

**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO****RURAL/AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
AGENDA****Thursday, May 13, 2021**

<u>PAGE NO.</u>		<u>ACTION</u>
	<u>AGENDA- May 13, 2021</u>	Approve
	<u>Supplementary Agenda</u>	Receive
	<u>MINUTES</u>	
3-5	Rural/Agriculture Committee Meeting Minutes - April 8, 2021	Approve
	<u>DELEGATION</u>	
	<u>FOOD HUB FEASIBILITY STUDY</u>	
	Janine de la Salle – Urban Food Strategies Darren Stott – Greenchain Consulting David Van Seters – Sustainability Ventures	
	<u>RURAL REPORTS</u>	
6	Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development – Agriculture Newsletter	Recommendation
7-8	Liliana Dragowska, HRVA Coordinator - Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability Analysis May 2021 Project Status Update	Receive
9-14	Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development – UBCM Federal Gas Tax Fund: 2021 Update	Receive
15-17	John Illes, Chief Financial Officer - Meeting Day and Half Day Rates	Discussion
18-19	John Illes, Chief Financial Officer - Dental and Medical Benefits for Directors	Discussion
20-24	John Illes, Chief Financial Officer - Provincial COVID – 19 Relief Funds	Discussion
	<u>AGRICULTURE REPORTS</u>	
25-32	Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development – Agriculture Development Area Lands Information	Receive

33-34 **Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development – Residential Flexibility in the Agricultural Land Reserve** **Receive**

CORRESPONDENCE

35-37 **Peace River Regional District – Lack of Funding - Invasive Plant Management** **Receive**

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

NEW BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO
RURAL/AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MEETING
(VIRTUAL)

Thursday, April 8, 2021

PRESENT: Chair Mark Parker

Directors Mark Fisher
Tom Greenaway
Clint Lambert
Chris Newell
Jerry Petersen
Michael Riis-Christianson
Gerry Thiessen

Staff Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer
Cheryl Anderson, Manager of Administrative Services
Megan D'Arcy, Agriculture Coordinator – left at 10:19 a.m.
Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development
John Illes, Chief Financial Officer
Deborah Jones-Middleton, Director of Protective Services – arrived at 10:21 a.m.
Michelle Roberge, Agriculture Coordinator – left at 10:19 a.m.
Deneve Vanderwolf, Planner 1/Regional Transit Coordinator
Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant

Others Gladys Atrill, Town of Smithers – arrived at 10:15 a.m.
Shane Brienen, District of Houston
Brad Layton, Village of Telkwa – arrived at 10:29 a.m.
Linda McGuire, Village of Granisle
Bob Motion, District of Fort St. James
Sarrah Storey, Village of Fraser Lake – arrived at 10:30 a.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Parker called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m.

AGENDA

Moved by Director Riis-Christianson
Seconded by Director Lambert

RDC.2021-4-1

“That the Rural/Agriculture Committee Agenda for April 8, 2021 be approved as amended to remove Crown Land Referral No. 7410175 (Area F).”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

MINUTES

Rural/Agriculture Committee
Meeting Minutes
-March 11, 2021

Moved by Director Lambert
Seconded by Director Greenaway

RDC.2021-4-2

“That the minutes of the Rural/Agriculture Committee meeting of March 11, 2021 be adopted.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

AGRICULTURE COORDINATOR INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Parker introduced Megan D'Arcy and Michelle Roberge, Agriculture Coordinators. Ms. D'Arcy's focus area will be Burns Lake west to the RDBN western boundary and Ms. Roberge's focus area will be Burns Lake to the RDBN's eastern boundary.

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Crown Land Referral

Crown Land Referral
No. 7410174
Electoral Area F

Moved by Director Petersen
 Seconded by Director Greenaway

RDC.2021-4-3

"That the Comment Sheet for Crown Land Application Referral No. 7410174 be provided to the Province."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Crown Land Referral
No. 7410176
Electoral Area F

Moved by Director Petersen
 Seconded by Director Greenaway

RDC.2021-4-4

"That the Comment Sheet for Crown Land Application Referral No. 7410176 be provided to the Province."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Crown Land Referral
No. 7410005
Electoral Area C

Moved by Director Greenaway
 Seconded by Director Petersen

RDC.2021-4-5

"That the Comment Sheet for Crown Land Application Referral No. 7410005 be provided to the Province."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Crown Land Referral
No. 0282536
Electoral Area F

Moved by Director Petersen
 Seconded by Director Greenaway

RDC.2021-4-6

"That the Comment Sheet for Crown Land Application Referral No. 0282536 be provided to the Province."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

RURAL DIRECTORS' ROUNDTABLE

1. Input on Rural Agenda Items

- Chair Parker
 - Provide agenda input or items to Chair Parker

2. Rural Priorities

- Chair Parker
 - Number 1 Priority currently is connectivity
 - Bring forward additional items to Chair Parker

NEW BUSINESS

Nechako Watershed Roundtable

Director Lambert attended a Nechako Watershed Roundtable meeting. He provided an overview of conversations regarding working with Carrier Sekani Tribal Council in regard to water interests and developing a membership model for Regional District participation.

COVID Restart Funding

Director Riis-Christianson spoke of the COVID Restart funding and supporting community groups and organizations. Discussion took place regarding organizations throughout the region and the response in regard to COVID Restart funding support. Director Lambert mentioned providing support to the community halls within Electoral Area "E". Director Petersen indicated he has received an application for Electoral Area "F".

CAO Helgesen noted that information has been submitted to the regional newspapers for non-profit societies in regard to the COVID Restart funding.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Director Lambert
 Seconded by Director Riis-Christianson

RDC.2021-4-7

"That the meeting be adjourned at 10:32 a.m."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY



 Mark Parker, Chair

 Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural / Agriculture Committee Memorandum

To: Chair Parker and Committee
From: Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development
Date: May 13, 2021
Regarding: **Agriculture Newsletter**

Recommendation:

That the Committee recommend that the Board approve a subscription-based Agriculture Newsletter.

Background:

As part of the ongoing work of implementing the RDBN Food and Agriculture Plan, the Agriculture Coordinators are proposing an Agriculture Newsletter that interested parties can subscribe to receive for free. The Newsletter will be sent digitally via email as well as be available on the RDBN website.

The intent of the newsletter is to:

- Inform local producers, agriculture organizations and other governmental bodies of agriculture related events, relevant policies/legislation and bylaws, programming and granting opportunities within the RDBN.
- Augment the RDBN Ag website content.
- Promote RDBN and Eco Dev-Agriculture department operations.
- Increase engagement between RDBN and local agricultural community.

