



**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO  
RURAL/AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE  
AGENDA  
Thursday, May 9, 2024**

<b><u>PAGE NO.</u></b>		<b><u>ACTION</u></b>
	<b><u>AGENDA, May 9, 2024</u></b>	<b>Approve</b>
	<b><u>Supplementary Agenda</u></b>	<b>Receive</b>
	<b><u>MINUTES</u></b>	
<b>2-6</b>	<b>Rural/Agriculture Committee Meeting Minutes - March 7, 2024</b>	<b>Approve</b>
	<b><u>AGRICULTURE REPORTS</u></b>	
<b>7-12</b>	<b>Megan D'Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator -Ministry of Agriculture and Food Follow-up Letter</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Megan D'Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator -BC Vegetable Marketing Commission - Update</b>	<b>Receive</b>
	<b><u>RURAL REPORT</u></b>	
<b>14-15</b>	<b>Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development - Grant in Aid Under \$2,500 Approval Update</b>	<b>Receive</b>
	<b><u>SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA</u></b>	
	<b><u>NEW BUSINESS</u></b>	
	<b><u>ADJOURNMENT</u></b>	

**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO****RURAL/AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MEETING****Thursday, March 7, 2024**

**PRESENT:** Chair Clint Lambert

Directors Judy Greenaway  
Shirley Moon  
Chris Newell  
Mark Parker  
Michael Riis-Christianson  
Stoney Stoltenberg

Staff Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer – via Zoom  
Cheryl Anderson, Director of Corporate Services  
Megan D’Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator  
Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development – left at 11:38 a.m.  
Janette Derksen, Waste Diversion Supervisor – left at 12:12 p.m.  
John Illes, Chief Financial Officer – arrived at 11:22 a.m.  
Jason Llewellyn, Director of Planning  
Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of Corporate Services

Others Shane Brienen, District of Houston – arrived at 12:47 p.m.  
Martin Elphee, District of Fort St. James – arrived at 12:47 p.m.  
Linda McGuire, Village of Granisle – left at 12:12 p.m.  
Kevin Moutray, District of Vanderhoof  
Sarrah Storey, Village of Fraser Lake – left at 12:05 p.m.  
Henry Wiebe, Village of Burns Lake – arrived at 12:47 p.m.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Lambert called the meeting to order at 11:16 a.m.

**AGENDA &  
SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA**Moved by Director Stoltenberg  
Seconded by Director GreenawayRDC.2024-3-1

“That the Rural/Agriculture Committee Agenda for March 7, 2024 be approved; and further, that the Supplementary Agenda be dealt with at this meeting.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

## **MINUTES**

Rural/Agriculture Committee Meeting Minutes -February 8, 2024 Moved by Director Stoltenberg  
 Seconded by Director Parker

RDC.2024-3-2 "That the minutes of the Rural/Agriculture Committee meeting of February 8, 2024 be approved."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

## **AGRICULTURE REPORT**

BC Vegetable Marketing Expands Regulated Area Moved by Director Stoltenberg  
 Seconded by Director Parker

RDC.2024-3-3 "That the Committee receive the Regional Agriculture Coordinator's BC Vegetable Marketing Expands Regulated Area and the Supplementary Agenda Clarification regarding BC Vegetable Marketing Commission Expansion of Regulated Area memorandums."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The following was discussed:

- Additional clarification is needed regarding the BC Vegetable Marketing Commission's expansion of regulated areas
- Challenging contacting the Commission
- Researching impacts to areas that were part of the Commission's regulated area prior to the expansion e.g. Quesnel
- The potential impact to BC Farmer's Markets in northern B.C. is unknown
- Concerns regarding potential impacts to vegetable farmers, growers and community gardens in the north
- Lack of communication regarding the January 1, 2024 implementation
- Inviting the Commission to a future RDBN meeting or North Central Local Government Association (NCLGA) AGM
  - o Director Greenaway will bring it forward to the NCLGA Planning Committee.

## **DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

Recent Agricultural Land Commission Decisions Moved by Director Riis-Christianson  
 Seconded by Director Greenaway

RDC.2024-3-4 "That the Committee receive the Planning Technician's Recent Agricultural Land Commission Decisions memorandum."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

## **DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (CONT'D)**

Discussion took place regarding the following:

- Decisions made by the ALC do not coincide with decisions made by the Board and don't address local and/or northern considerations
- Board's past advocacy with the Province utilizing the historical decision making by the ALC
- Issue stems from the Ministry of Agriculture removing the two-zone system that was in place in the past
  - o Board advocated that the Province keep Zone 1 and 2
  - o Continued to bring forward the issue once the Province removed the two zones and showcased the differences in the north
- ALC response time
- Lands included in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) that lack agriculture qualities
  - o ALC indicated lack of capacity to review
  - o Important to review
- Provide information and meet with the Assistant Deputy Minister and Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food at a meeting planned for April
- Leading up to the 2024 UBCM Convention consider bringing forward to the Minister of Agriculture and Food the impacts to the region and north regarding the removal of the two-zone system.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES REPORT**

### Agricultural Plastics (3-year) Pilot Project

The Committee discussed the following:

- Renewing the Pilot on an annual basis and focus on on-farm collection
- Having conversations with producers
- Responsibility of the agriculture sector to recycle agricultural plastics
- Province considering investigating agricultural plastics as part of an Industrial Commercial Institutional (ICI) program in potentially 3-5 years
- Option to utilize the Canada Community Building Fund or Northern Capital Planning Grant for the Pilot
- Challenges identifying new markets to minimize the long distances the product must travel to end markets during the 3-year Pilot Project.

