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Buck-passing at UBCM

VICTORIA — The 68th annual convention of the Union of B.C. municipalities ended here Friday, with nothing of a substantial nature accomplished.

The delegates, in scores of resolutions, demanded more funds from senior governments, focusing much of their displeasure on the provincial government. It was a repeat of last year's event.

Municipal Affairs minister Dan Campbell, in scathing terms, told the UBCM delegates that all their problems stemmed from "colossal mismanagement" of funds by the federal government. Federal government observers at the convention tended to blame Campbell for the failures. The annual convention was a classic game of buck passing.

What is probably needed is a bull session where municipalities, the province and Ottawa's new minister of state for urban affairs can hash out the problem.

The federal government has supported the concept of tri-level consultation. The Cana-



dian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities, and all provincial municipal association including the UBCM, feel it's the most important immediate need.

But Campbell stands in the way of a tri-level meeting.

It had been planned for this fall, but at the annual meeting of municipal affairs ministers, a few weeks ago in Victoria, Campbell and Quebec minister Maurice Tessier managed to get the meeting postponed.

It may or may not take place next spring.

Campbell has a strong case — the federal authorities are paying only lip-service to urban problems without making any commitment to pro-

vide needed funds or tax reform.

The UBCM and the national organization, the CFMM, agree entirely with Campbell, but they do not like his tactics.

In fact, the CFMM officials have come to regard the B.C. minister as an obstacle to solving the universally-accepted problems.

Everyone, it seems, except Campbell, wants to give Ottawa's Robert Andras a chance to do his job. Few people are optimistic, but they are not erecting roadblocks in front of the federal government.

Campbell is walking a tight-rope. He wants federal money but he refuses to tolerate any intrusion by Ottawa into his provincial jurisdiction. The only losers here are the country's municipalities.

For Campbell, this year's UBCM convention was anything but a success.

He had asked the UBCM to decide in favor of extending money voting rights to non-property owners, but the convention refused by a narrow vote.

Campbell told the delegates

that the federal capital gains tax proposals on real estate were a serious intrusion into municipal affairs, and he suggested that the UBCM adopt a firm policy demanding a share of the money to be collected from the tax.

But the convention delegates refused to do so.

The minister asked the convention to develop a formula for senior citizen's tax relief on property. The delegates failed to formulate a tax relief proposal, although they did give general support to the idea.

On the tenants matter, Campbell has indicated that the UBCM decision will have no bearing on his future actions. He said that despite the decision, he may introduce legislation this winter to make money voting rights universal in B.C.

Campbell is probably right in this issue.

In fact, on almost every issue the municipal affairs minister is light years ahead of B.C. municipalities in his thinking.

But his steamrolling tactics upset just about everyone else in his field in Canada.



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