The newsletter will be an important tool in ensuring that Agriculture Coordinator engagement with producers reaches the largest audience and will also assist with fulfilling many of the informational components of the RDBN Food and Agriculture Plan.



REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY NECHAKO STAFF REPORT

TO: Chair Parker and the Rural/Agriculture Committee
FROM: Liliana Dragowska, HRVA Coordinator
DATE: May 13, 2021
SUBJECT: Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability Analysis May 2021 Project Status Update

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Committee receive the “Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability Analysis May 2021 Project Status Update” report.

VOTING: All/Directors/Majority

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On March 11, 2021 the Committee endorsed the Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerability Analysis (HRVA) project charter. Since that time staff have been working on Phase 1 of 4 – “Establishing the Process”. Phase 1 of the HRVA process is currently on track and this report provides a brief Project Status update.

The next project update will be provided once the HRVA Electoral Area Committees have been established.

Written By:

Liliana Dragowska

Liliana Dragowska
Hazard, Risk, Vulnerability Analysis Coordinator

Reviewed By:

Deborah Jones-Middleton

Deborah Jones-Middleton
Director of Protective Services

DISCUSSION

Phase 1 of the HRVA process is currently on track and focuses on collection of information and resources to better understand opportunities for collaboration in the development of an HRVA and establishing a process for communication and engagement for the HRVA.

During our discussions with rural directors, some of the comments we heard and will continue to take into consideration as the HRVA process unfolds, include:

- concern about RDBN project crossover and community fatigue or confusion;
- concern regarding the workload and time commitment being requested of HRVA committee volunteers;
- concern over exclusively meeting digitally and ensuring that the process allows for in-person relationship building;
- ensure adequate lead time for planning, scheduling, and providing background materials for meetings to community volunteers is extremely important;
- focus recruitment on individuals who can work together but also have experience in hazards and community committees;
- work at designing committee meetings in an interactive forum.




Staff are in the process of inviting member municipalities and First Nation communities to participate in the project and finding opportunities for collaboration and shared learning.

Recruitment has started in Electoral Area 'A' and 'D', and will continue across the region over the coming months. Since recruitment involves building relationships and a number of one-on-one conversations, this process will take some time.

Once the HRVA committee recruitment is complete, staff will contact each Electoral Area Director to confirm the list and set a date for the initial HRVA committee meeting and training session.

Staff have also developed a draft outline and work plan for HRVA committees.

Below is a summary of the phase one HRVA project task status:

HRVA Project Task Status – May 2021							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Website Update and EA landing pages			✓				
Confirm Rural Directors Committee Support			✓				
Build Project Awareness – Emergency Preparedness Week Ads and Press Release			✓				
HRVA Outreach & Overview Presentations to Member Municipalities	!	!	!	!	!	!	✓
HRVA Outreach & Overview Presentations to FN Communities	X	X	!	X	X	!	X
HRVA Committee Recruitment	!	X	X	!	X	X	X
HRVA Background Research and Document Collection	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
 Task Done  In Progress  Task Not Started or Waiting							



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural / Agriculture Committee Memorandum

To: Chair Parker and Committee
 From: Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development
 Date: May 13, 2021
 Regarding: **UBCM Federal Gas Tax Fund: 2021 Update**

Recommendation:

Receive.

Background:

UBCM provided an update regarding the 2021 Federal Gas Tax Fund. Staff plan to follow-up on this information with discussion topics at the June 10 Committee meeting.

Highlights include:

- 1) Contingent upon the passing of Bill C-25, local governments would see funding allocations effectively double for the current year.
- 2) The Government of Canada has committed to renaming the program the “Canada Community-Building Fund”, which recognizes that the fund is no longer associated with gas tax revenues.
- 3) The 10-year Gas Tax Fund is currently set to expire in March, 2024. At this time, there is a considerable amount of unspent funds in local government Gas Tax Fund accounts. In the coming months, UBCM will be in contact with local governments holding significant amount of Community Works Funds to confirm that funds will be utilized for local government capital projects within the current timeframe of the program. We expect that there will be requirements for spending Community Works Funds within a reasonable timeframe or funds may be re-allocated for future programming.

Attachments:

- 1) UBCM Federal Gas Tax: 2021 Update
- 2) RDBN Federal Gas Tax Balances – as of April 27, 2021
- 3) Anticipated 2021 Allocation (based on double allocation)
- 4) Summary of Currently Committed Gas Tax Funds (distributed separately)



Date: April 8, 2021
To: CFOs & Communication Managers
From: Union of BC Municipalities
RE: Federal Gas Tax Fund: 2021 Update

The federal Gas Tax Fund (FGTF) is now in its 17th year of delivering funding to local government infrastructure and capacity building projects in British Columbia. During that time, the fund has transferred over \$3.5 billion to B.C.'s communities.

I am writing to you to provide an annual update on aspects of the overall compliance framework for local governments in B.C. Like all federal funding programs, the FGTF is subject to evaluation by the Government of Canada to ensure that the program is delivering on its intended outcomes and that recipients are fulfilling their obligations. A high level of compliance is critical for ensuring that this program is retained in its current form and level of funding.

We are asking for your continued support in increasing the current level of compliance in the following areas:

2021 Top-up and Proposed Name Change

In March, the Government of Canada announced its intention to top-up the federal Gas Tax Fund allocation provided to B.C. and other provinces and territories for 2021. Contingent upon the passing of Bill C-25, local governments would see funding allocations effectively double for the current year.

The Government of Canada has also committed to renaming the program the "Canada Community-Building Fund", which recognizes that the fund is no longer associated with gas tax revenues.

UBCM will be updating local government's 2021 Community Works Fund allocations pending the adoption of Bill C-25.

Communications

Each local government that receives federal Gas Tax Funds has signed a funding agreement that includes a Communications Protocol (“Schedule E”). The basic aim of the communications protocol is to ensure that B.C. residents are made aware of the contributions provided by the Government of Canada through the program. There are several ways in which this can be achieved: installation of temporary construction signage; formal communications (such as news releases and media events); and social media. I am writing to you to identify minimal goals in each of these areas.

- Guidelines for signage installation along with templates are available on Infrastructure Canada’s [website](#). Any project utilizing over \$100,000 from the FGTF should be accompanied with project signage. UBCM gathers data on signage installation in our annual reporting process for the federal government. *Although we did see an increase in signage installation in the last reporting year, we note that many local governments are not reporting signage for projects meeting the threshold.*
- Communities receiving annual FGTF allocations greater than \$400,000 and those receiving grants through the Strategic Priorities Fund should undertake at least one formal communication highlighting the use of funds in each year.
- Local governments are required to provide advance notice to Canada, B.C. and UBCM twenty-one days in advance of any formal communications. This requirement can be fulfilled by contacting UBCM. Social media provides an efficient way to update local residents on projects and to acknowledge federal contributions. Please tag UBCM (@GasTaxFundBC) on any posts to your community’s Facebook page that recognize projects funded through the FGTF. Please ask staff responsible for social media in your local government to “like” our page. Our aim is to create a living journal of how the FGTF is renewing infrastructure in B.C.’s communities.

