

**Subject: [Fwd: FW: Community Charter]**  
**Date:** Wed, 21 Nov 2001 14:42:36 -0800  
**From:** Brian Platts <brian\_platts@telus.net>  
**To:** Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>

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**Subject: FW: Community Charter**  
**Date:** Wed, 21 Nov 2001 09:50:04 -0800  
**From:** Ernie Crist <CristE@district.north-van.bc.ca>  
**To:** "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>

> *B.C.'S PROPOSED NEW COMMUNITY CHARTER*

>  
> *At this very moment the provincial government is putting the finishing touches on its NEW Municipal Charter. A special committee to review the proposed legislation includes not only members of the government but also present and ex local government leaders including the ex-mayor of the District of North Vancouver Marilyn Baker.*

>  
> *Under our present system of constitutional government in Canada, based on the British North America Act of 1867, municipalities are not recognized as a constitutional form of government. In fact, they are not even mentioned in the Act.*

>  
> *Then how did they come into existence? They are creations of provincial governments which decide their responsibilities, what they can do and not do, or even whether they shall continue to exist.*

>  
> *Originally, 134 years ago, their responsibilities were relatively simple. But how things have changed! Today, we have cities in Canada that are bigger in population than some provinces. And their responsibilities have increased greatly. The main problem they face is that the federal and provincial governments have divided up all the lucrative forms of taxation between themselves and left the municipalities with only property taxes as their main source of revenue.*

>  
> *But local governments, unlike in most other countries, not only get no help but they are being denied even the very taxes collected on their behalf. Gasoline tax for instance is collected by the Fed. Gov. but instead of being returned to pay for municipal road infrastructure the money collected remains in Ottawa. This has placed an enormous burden on homeowners. Homes, in contrast to business, do not produce any revenue to offset taxes.*

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> *For countless years municipalities across Canada, united in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, have pressed Ottawa to change this situation but all their appeals so far have fallen on deaf hears.*

>  
> *In B.C., municipalities are governed by the Municipal Act and more recently by the Local Government Act. Together they constitute a vast array of restrictions amounting to a bureaucratic nightmare.*

>  
> *Now our Liberal government has introduced a new Community Charter to replace the Municipal Act and the Local Government Act, which, it declares, will meet the needs of municipalities in a new way.*

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> *A draft of the new Charter reduces the size to 109 pages. That is good.*

>  
> *The rights of municipalities have also been defined more clearly. That is also progress.*

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> *A Discussion Paper dated October 22, 2001, prepared by the Minister of  
> State for Community Charter, lists the highlights and claims the Community  
> Charter would:*  
>  
> - *"reinforce in law that municipalities are an order of government  
> in B.C."*  
>  
> - *"give communities the powers and resources to make local decisions  
> locally."*  
>  
> - *"enable municipalities to become more self-reliant by providing  
> them with greater autonomy, independence, new  
> powers and better financial and other tools for governing  
> communities and delivering services."*  
>  
> *These sound good, almost too good to be true.*  
>  
> *But what precisely does the government mean when it says municipalities  
> will be given new "resources" and "new financial tools" to enable them to  
> meet their needs?*  
>  
> *Does it mean that the provincial government will now share with the  
> municipalities some of the revenue it collects today from local citizens  
> such as gasoline and liquor? The answer from Victoria is an emphatic  
> "NO". The government will not only NOT share these revenues but it will  
> not allow municipalities to enter any tax field now enjoyed by the  
> provinces either.*  
>  
> *Where then will these new "resources" and "new financial tools" come  
> from?*  
>  
> *The Discussion Paper suggests that new revenues could be obtained from  
> taxes on water, sewage treatment services, amusement taxes to aid tourism,  
> and other services.*  
>  
> *That is just another way of absolving the government of any financial  
> responsibility for the welfare of municipalities and forcing them to  
> increase taxes on their citizens.*  
>  
> *The Discussion Paper also states that the Community Charter Council will  
> consider giving municipalities the right to lower taxes on new businesses  
> to encourage them to locate in the community and whether these exemptions  
> should also apply to school taxes.*  
>  
> *Another idea being promoted behind the scenes is that municipalities will  
> now be encouraged to enter public/private partnerships with corporations  
> to develop municipally owned lands or land purchased by municipalities for  
> such ventures. In other words, if municipalities require more money to  
> meet citizen needs, they must go into business with corporations.*  
>  
> *Clearly there are economic and political forces at work in BC that want to  
> transform municipalities into full corporations doing what all  
> corporations do - providing only services that are profitable and dropping  
> those that are not profitable.*  
>  
> *In my view, such an objective would destroy the whole concept of what  
> municipalities were created for namely to provide services to their  
> residents on a business-like basis except that the criteria of efficiency  
> are not profit but quality of service at minimum cost to the taxpayers..*  
>  
> *Mayors and Councillors should not be placed in the position of having to  
> go around shopping for business partners to make money from municipal*

- > land. In my opinion being forced to do so is a form of coercion driving
- > municipalities into the arms of private corporations at the expense of
- > community interests.
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- > This pursuit will also lead to corruption. It will most definitely lead to
- > more out of control bureaucracies and that means less control by the
- > citizens. The proposed arrangement will be a marriage between municipal
- > bureaucracies, local politicians, corporations and speculators at the
- > expense of the public interest.
- >
- > Municipalities are not businesses. They were created to provide services
- > to citizens, not to make profits for corporations. Municipalities should
- > not be forced into profit-making ventures with them. Corporate influence
- > on all levels of government is already too strong. We must keep municipal
- > government under citizen control.
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- > Instead of hanging on to its monopoly of taxing powers, the province
- > should share them with the municipalities. This is quite apart that
- > Canada needs a new constitution which recognizes municipalities as
- > legitimate levels of government. It should have been done decades ago.
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