
NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier
Ministry of Municipal Affairs
Northwest BC Resource Benefits Alliance

Province, northwestern communities partner to support people, economic growth

VANCOUVER – The Province and the Northwest BC Resource Benefits Alliance (RBA) are working together to ensure the region’s economic development contributes to building strong, sustainable communities and delivers good-paying jobs for residents.

“We believe that people should benefit from the prosperity generated by their hard work and the resources of the regions where they live,” said Premier David Eby. “We are committed to partnering with northwestern communities to help stabilize their infrastructure and growth over the long term.”

In September 2022, the Province and the RBA signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and established a joint staff-level working group to develop a shared understanding of the financial challenges of local governments in the RBA region. The working group has completed a summary report, *Working Towards a Collective Understanding: Industrial Development, Local Government Infrastructure, and Liveability in the RBA Region*, which outlines key themes affecting the region.

“We know that northwestern B.C. has unique needs. The summary report provides us the information we need to collectively understand the big picture of how development is impacting these fast-growing communities,” said Anne Kang, Minister of Municipal Affairs. “Our government is listening to rural and northern voices and is committed to continue working collaboratively with local governments to meet the needs of people in this region.”

While findings of the working group show RBA communities are generally in strong financial positions, because of a small property tax base, low borrowing limits and the lack of development finance revenue, the RBA region is becoming increasingly dependent on senior government grant funding to meet its community infrastructure and servicing needs.

It is estimated that nearly 74% of all major projects related to mining, oil and gas, wood manufacturing, and petrochemical manufacturing recently completed or under construction in B.C. are within the RBA region.

Since 2017, the Province has made substantial investments in the region – more than \$336 million through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, Northern Capital and Planning Grant, Growing Communities Fund, and critical community infrastructure funding to the region.

The RBA is an association of all 21 local governments in the northwest, from Masset to Vanderhoof.

Quotes:

Jennifer Rice, Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health, and MLA for North Coast –

“Local governments in the northwest are working hard to create and maintain appealing and livable communities so that they can recruit and retain the needed workforce for the expanding economic development in northern BC. Our government is committed to working with the RBA to address northwestern B.C.’s unique needs and I look forward to the continued collaboration.”

Nathan Cullen, MLA for Stikine –

“The province is focused on supporting development that creates good-paying jobs and sustainable communities across the northwest. We are working together with the RBA to support resource development and critical infrastructure so that everyone can thrive in the places we call home.”

Herb Pond, mayor of Prince Rupert, and North Coast Regional District director –

“Infrastructure needs in the northwest are huge. With the impact of industrial development all around us, our communities are feeling the impact. Partnerships with the Province are vital to ensuring we can maintain industrial activity that supports provincial growth.”

Sean Bujtas, mayor of Terrace, and Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine director –

“I am pleased that the provincial government carries on with its commitment to the MOU signed in September 2022. We look forward to continuing this work with the intent to having an agreement in place for the 2024 budget.”

Shane Brienen, mayor of Houston, and Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako director –

“For years, our communities have strengthened the provincial economic growth. Partnering with the Province will ensure that our communities remain viable and able to maintain basic servicing needs.”

Quick Facts:

- Since 2019, the B.C. government has also provided \$150 million in grants through the Northern Capital and Planning Grant to help local governments with planning and infrastructure improvements. The RBA region received approximately \$116 million of the funding.
- As part of the \$25-million Northern Healthy Communities Fund, the Province has invested more than \$15 million in 90 projects that strengthen services in northern B.C. communities experiencing rapid economic growth.
- New projects receiving Northern Healthy Communities Fund investments will be announced quarterly until 2026.

Learn More:

The Province of BC and Northwest BC Resource Benefits Alliance (RBA) Working Group Summary Report – executive summary: http://news.gov.bc.ca/files/RBA_final_report.pdf

Northwest BC Resource Benefits Alliance: <https://www.nwresourcebenefits.ca>

Northern Healthy Communities Fund: <https://www.northerndevelopment.bc.ca/funding-programs/partner-programs/northern-healthy-communities-fund/>

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