Project Eligibility

We continue to provide advice to local government staff on what are considered eligible projects for the use of Community Works Funds.

For projects to be eligible, the following questions should be considered:

1. Is the recipient of funding for the project an “Ultimate Recipient” by definition?
2. Will the project result in a tangible capital asset in B.C. that is primarily for public use or public benefit?
3. Does the project fall under one of the eligible investment categories?

UBCM developed [guidelines for determining project eligibility](#) for more information and examples of eligible and ineligible projects.

The following projects have been deemed an ineligible use of Community Works Funds:

- Fire halls, fire trucks, emergency operations centres
- City halls, public works buildings and other administrative buildings
- Child care centres
- Social housing
- Seniors care facilities and housing
- Health care related infrastructure
- Small equipment purchases as stand-alone projects
- Feasibility studies and detailed design (without additional capital spending)

Unspent Funds

The 10-year Gas Tax Fund is currently set to expire in March, 2024. At this time, there is a considerable amount of unspent funds in local government Gas Tax Fund accounts. In the coming months, UBCM will be in contact with local governments holding significant amount of Community Works Funds to confirm that funds will be utilized for local government capital projects within the current timeframe of the program. We expect that there will be requirements for spending Community Works Funds within a reasonable timeframe or funds may be re-allocated for future programming.

If you have any questions, please contact Holly Yee, Program Administrator, Gas Tax Program Services, by telephone at 250-356-5134 or via email at gastax@ubcm.ca. For signage and communications questions, please contact Paul Taylor, Director of Communications at ptaylor@ubcm.ca.

Regards,



Brant Felker
Manager, Gas Tax Program Services, UBCM

Updated as of: April 27, 2021

Federal Gas Tax Community Works Fund

Year: 2021

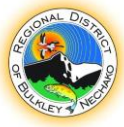
Electoral Area	Population	Opening Balance 2021	Interest Earnings	Funds Spent	Funds Committed	Funds Internally re-allocated	Funding Received	YTD Funds Available
A	5,256	1,406,826.20	5,587.70	24,926.35	786,446.84		-	601,040.71
B	1,938	698,838.96	2,775.68	-	470,000.00		-	231,614.65
C	1,415	638,222.84	2,534.93	-	521,824.00	125,000.00	-	243,933.77
D	1,472	798,446.52	3,171.31	45,000.00	330,000.00		-	426,617.83
E	1,593	431,331.48	1,713.18	38,250.00	208,362.00		-	186,432.66
F	3,665	823,988.00	3,272.76	105,570.93	449,067.00	(250,000.00)	-	22,622.83
G	903	434,573.55	1,726.06	-	-	125,000.00	-	561,299.61
	16,242	5,232,227.55	20,781.63	213,747.28	2,771,407.90		-	2,267,854.00

Updated as of: April 27, 2021 (WITH ESTIMATED DOUBLE ALLOCATION)

Federal Gas Tax Community Works Fund

Year: 2021

Electoral Area	Population	Opening Balance 2021	Interest Earnings	Funds Spent	Funds Committed	Funds Internally re-allocated	Funding Received	YTD Funds Available
A	5,256	1,406,826.20	5,587.70	24,926.35	786,446.84		555,382.15	1,156,422.86
B	1,938	698,838.96	2,775.68	-	470,000.00		204,781.32	436,395.97
C	1,415	638,222.84	2,534.93	-	521,824.00	125,000.00	149,517.84	393,451.61
D	1,472	798,446.52	3,171.31	45,000.00	330,000.00		155,540.81	582,158.65
E	1,593	431,331.48	1,713.18	38,250.00	208,362.00		168,326.44	354,759.10
F	3,665	823,988.00	3,272.76	105,570.93	449,067.00	(250,000.00)	387,267.04	409,889.87
G	903	434,573.55	1,726.06	-	-	125,000.00	95,416.68	656,716.29
	16,242	5,232,227.55	20,781.63	213,747.28	2,771,407.90		1,716,232.28	3,984,086.28



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural Committee

To: Chair Parker and Rural Directors
From: John Illes, Chief Financial Officer
Date: May 13, 2021
Re: Meeting Day and Half Day Rates

Recommendation (All/Directors/Majority):

Discussion

Background:

The Regional District will pay meeting day (or half day) rates for all Regional District meetings and events including Board Meetings, Committee Meetings, and attendance at conventions as per our bylaw.

The Board must approve remuneration for attendance, by Board motion, for Director attendance at other meetings representing the Board.

As there have been many more meetings than usual with the advent of “zoom” or “teams” type meetings and there have also been more meetings between local government and Indigenous governments, it may be an appropriate time to review our current practices with regard to what meeting remuneration covers.

Where there is intent by the Board for some Directors to attend meetings but not clear intent to pay remuneration to that Director, the Finance Department, working with the CAO, will use their best judgement to determine the eligibility for pay. This type of payment is allocated to the \$2,000 discretionary budget for each Electoral Area Director.

Attachment: **Bylaw 1837 Pages 11 to 12**

SCHEDULE B

Meeting Remuneration

It must be noted that the following table is intended to provide examples of categories of meetings and the remuneration applicable to that category. It must be recognized that the Board may eliminate or establish committees from time to time, which may or may not be eligible for remuneration in accordance with the applicable category.

- (A) For attendance at meetings, Directors will be remunerated and expenses will be paid in accordance with the attached table.
- (B) Those meetings which receive remuneration as indicated in the attached table are deemed to be "Sanctioned Meetings".
- (C) Where more than one meeting is held on the same day, the meetings shall be deemed to be one meeting. As an exception, when one of the meetings is a regular Board meeting and the other meeting begins after 6:00 pm on the same day, the other meeting will be remunerated as a separate meeting.
- (D) Directors are only eligible for remuneration where an agenda for the meeting is prepared and distributed in advance and minutes are recorded and submitted to the Board for consideration or for meetings called because of an emergency.
- (E) Where a Director attends a meeting by means of electronic communications, remuneration shall be at the normal rate for that meeting.
- (F) Remuneration for meetings not listed on the attached table must be approved by the Board. It is noted that Directors may choose to accept appointments to a wide variety of bodies; however, except as specifically provided for herein, those appointments shall be without remuneration. For clarity, meetings regarding a Director's local services, Regional District public hearings, and Advisory Planning Committee and commission meetings are excluded from remuneration under this section.

