, members agree that they will not disclose or give to any person any information or documents that come to their knowledge or possession by virtue of being a member of the Council.
- b. If a member is found to have violated this provision, the appointment of that member may be immediately rescinded.
- c. Council documents, communications, work and activities are subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

9.0 Conduct and Conflict of Interest

- a. Council members shall comply with the *General Conduct and Conflict of Interest Guidelines* set out by Government (see appendix).
- b. The *Guidelines* also extend to individuals whose time and efforts have been volunteered by Council members in support of the work of the Council.
- c. If perception of conflict has been disclosed and successfully addressed as outlined in the *Guidelines*, the work of Council members will not preclude their organizations from participating in existing or future government projects.

If a Council member is found to have violated the *Guidelines*, the appointment of that member may be immediately rescinded

APPENDIX

General Conduct and Conflict of Interest Guidelines

Government appointees are expected to meet high standards of conduct which enhance and maintain public confidence in the operation of B.C.'s public agencies, boards and commissions. They must act to instil public confidence in their actions and decisions.

Who is affected?

These guidelines apply to anyone appointed by the provincial government to any agency, board or commission operating in BC, unless they are already subject to ethical guidelines specifically created by government specifically for their particular agency, board or commission, or are appointed to act as a consequence of being a government employee.

How do the guidelines work?

The provincial government respects the independence of its agencies, boards and commissions. It appreciates the efforts and willingness to serve of dedicated individuals.

It also expects all government appointees to agencies, boards and commissions to work within these guidelines.

Specific agencies, boards or commissions may have their own explicit needs, guidelines or standards. If no such standards yet exist, public bodies are encouraged to design their own.

The chair or registrar of an agency, board or commission, or government itself may take action if these guidelines are breached. Such action may include dismissal, suspension, reprimand, warning or other sanction.

When and where possible, appointees or their chair or registrar may seek the opinion of provincial government staff with whom their particular board works, for clarification or resolution of any matter.

Conflict of Interest

Appointees must avoid any conflict of interest that might impair or impugn the independence, integrity or impartiality of their agency, board or commission. There must be no apprehension of bias, based on what a reasonable person might perceive.

Appointees who are in any doubt must disclose their circumstances and consult with their chair

or registrar.

In practical terms, appointees should ensure that:

- All personal financial interests, assets and holdings are distinct from and independent of any decision, information or other matter that may be heard by or acted upon by their particular agency, board or commission.
- Activities undertaken as a private citizen are kept separate and distinct from any responsibilities held as a member of an agency, board or commission.
- Activities undertaken as a member of an agency, board or commission are kept separate and distinct from any activities undertaken as a private citizen.
- They remain impartial at all times toward individuals who deal with their agency, board or commission and as a member avoid taking any action that may result in preferential treatment for any individual.
- Personal employment is not dependent on any decision, information or other matter that may be heard by or acted upon by the agency, board or commission.
- Other memberships, directorships, voluntary or paid positions or affiliations remain distinct from work undertaken in the course of performing their duties as public appointees.
- Actions taken in the course of performing duties as public appointees neither cause nor suggest the reality or perception that their ability to perform or exercise those duties has been or could be affected by private gain or interest.

Other Guidelines

While acting as a member of an agency, board or commission, appointees are expected to abide by the following:

- Integrity

Appointees are expected to act at all times in good faith and with honesty and due diligence, for the public interest.

- Participation and Preparation

Appointees are expected to regularly attend meetings and to adequately prepare for the duties expected of them.

- Behaviour

The conduct and language of appointees must be free from any discrimination or harassment prohibited by the Human Rights Code.

Appointees' conduct should reflect social standards of courtesy, respect and dignity.

- Confidentiality

Appointees must not reveal or divulge confidential information (defined as that which cannot be obtained from other sources) received in the course of their duties.

Confidential information must not be used for any purpose outside that of undertaking the work of the agency, board or commission to which they have been appointed.

- Public Commentary

Appointees must comply with the public comment protocols established by their particular agency, board or commission.

If none exist, appointees must refer to the chair for guidance before making public comment on agency, board or commission matters.

- Private Gain

Agency, board or commission work should not result in any personal or private financial or other substantive gain for public appointees. (Private gain does not include honouraria for service on an agency, board or commission.)

- Duty to Inform

Appointees must inform the chair of their agency, board or commission of any circumstance that may have a negative or harmful effect on their respective abilities to perform the duties required of their appointments.