CITY OF
PORT
COQUITLAM
Office of Mayor Brad West

Executive Members,
Union of BC Municipalities
Suite 60-10551 Shellbridge Way
Richmond, BC V6X 2W9

June 12, 2019

Re: Government of China Reception at UBCM Convention

Dear UBCM Executive Members,

I am writing to state my strong opposition to your decision to allow the Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Vancouver to host a reception for local government elected officials at the upcoming UBCM convention and to implore you to reconsider.

I am proud of the good work that is undertaken by the UBCM on behalf of its member municipalities. The UBCM has built a positive reputation as a place where elected officials come together to advocate on behalf of their constituents and work with the provincial government to find solutions, however, I believe your decision brings the UBCM into disrepute and reflects horribly on all members.

To state it plainly: the Government of China is engaged in a number of actions that are hostile to our country's interests and the interests of every Canadian, and are completely at odds with our values, the rule of law and the very principles that we were all elected to uphold.

A small sampling of these actions includes:

-The hostage-taking of two Canadian citizens, Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, on December 10, 2018. This arbitrary detention means being held in a secret location without access to a lawyer and conditions that include regular interrogation and being under bright lights in a small space 24 hours a day.

-A brutal crackdown on peaceful, legitimate protests in Hong Kong.

-The internment of in excess of one million ethnic Uyghurs and other Muslims in China in camps who are subject to gross human rights violations, physical and psychological abuse and death.

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The above actions have been confirmed and condemned by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, respected scholars, writers and governments from all over the world.

These are not opinions, they are facts, and constitute some of the most heinous actions currently undertaken by a government today.

How could the Union of BC Municipalities possibly grant the government responsible for these actions any legitimacy, standing, or promotion by facilitating access to BC's locally elected Mayors, Councillors and Area Directors in exchange for a financial contribution?

What line does the Chinese Government have to cross before the UBCM says no more?
Is there a line?
Would the UBCM accept a financial contribution and arrange a reception for the Government of North Korea?
If not, what actions have they undertaken that have disqualified them that the Government of China has not?

When the UBCM makes a decision about who they accept financial contributions from in exchange for receptions with locally elected officials, they are also making a statement about themselves.

I remain thoroughly unconvinced that there is any value in this relationship that outweighs the significant harm done by the message it sends about how easily our principles can be dispensed with. While it no doubt benefits the Government of China in their quest to grow their soft power and influence and is something of a propaganda victory for them, the cost to our organization's standing is immeasurable.

I urge you to reconsider your decision and provide an opportunity for your members to discuss this matter at the upcoming UBCM convention.

Sincerely,

Mayor Brad West

cc: BC Mayors