Meeting Type	Allowance *		Notes
	Half Day < 3.5 hrs	Full Day 3.5 hrs+	
Board and Committee Meetings	\$235	\$235	Travel time may be claimed (if applicable)
Other approved meetings within the Regional District	\$118	\$235	Travel time may be claimed (if applicable)
Attendance and travel to Conventions or similar events (including: NCLGA, UBCM, Minerals North, etc.)	\$118	\$235	Includes time spent travelling to these events. Additional travel time is not applicable.
<p>* to be increased annually on January 1st, based on the previous year's consumer price index (yearly average for the Province of B. C. as published by Statistics Canada), for completion of his or her duties of office. In the event that there is no increase to the consumer price index, or if it were to decline, the basic remuneration rate would remain the same as in the previous year.</p>			



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural Committee

To: Chair Parker and Rural Directors
From: John Illes, Chief Financial Officer
Date: May 13, 2021
Re: Dental and Medical Benefits for Directors

Recommendation (All/Directors/Majority):

Discussion

Background:

The Regional District currently offers optional medical and/or dental benefits to interested Directors and the premiums are paid for by the Director. Initial discussions with our benefits provider indicate that this option may very likely be discontinued after the next election in the fall of 2022 but that they may be willing to provide benefits to Directors in a situation where all Directors (or at least all Rural Directors) are enrolled. Automatic enrolment is of greater interest to the provider as it is considered less of a financial risk. In addition, UBCM also provides extended medical and dental benefits to elected officials that staff could investigate after the next election.

The current cost for Regional District Extended Medical and Dental benefits is \$364.07 per person per month (for the family rate and half as much for the single rate). If the Regional District were to pay for these benefits for Directors, these benefits would be deemed non-taxable as so are a more favoured form of remuneration for many people.

The cost to the Regional District would be \$30,600 per year for the Rural Directors or \$65,528 for the whole Board based on providing family benefits (as compared to single benefits). This would be a tax increase of just slightly less than \$0.01 per \$1,000. The cost to the taxpayer could be decreased or offset by:

- Reducing budgeted Director travel expenses,
- Reducing Director monthly remuneration,
- Reducing other costs associated with general administration, or
- A combination of a slight tax increase and any of the other factors.

If the whole Board is included as insured members, The Regional District may be able to negotiate a premium reduction further reducing overall costs as the cost is somewhat based on the total number of insured individuals. For example, the cost for an optional family plan for a director is currently \$100 more than a “mandatory enrolment” plan for a



staff member because the insurance is optional and there is a very small number of directors currently participating.

The UBCM plan offers elected officials access to medical and dental plans. These plans are similar in nature to the staff plan offered to Regional District employees. Following local government elections, elected officials have four (4) months to enrol to the UBCM plan and there must be a minimum of three elected official applicants in any local government to enrol. Enrolment must be for the full term of office. The cost for the premiums would be paid for by the directors.



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural/Agriculture Committee

To: Chair Parker and Committee
From: John Illes, Chief Financial Officer
Date: May 13, 2021
Re: Provincial COVID – 19 Relief Funds

Recommendation (All/Directors/Majority):

Discussion.

Background:

At this meeting staff are looking forward to a Rural Director discussion (brain storm session) on regional opportunities for a COVID-19 safe restart. Staff will return an updated financial summary at the June meeting, and will incorporate and flush out ideas and questions on eligible funding.

At previous meetings, the Board allocated \$132,047 broken down by Electoral Areas to be used for Covid Relief efforts within their jurisdictions (the amounts in the brackets are the amount spent as of the last Board Meeting):

A	\$42,732	(\$7,224)	E	\$12,951	(\$5,654)
B	\$15,756	(\$ 0)	F	\$29,796	(\$4,291)
C	\$11,504	(\$ 0)	G	\$ 7,341	(\$5,000)
D	\$11,967	(\$ 0)			

Advertisements have been placed in the local newspapers for each jurisdiction to notify different not for profit organizations that there exists the possibility of funds to help them financially recover from the pandemic. In addition, the Board further allocated an additional \$383,207 to be distributed by the Electoral Area Directors as a committee.

The broad eligible costs are as follows:

- Addressing revenue shortfalls
- Facility reopening and operating costs
- Emergency planning and response costs
- Bylaw enforcement and protective services like fire protection and police
- Computer and other electronic technology costs (to improve interconnectivity and virtual communications)
- Services for vulnerable persons (e.g. persons living with disabilities)
- Other related costs

Attachment: Province of BC COVID Safe Restart Grant - FAQ



COVID SAFE RESTART GRANT Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

COVID SAFE RESTART GRANT Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)	
Program Description	
Question	Answer
What is the purpose of the COVID-19 Safe Restart Grant for Local Governments?	This grant will support local governments as they deal with increased operating costs and lower revenue due to COVID-19. It will also ensure local governments can continue to deliver the services people depend on in their communities throughout the pandemic and the post-COVID recovery period.
Will local governments still be eligible for funding from other COVID-19 programs like Emergency Management BC?	This grant should not impact other funding programs; it is designed to augment other funding programs, not replace them.
Will the COVID-19 Safe Restart Grants be audited?	No, this is a liquidity injection to help local governments deal with COVID related costs. There will be no audit and no clawback provisions. However, the Province will want to know where the money was spent. This will help inform future provincial measures should another state of emergency occur.
Use of Funds	
Question	Answer
What are the eligible use of funds?	Eligible costs are response and recovery costs related to COVID-19 and include, but are not limited to, the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facility reopening and operating costs; • emergency planning and response costs; • protective services and bylaw enforcement costs; • programs vulnerable populations; • computer and other electronic technology costs; • budgeted revenues that have not been collected.
Is the grant conditional or unconditional?	The grant is technically conditional, but the conditions are extremely broad and non-exhaustive (see announcement letter).

