

February 29, 2024

Via Email

UBCM Member Municipalities

Dear UBCM Members:

Re: Support for Resolution

I am writing to you on behalf of Osoyoos Town Council to request your support for our proposed resolution on legislative changes regarding personal and defamatory attacks on municipal leaders at the upcoming SILGA Convention, in advance of the UBCM Convention this fall.

Municipal leaders across the province are facing increasing levels of personal and defamatory attacks, which not only impact our ability to effectively serve our communities but also have a negative impact on the overall functioning of local government. It is imperative that we address this issue and advocate for legislative changes that provide better protection for municipal leaders.

At the February 27, 2024, Regular Open Council Meeting, Town Council passed the following resolution:

Whereas Local Governments recognize the importance of fostering respectful and constructive dialogue within the community; and

Whereas personal and defamatory attacks on local government leaders, including both senior staff and elected officials, undermine the integrity of the democratic process and create a hostile working environment, and

Whereas current legislative and legal frameworks, including those of WorkSafeBC and Workers Compensation Act, do not provide adequate protection against such attacks, thereby hindering the ability of local government leaders to carry out their duties effectively,

Therefore be it resolved that UBCM advocate for legislative changes that address the issue of personal and defamatory attacks on local government leaders; and

Further be it resolved that these changes should aim to strengthen protections for local government leaders against unfounded, defamatory and malicious accusations while also upholding principles of freedom of speech and transparency;

Further be it resolved that UBCM is encouraged to collaborate with other relevant stakeholders, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, including legal experts and advocacy groups, to develop comprehensive proposals for legislative reform.

Together, we can work towards creating a safer, more respectful environment for all municipal leaders to effectively carry out their duties on behalf of their communities. We look forward to and appreciate your support on this matter.

Attachments:

ToO Background Information SILGA Resolution

Yours truly,



Sue McKortoff
Mayor

c: Town Council
R. Risling, CAO
Brianna Hillson, Director of Corporate Services
Honourable Anne Kang, Minister of Municipal Affairs

Legislative Changes - Personal and Defamatory Attacks on Municipal Leaders

Background Information:

There has been a concerning rise in the frequency and severity of personal and defamatory attacks directed toward municipal leaders (including Council members and staff). These attacks are often through various channels, including social media, and create a hostile working environment and hinder the ability of municipal leaders to carry out their duties effectively. The repercussions of defamatory personal attacks extend beyond the municipal realm and can detrimentally affect Council members who are working professionals by impacting their livelihood. The damaging effects of the personal attacks are not confined to professional settings; they often infiltrate into the personal lives of both staff and municipal council members, including incidents outside of business hours.