THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Council Item 08b

4 June 2008

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
Council of Senates
2016 - 1874 East Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z1

To: Council of Senates
From: Elections Committee
Re: Appointment of the Chancellor

On 14 and 15 May of this year, the Vancouver and Okanagan Senates approved the attached resolutions of concern regarding several sections of the the *University Amendment Act* (Now granted royal assent) that relate to the changing of the UBC (and SFU, UNBC, and UVic) from a position elected by the Convocation to one appointed by the Board of Governors.

The Committee submits this resolutions to the Council for its information and for further discussion of the matter.

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

1 May 2008
As amended 14 May 2008

Approved 14 May 2008 – Vancouver Senate
Approved 15 May 2008 – Okanagan Senate

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To: Senate
From: Council of Senates Election Committee
Dr. Ronald Yaworsky, Chair

Subject: Proposed Changes to Chancellor Selection Process

As Senate may be aware, our provincial government has introduced Bill 34, The University Amendment Act and scheduled it for second reading (May 1, 2008).

The provision that affects UBC relates to the selection of the Chancellor. Bill 34 proposes to amend the University Act such that the Chancellor will no longer be elected by the Convocation, but rather he/she "is to be appointed by the Board of Governors on nomination by the alumni association and after consultation with the council [of senates]".

The Elections Committee believes that this provision and its implementation are inappropriate for a number of important reasons, and accordingly, we feel it appropriate that this issue be brought to the attention of both Vancouver and Okanagan Senates.

First, our university's convocation is significantly broader than the group represented by the Alumni Association - our convocation includes not only alumni, but faculty, librarians, senators, and most recently those honoured with emeritus status – all of whom have now been disenfranchised by the practice of having the Board appointed a chancellor upon the sole nomination of the Alumni Association (who previously did have a tradition of nominating a candidate, but this candidate was required to stand for election by the convocation).

Second, the history and tradition of our Chancellor's election runs deep and indeed dates back to the centenary we now are celebrating – I am informed that the first Chancellor election was in 1908, between Francis Carter-Cotton and Sir Charles Tupper. For the next 90 years or so, election turn-out was strong, averaging 20%, although the usual pattern was for a chancellor seeking re-election to stand unopposed, and for an election for new chancellor, it resulted in what was often an interesting contest.

In the past decade, thousands of people have voted with the size of our convocation doubling over the past 17 years, the percentage of those voting is of course low. In those years with low turnout, specifically the 1990s, it should be noted that the university significantly reduced the publicity around the election and its nomination process. Nevertheless, over the past three elections the number of votes cast for Chancellor has more than doubled. In our view, none of the above indicates the need for a replacement of a long-standing tradition without, at the very least, open discussion and review.

Third, the general practice throughout Canada is for the Chancellor to be elected - either from their convocations or by their senates; joint senates and board or by a joint council of various sorts. Only one major institution, Dalhousie, appoints its Chancellor by its Board alone. The British universities upon whom our structures are based also generally continue to elect their (vice) chancellors.

Finally, this provision was advanced by the government in the absence of consultation and communication with our Convocation, our Senates, and critically, our Council Elections Committee. Note that the Elections Committee's Terms of Reference state we "shall be responsible for recommending to the Council of Senates, in consultation with the Secretary to the Council of Senates, any rules necessary for nominations, elections, and voting in any election of the Chancellor."

In summary, our Committee is strongly opposed to this intended change - without consultation and careful consideration at the very least - and thus we are recommending the following resolution to both the Vancouver and Okanagan Senates for their consideration:

Whereas the office of Chancellor and its election is an institution dating back to the founding of UBC and our predecessor universities; and

Whereas the election of the Chancellor is an important symbol to many parts of the UBC community - including alumni, faculty, librarians, senators, and most recently those honoured with emeritus status - together forming our Convocation and coming together to select the ceremonial head of our University; and

Whereas the Chancellor is a member of university senates and serves in an academic role as conferrer of degrees and chair of the Convocation in addition to its ceremonial position; and

Whereas the autonomy of the University to govern its affairs should be respected and its internal governance should not be adjusted externally without thorough study, consultation, and consideration:

That this Senate resolve to express its concern for the lack of consultation with the University of British Columbia on the changes to the manner in which the Chancellor is selected;

And that this Senate further resolve to express its concern for the changing of an office elected by the Convocation to an office appointed by the Board of Governors;

And that this Senate further resolve to direct the Secretary of Senate to inform the Board of Governors, and the other senates currently under the University Act of the position of the Senate on this matter;

And that this Senate further resolve to direct the Chair of Senate to inform the Honourable Murray Coell, Minister of Advanced Education and Minister Responsible for Research and Technology, of the position of the Senate on this matter with the request that he communicate these concerns to others in the Government of British Columbia and with the request that UBC be allowed to continue the practice of electing its Chancellor in the traditional manner.