COVID SAFE RESTART GRANT Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)	
Can local governments provide contributions to third-parties from the COVID-19 Safe Restart Grants, like local community organizations providing services to vulnerable populations?	Yes, grants to charitable, philanthropic and not-for-profit organization providing core community services during COVID-19 are acceptable. However, local governments need to be careful about the prohibition on assistance to businesses. If a local government is providing assistance to a business, the business should be providing a local services under a partnering agreement, and that service should be related to one of the eligible COVID costs. When annually reporting such third-party transfers, the local government should report the amount of the transfer, to whom, and for what purpose.
Can the local government use these funds to support a regional response to an issue (i.e. municipal funds paid directly to the regional district).	Yes, a transfer from one local government to another for the provision of a local service is allowable. When annually reporting such intergovernmental transfers, the transferring local government should report the amount of the transfer, to whom, and for what purpose.
Is upgrading internet service in a community an eligible cost?	Yes, that is an eligible cost. However, remember the prohibition on assistance to business. A local government can either provide the service directly or structure the grant as funding through a municipal internet service and contract the servicing to a private party. Either funding technique should be allowable under the CC.
Can we claim staff time - both Union and Management on COVID related tasks (e.g. writing policy, installing signage, cleaning)?	If you can relate labour costs to one of the broad service items in the announcement letter, then yes, that should be acceptable.
Can we use the grant for capital costs?	The primary use of this grant is for operational impacts. Grants can only be used for capital in limited circumstances, including: building restart, upgrade and retrofit costs to address COVID; computer, network, and internet system costs to address COVID; and repayment of funds borrowed from a capital reserve fund to address COVID.
Can local governments use the funds to replenish our statutory reserve funds where the municipality borrowed from these funds to address COVID-19 issues?	Yes, a local government can use the grant funds to replenish any statutory reserve funds or repay outstanding revenue anticipation borrowing that was incurred due to COVID-19. While this can be paid down anytime before the end of 2025, the payment must relate to borrowing that occurred in 2020.
Can grant funds can be allocated to previously outlaid expenses from spring/summer of 2020?	Yes, eligible expenses include outlays that occurred during 2020. The purpose of this grant is to address COVID-19 response and recovery costs.

COVID SAFE RESTART GRANT Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)	
Timing	
Question	Answer
When will grant funds be disbursed?	The payments were dispersed in the third week of November 2020.
What is the timeline over which these grant funds must be expended?	There is no time limit in the regulation creating this grant. The Province anticipates local governments will use this money through both the COVID response and post-COVID recovery periods (2020, 2021, and possibly 2022).
Reporting	
Question	Answer
What is the reporting requirements for local governments?	Each local government must do an annual report on the use of COVID-19 Safe Restart funds and this report must be a schedule to the audited financial statements. The report does not need to be audited. The report should outline the money received, the use of funds during the calendar year, and the remaining balance at the end of the year. The reporting can be done at a very high-level. The annual reporting must be done until such time as the COVID-19 Safe Restart Grant is completely utilized.
Is the Province going to produce a standard reporting form for local governments?	No, as an autonomous order of government, local governments may design their own forms providing the reporting forms include a base-level information from the above question. Local governments can work with one another, or with the GFOABC, to design a standardized reporting form if they choose. Please note that the Province does not expect a great deal of detail in these reports; a high-level classification of each spending item is fine. For example: if you spend \$100,000 on system upgrades, it is completely fine to state "\$100,000 for systems upgrades" we don't need to go into detail on those specific upgrades.
What is the broad accounting treatment for the grant?	The accounting treatment is a local government issue. Local governments, the GFOABC, and the accounting firms should come to a broad agreement on the accounting treatment in accordance with Public Sector Accounting Standards.

COVID SAFE RESTART GRANT

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

<p>How do Regional Districts allocate the money to various services? And what is the reporting requirement on the allocation</p>	<p>In addition to preparing an annual report on how the COVID-19 Safe Restart Grant was spent, regional districts must provide a report on how the funds were allocated to different service. The allocation report must be completed before the end of calendar 2021. It is entirely up to the regional board on how they choose to allocate the money. However, a good starting point would be to examine services that were impacted by COVID-19. e.g. recreation and community centres.</p>
<p>Do local governments have to provide any back up or justification for lost revenue?</p>	<p>You don't have to justify your lost revenue. However, as part of the annual reporting on the use of COVID-19 Safe Restart funds, local governments must report on how the funds were used. Thus, you should indicate how much funding was earmarked for lost revenue. By lost revenue, the Province is referring to any budgeted revenue that was not collected during the pandemic and post-COVID recovery period.</p>



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural / Agriculture Committee Memorandum

To: Chair Parker and Committee
From: Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development
Date: May 13, 2021
Regarding: **Agriculture Development Area Lands Information**

Recommendation:

Receipt.

Background:

Chair Parker provided the attached information about Agriculture Development Area Lands:

- 1) History of Agriculture and ADA Lands
- 2) Principles of the Forest Industry and Timber Harvesting and its Relationship to Agriculture Development Area Lands.

History of Agriculture and ADA Lands

Agriculture began in this region about 1806 when the Hudson's Bay Company set up trading posts at the east end of Stuart Lake (Fort St James) and the east end of Fraser Lake (Fort Fraser). A few settlers came to the area during the 1800s, but most were transient and came for the trapping and potential gold mining opportunities.

Settlement for agriculture began in the Nechako Valley around 1900. When the first settlers arrived, they survived off the land by growing and producing their own food and exploring for gold and silver and by trapping furbearing animals. As the population increased they also grew large gardens and logged trees and cut lumber to trade or sell to the newly arriving settlers.

The first homesteaders took land that was generally on the north east end of large meadows and muskegs where wild grasses and sedges could be harvested for livestock feed. At the time those were the areas where there was water and there were trees that were large enough to build cabins and barns. Those were the areas that had that had 'farmable' land and given the fire history of the area with fire moving with the prevailing south west to north east winds had been protected from some of the numerous fires that had burned through the region and therefore they were the areas had trees that were more than about 80 years old.

The natives at the time lived in pole framed structures wrapped in caribou skins, as there were still hundreds of thousands of caribou in the region at the time.

The Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad was completed in 1914 with the last spike being driven just east of Fort Fraser.

In 1914 a quarter section (160 acres) of land could be purchased from the Crown for \$1.00, and the population grew rapidly over the next several years. The railroad offered an affordable transportation method to get cattle, milk, cheese, vegetables and lumber to larger markets, and offered a quicker and more viable way than pack horses and paddle wheelers to get salt, flour, and sugar and machinery into the area for agricultural land development.

Some soil surveys and arability studies took place in the 1920s, 1940s, 1950s and 1970s, although most of these studies were just recycled versions of the first or the earlier soil surveys. The land north of Fort St James was not considered arable, because the trees were too large and therefore the land would be too difficult to clear and farm.

Agriculture and forestry worked with each other, and competed with each other for the land base for decades.

The government tried to increase the agricultural base in the Nechako Valley in the 1950s by leasing and selling agricultural land. Several families moved here from the United States to take advantage of the relatively cheap land (\$2 to \$14 per acre including all of the timber).

The Vietnam War had begun in 1955 and in 1961 the US became involved and sent troops to Vietnam. Hundreds of US citizens, mainly from west coast states arrived in the Nechako Valley to farm and to evade being drafted, or having their offspring being drafted into the US Armed Forces. Vanderhoof was often referred to as little Oregon. The population boomed and Agriculture and Forestry activity increased. In 1965 the Endako Molybdenum Mine opened and the population increased again.

When the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) came into effect in 1973 the area that was put into the ALR was based on the old maps, old soil surveys and some air photo interpretations.

In 1983 after doing some arability studies, the government produced the Vanderhoof Crown Land Plan that set aside some of the suitable land in Agricultural Development Areas (ADA) for agricultural development.

The purpose of the ADA land was to ensure that land that was suitable for agricultural development would still be available when the conditions were right to develop it, and local farmers and ranchers could expand their land base in a logical manor and to become viable businesses. The ADA would also allow new entrants into agriculture in areas where there was considered to be suitable land available that was in excess on the needs of established farmers.

The Agricultural Lease policy changed during the development of the ADAs, and there was a mini land rush. Much of the land was leased and sold to farmers and ranchers, however a large proportion of that land was obtained by land and timber speculators and although some of it has now become farmland, much of it has become woodlots and quarter section home sites.

Under the 1980s Agricultural Lease program the land only had to be 50% arable and when 25% of the arable area was "cleared" the parcel could be purchased.

For a period of time new entrants with no agricultural background or experience could lease up to two sections (1280 acres) of land (their spouse could also obtain up to two sections) and they could gain title to that land by clearing 25% of the arable area within 10 years and if they could not get the required clearing done they could get a 10 year extension.

In many cases the existing farmers had great difficulty getting even a ¼ section of Agricultural Lease for expansion purposes.

One large forest license holder from Prince George, a large logging contractor from Burns Lake, a Real Estate Developer from Abbotsford, several Forest Ministry employees, among others became interested in being farmers and a few farmers themselves leased large tracts of land in the Vanderhoof area, not for the land, but for the timber, and the cut and run ag lease program was born.

Many parcels of ADA (and other land) were leased, logged, and left to return to the Crown. Most of those vacant parcels of logged land that had reverted to the Crown were later advertised and auctioned off with most going to farmers and eventually becoming farm land. The rules changed to put a restriction of 15 kilometers from the home quarter for lease applications after the out of area leasing fiasco took place.

Almost all of the land that Reckitt Benckiser has put into their Trees for Change program was once ADA land that had been leased and purchased for agricultural purposes.

In 1993 the government began working on the Vanderhoof Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), which was an attempt to put some order to land use issues.

Although the working groups used to develop the LRMP were populated by about 50 or more members from many diverse government, industry, and recreational groups, agriculture did have a couple of representatives at the LRMP table.

Old soils maps from the 1940s, 1950s and 1970s, topographical maps, along with ALR maps were used to determine areas where land that had the best suitability for future agricultural development. Those areas were outlined on maps so arability work could be done to ensure the accuracy of the old maps, and that the most suitable land would be set aside for future agricultural use.

Unfortunately the Ministry of Forests decided that much of the area that had good potential for agricultural development was best suited for growing trees and that land was set aside for woodlots and woodlot top up lands when woodlots were being topped up to 600 Ha. Those lands were removed from the areas to be studied for arability and were instead set aside for woodlots and woodlot top ups.

Westland Resource Group was awarded a contract to perform an Arability Study that was used to determine the areas where the final ADA land areas would be set aside. Westland Resource Group consisted of some of the top soils and agriculture people in BC, including a grain expert from the Peace River region and fruit expert from the Okanagan.

Arability maps were produced in 1998 that showed arable land, marginally arable land, and non-arable land for the areas that were studied.

An Arability Study Steering Committee was struck from LRMP members. Each of the forest companies that had timber license volume within the Vanderhoof Forest District were well represented at the negotiation table, along with representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Lands, Ministry of Environment (Habitat, Wildlife and Parks) and the Ministry of Forests (Timber, Range and Recreation) along with a couple of people representing the agriculture industry.

Some of the timber company representatives were quite reasonable, however others were somewhat adversarial. While the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands people generally took a neutral position, for the most part, the Ministry of Environment and Parks, and the Ministry of Forests took a stance that their interests were more important than others. Both believed that they had the power and they would use it to protect all of the interests of the Forest Industry, wildlife, recreation, and the environment.

In the end agriculture was able to secure some ADA land to be set aside for future development and expansion, even though the studied parcels were to be at least 70% arable it was not always the best land that got set aside, and often it was not laid out in ways that made the best sense for agriculture. Due to legal land survey cost constraints, straight lines were drawn on the maps and odd shapes were created to provide parcels that were reasonably situated and spaced to provide equal opportunity for all of the agricultural areas within the Nechako Valley.

The Parks people had secured major areas as Protected Areas, which later became parks. The Ministry of Environment wanted to make sure no ADA land would be within 30 meters of any form of water source, as those areas should be there to act as travel corridors for wildlife. ADA areas were also not to interfere with any of the Ministry of Environment Ungulate Management Areas that were probably areas that they had decided were key habitat areas for protecting and establishing their transplanted elk.

Most of the odd shaped ADA parcels were created in order to avoid small wetlands, small drainage areas or streams, swamps or potholes. Also the ADA areas had to be laid out to avoid areas that could possibly have archaeological importance or interfere with existing roads or trails.

When people make application to lease or purchase ADA lands, detailed Archaeological Studies are required on many parcels (at the applicant's expense and non-refundable if evidence is found) to ensure no evidence of pre contact use had taken place there.

Some individuals within the Forest Ministry thought that if ADA land was to be set aside for agriculture, then the ADA should be totally devoid of any trees, as agriculture just wanted to clear all of the land, and it would be desirable to have all of the trees removed.

Some forestry people still have the belief that removing the timber is clearing the land.

You have to clear at least a few hundred acres of land to realize the cost of properly clearing land for agricultural production. After removing the trees, removing the slash, stumps, and roots from the ground and piling, burning, re-piling and burning and disposing of that material takes time, money and effort. On some soils rocks have to be raked, picked, piled and be removed from the field. Then breaking the land and root raking and burning the root piles and doing it a couple of times until the surface is clean and level, and then cultivating (usually 2 or 3 times), dragging, packing, and preparing a suitable seedbed, and planting good certified seed and fertilizing and re-packing the fields to ensure proper seed to soil contact requires a lot more time, machinery and money than most people think is possible.

During the LRMP planning period and while negotiations were still taking place a large amount of the potential ADA land was harvested by the major forest licensees and the Small Business Forest Enterprise (SBFE) program. When land was being harvested by forest licensees, silviculture was performed that included disc trenching often took place, which caused problems for future agricultural development.

In 1996 a ministerial order was brought into place to attempt to put an end to the rampant timber harvesting that was being done in a manner that was not compatible with agricultural development. When the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic came along in the mid-1990s much of the ADA land was targeted by the Small Scale Salvage program (SSS) and Non-Replaceable Forest Licenses (NRFLs) under the pretention that harvesting all of the best timber while "red" would save the rest of the forest from the beetles and enable the timber to be salvaged while it still had some value.

Stumpage for Agricultural Lease holders was often in the \$40 to \$60 per cubic meter range, while at the same time small scale salvage operators could come onto the same areas including active agriculture lease land and harvest the same trees for 25 cents per cubic meter. The low

stumpage paid by forest licensees allowed the price of logs to fall to between \$20 and \$30 per cubic meter, as the mill operators would not purchase private wood unless they could get it for less than they could get Crown timber delivered for.

Government continues to change the rules for obtaining an Agricultural Lease, and often those rules have strayed far from the intent of the ADAs and the Agricultural Lease program. The intent of the program was to have the land with the highest capability available for expansion purposes and that a qualified applicant would apply on land that was complimentary to their existing holdings, and they would apply on the parcel that made the most sense from an agricultural point of view. This is almost always the closest parcel, generally an adjoining parcel unless the closest parcel is marginally arable and the next closest parcel is extremely arable.

An applicant should be able to demonstrate that they require the additional land to make their operation viable, or improve the viability of their farm or ranch operation.

There should be a demonstrated need for more land for agricultural production, and any revenue from harvesting any timber that was on the land should be used to clear and cultivate the land.

Most land has always had some timber value on it, and some parcels have had more timber value than others, however from my experience it has at least 9 times out of 10 been more economical to purchase land that was already in production than to get revenue from the timber and spend all of that revenue plus another substantial amount to clear, develop, cultivate, seed and fertilize to get the land into agricultural production.

It was never intended for Agricultural Leases to be used as a timber grab, land grab nor a short term money maker.

The timber revenue usually only gets the land cost down to somewhere near what similar private land can be purchased for, except that ADA land is often next to ones existing land, and the nearest private land for sale is usually down the road where the cost of moving machinery, equipment and crops, or livestock will always have an ongoing and long term cost.

If private land exists close to or next to an existing farm or ranch, the land that is production usually provides revenue immediately, where an agricultural lease will usually take 5 or 10 years or more to begin to provide revenue to pay back the costs of that land.

Too many times, the wrong people get the land for the wrong reasons that have nothing to do with agriculture, and everything to do with greed.

The Principles of the Forest Industry and Timber Harvesting and its Relationship to Agricultural Development Area Lands:

The forest industry cannot start with bare land, spend money on planting trees and wait to harvest the trees. The same principle applies with agriculture.

A portion of the timber value has to remain with the land as a silviculture allowance to ensure that there is a new crop of trees produced from the land base to make the forest industry sustainable.

In this region of BC where the land is covered in some form of trees, land clearing is expensive, and some revenue from that original crop of trees is needed to convert the land to agriculture use.

Stumpage has to be in a range that allows enough profit between what it cost to harvest and manufacture the forest products and what those products are being sold for, plus enough surplus \$ to perform free-to-grow silviculture, or mills simply would not harvest the timber. In the mid-1990s free to grow silviculture varied with the biogeoclimatic typing for the harvest area, and ranged as high as about \$3,500 per hectare.

The agriculture lease program was patterned after the forestry system. In order to get the stumps out of the ground, some of the timber revenue had to stay with the land to help offset some of the costs, just as some of the timber revenue has to stay with the land to ensure the next crop of trees.

In 1983 the Vanderhoof Crown Land Plan set aside some of the better land next to and near to existing farms and ranches as Agricultural Development Area (ADA).

In 1993 when the Vanderhoof Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) began being negotiated, a few people from the agricultural industry spent countless hours over a period of about eight years in process and negotiating meetings in an attempt to ensure that the agriculture industry in the Nechako Valley had a voice, and would remain as a viable industry with a suitable land base to expand upon. An arability study was conducted and a few thousand hectares of ADA land was set aside for future agricultural development.

The agriculture and forest industry people were able to negotiate in good faith. The same principles as were used by the forest industry to ensure a crop of trees would be planted for the future on forest land would also apply to help ensure agriculture crops would be planted on ADA land.

There would be value attached to the land from any timber harvesting to encourage the development of the ADA land through use of the revenue from the timber or from a clearing credit system.

Forest licensees were agreeable to apply an amount equivalent to their free to grow silviculture allowance if they harvested on ADA lands, as it was agreed that silviculture should not take place on arable land that would ultimately be cleared. If forest companies harvested any timber from ADA lands it would have to be harvested using Special Operating Procedures (SOPs) that were compatible with future agricultural development and an amount equivalent to the free-to-grow silviculture allowance would be placed in a trust fund to be used for clearing credits on the parcel of land where the timber was harvested from.

Government (Forest Ministry) was at that time unable to find a way to direct revenue from the stumpage to fund and administer a clearing credit program, in lieu of the silviculture credit allowance available to the forest industry.

The Bovine Spongiform Encephalitis (BSE) crises that crippled the cattle industry in 2003 has abated and some level of profitability has returned to the industry resulting in a broader interest in the uptake of agricultural leases that should result in a fair percentage of the ADA being developed in the near future.

The basic starting point of any discussion regarding timber harvesting on ADA lands by forest licensees is that there needs to be an across the board agreement to establish clearing credits on a per hectare basis for all harvested areas. Unless an acceptable clearing credit is in place to offset timber value, the development of ADA lands for agriculture will have to depend on whatever timber value remains on the land parcel and therefore no timber harvesting should take place on the ADA land base.



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural / Agriculture Committee Memorandum

To: Chair Parker and Committee
From: Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development
Date: May 13, 2021
Regarding: **Residential Flexibility in the Agricultural Land Reserve**

Recommendation:

Receive.

Background:

In January 2020 the Province announced a proposed policy direction to increase residential flexibility in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). The changes listed in the attached News Release are being finalized as a result of consultation with farmers, ranchers, ALR landowners, the Agricultural Land Commission, local governments and First Nations.

Link: Residential Flexibility Intentions Paper

Link: What we Heard Report on residential flexibility

Attachment: April 9, 2021 News Release – Residential Flexibility in the Agricultural Land Reserve

British Columbia News

Residential flexibility in the Agricultural Land Reserve

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/24203>

Friday, April 9, 2021 10:46 AM

The ministry's 2020 intentions paper outlined proposed changes to create more residential opportunities in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).

After hearing from farmers, ranchers, ALR landowners, the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), local governments and First Nations governments, government is now finalizing these changes.

- In the coming months, government expects to detail rules that will, in most circumstances, enable ALR landowners to have both a principal residence (that could include a secondary suite) and a small additional residence, whether or not there is farming activity on the property, and without having to apply and receive permission from the ALC.
- The ministry is proposing new rules to provide more flexibility to help farming families thrive and to benefit non-farmers living in the ALR.
- New rules will also help small-scale farmers by streamlining approval for a small-farm labourer residence or agri-tourism accommodation.
- Local government rules continue to apply and may be more restrictive on residential use of the ALR and may even prohibit any additional residences on the ALR.
- People who are farming already have a path with the ALC to build one or more residences of any size if it can be demonstrated that they are reasonably necessary for farming purposes.
- The ALC approves approximately 80% of applications for additional residences for farm use. Local government approval is also required.
- While changes are being finalized, the grandfathering period for manufactured homes on the ALR is planned to be extended until Dec. 31, 2021 to provide the necessary six-month transition period for local governments to adjust their rules as necessary.

Learn More:

Residential Flexibility intentions paper:

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/agriculture-land-reserve/residential_flexibility_intentions_paper.pdf
(https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/agriculture-land-reserve/residential_flexibility_intentions_paper.pdf)

What we heard report on residential flexibility:

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/agriculture-land-reserve/what_we_heard_summary_residential_flexibility.pdf
(https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/agriculture-land-reserve/what_we_heard_summary_residential_flexibility.pdf)

Media Contacts

Dave Townsend
Government Communications and Public Engagement
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
250 356-7098
250 889-5945 (cell)



April 23, 2021

File: 5280.31

<p>The Honourable John Horgan Premier of BC PO Box 9041 Stn Prov Govt Victoria, BC V8W 9E1 Via email: Premier@gov.bc.ca</p>	<p>The Honourable Lana Popham Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries PO Box 9409, Stn Prov Govt Victoria, BC V8W 9V1 Via email: AGR.Minister@gov.bc.ca</p>
<p>The Honourable Katrine Conroy Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development PO Box 9049, Stn Prov Govt Victoria, BC V8W 9W2 via email: FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca</p>	<p>The Honourable George Heyman Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy PO Box 9360, Stn Prov Govt Victoria, BC V8W 9M2 via email: ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca</p>

Dear Mr. Premier, Minister Popham, Minister Conroy and Minister Heyman:

RE: Lack of funding – Invasive Plant Management

At its April 15, 2021 meeting, the Board of the Peace River Regional District (PRRD) discussed growing concerns that the Province is not recognizing the economic contribution agriculture makes to the province of BC.

It has come to the Board’s attention that, due to an oversight in funding allocations, there are no funds available for treatment of invasive plants on public lands by the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operation and Resource Development (FLNRORD). These non-funded activities include the ongoing treatment work targeted towards known, existing, high priority areas in our region as well as the rest of the province. This dramatic oversight will result in the spread of invasive plants on FLNRORD lands going unchecked and affecting neighbouring agricultural lands.

The PRRD respectfully requests answers to the following questions from each Ministry’s perspective:

1. How can \$12 million dollars be allocated from the office of the Premier, under FLNRORD, to assist with the detection and removal of invasive plants, without allocating funds to hire trained contractors to engage in treatment activities on Crown lands?
2. Given that the funding is meant for job creation and invasive plants are continually trying to invade Crown lands (which include much needed grazing areas that support the agriculture industry); why is funding not being directed towards reinstatement of those pre-existing jobs that would normally conduct the aforementioned treatment works through contract?

It is extremely concerning that the overarching Ministry which maintains the *Noxious Weeds Act* would neglectfully be unprepared to treat invasive plants found on Crown occupied lands. Without treatment, we would respectfully point out that invasive plants know no borders and, if unchecked, will encroach neighbouring lands containing vital agriculture.

diverse. vast. abundant.

PLEASE REPLY TO:

Box 810, 1981 Alaska Ave, Dawson Creek, BC V1G 4H8 Tel: (250) 784-3200 or (800) 670-7773 Fax: (250) 784-3201 Email: prrd.dc@prrd.bc.ca
 9505 100 St, Fort St. John, BC V1J 4N4 Tel: (250) 785-8084 Fax: (250) 785-1125 Email: prrd.fsj@prrd.bc.ca

The Province should be aware that the PRRD not only has an Invasive Plant Bylaw that enforces the procession of invasive plants within the entire area of the BC Peace, it also employs staff and contractors which are designated under the *Noxious Weeds Act* to enforce on the Crown's behalf. Further, additional seasonal staff are hired annually to assist with the vast number of complaints that are received regarding invasive plant infestations on public and private lands.

This leads us to our final question: in good faith, how can a local government enforce such invasive plant removal when the Ministry housing the legislation is not even engaging in such activities?

In closing, the agricultural industry in the north provides economic benefits for the entire province. Lack of funding and cancellation of any invasive plant treatment strategy will be detrimental, resulting in increased costs of treatment work when funding does become available.

We look forward to receiving a favourable response to our concerns and questions.

Yours truly,



Brad Sperling
Regional Board Chair

Yours truly,



Leonard Hiebert
Invasive Plant Committee Chair

c: Mr. Mike Bernier, South Peace MLA, via email: Mike.Bernier.MLA@leg.bc.ca
Mr. Dan Davies, North Peace MLA, via email: Dan.Davies.MLA@leg.bc.ca
Mr. Bob Zimmer, MP for Prince George-Peace River-Northern Rockies, via email: Bob.Zimmer@parl.gc.ca
NCLGA via email: admin@nclga.ca
UBCM via email: ubcm@ubcm.ca

Enclosures: April 21, 2021 Letter of Support, District of Chetwynd

**District of Chetwynd**

Box 357
Chetwynd, BC
Canada V0C 1J0

tel: (250) 401-4100
fax: (250) 401-4101

email: d-chet@gochetwynd.com

April 21, 2021

Peace River Regional District
P.O. Box 810
Dawson Creek, BC V1G 4H8
By email: leonard.hiebert@prrd.bc.ca

Attention: Director Leonard Hiebert – Electoral Area “D” Director

Dear Mr. Hiebert:

Re: Invasive Weed Control on Crown Land

As you described during a recent Peace River Regional District Board meeting, invasive weeds are a serious threat to biodiversity because they can spread quickly, outcompete native species and destroy the habitat, dominate natural and managed areas, and in so doing harm biological communities.

As BC’s environment, people and economy can be negatively impacted by the unchecked spread of invasive weeds, we support you in urging the Provincial government to continue to provide invasive weed control measures on crown land.

Yours Truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Allen Courtoreille". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Allen Courtoreille
Mayor