Staff noted that the RDBN Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) recommends reviewing options for recycling programs for agricultural plastics. Six balers have been provided to be used for on-farm collection if the Committee chooses to continue the Pilot Project.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES REPORT (CONT'D)**

Agricultural Plastics (3-year) Pilot Project Moved by Director Parker  
 Seconded by Director Riis-Christianson

RDC.2024-3-5 "That the Committee recommend that the Board direct staff to explore a one-year renewal of the Agricultural Plastics (3-year) Pilot Project focusing on on-farm collection; and further, that staff bring forward funding options to the Board prior to the end of the current pilot in June 2024."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Agricultural Plastics (3-year) Pilot Project Moved by Director Newell  
 Seconded by Director Greenaway

RDC.2024-3-6 "That the Committee receive the Waste Diversion Supervisor's Agricultural Plastics (3-year) Pilot Project memorandum."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

**Break for lunch at 12:12 p.m.**

**Reconvened after lunch at 12:47 p.m.**

### **NEW BUSINESS**

New Program for Veterinarian Clinics that treat Farm Animals Director Parker commented that the Province has announced that it will provide funding for summer placement costs for veterinary and veterinary technologist students to B.C. Veterinarian Clinics that help B.C. farmers and ranchers care for their animals. The \$300,000 pilot program offers up to \$6,000 per placement to help with wages and travel costs that could support the placement of up to 50 students in 2024.

Connectivity Projects Officially Announced in the RDBN Director Riis-Christianson reported that the Federal and Provincial Government announced combined funding for three connectivity projects in the RDBN, Fort St. James, Cluculz Lake, Burns Lake (rural areas) and Tchesinkut Lake with an estimated completion date of June 2025.

**IN-CAMERA MOTION**

Moved by Director Stoltenberg  
Seconded by Director Greenaway

RDC.2024-3-7

"That this meeting be closed to the public pursuant to Section 90(1)(k) of the *Community Charter* for the Committee to deal with matters relating to the following:

- Future Service Provision."

(All/Directors/Majority)      CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

**ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Director Stoltenberg  
Seconded by Director Riis-Christianson

RDC.2024-3-8

"That the meeting be adjourned at 2:51 p.m."

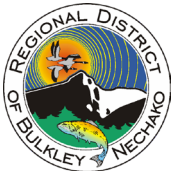
(All/Directors/Majority)      CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

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Clint Lambert, Chair

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Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director  
of Corporate Services



## Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural/Agriculture Committee

**To:** Chair and Committee  
**From:** Megan D'Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator  
**Date:** May 9, 2024  
**Subject:** **Ministry of Agriculture and Food Follow-up Letter**

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**RECOMMENDATION:** **(all/directors/majority)**

That the Committee recommend that the Board approve the attached follow-up letter to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

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### **BACKGROUND**

On April 10, 2024, Chair Parker and Directors Lambert and Moon met with Michelle Koski, Assistant Deputy Minister for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in Prince George.

One of the topics of conversation was the Provincially funded Agricultural Water Infrastructure Program administered through the Investment Agriculture Foundation, specifically the potential opportunity for community projects.

Staff are not aware of any current community irrigation infrastructure in the RDBN. Approximately 60 of the 189 recognized Improvement Districts in BC are listed as managing irrigation infrastructure, with the majority of them in the Kootenay or Okanagan regions.

Water improvement districts and their sustainability has been a challenging topic around the Province over the recent years, with many regional districts being approached to assume their ownership, as the cost to replace and/or maintain the infrastructure is no longer viable for the improvement district. On-going drought concerns and food security is a topic of interest within the RDBN, with one solution possibly being to determine the feasibility of a large-scale irrigation project in the Nechako region. Staff recommend a discussion on this topic with the Rural/Agriculture Committee to determine possible next steps prior to allocating staff resources for additional research on a project such as this.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Draft follow-up letter

UBCM – Improvement Districts 101





April 29, 2024

Michelle Koski  
Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
PO Box 9120 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9B4

Dear Michelle Koski:

**Subject: Meeting Follow-up**

The RDBN would like to follow up on one of the topics of conversation from our meeting on April 10, 2024. Specifically, we are interested in learning more about the possibility of a portion of the Agricultural Water Infrastructure Program money allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food being used for community-based water infrastructure projects (e.g., community irrigation systems).

Community agriculture water infrastructure projects have been identified as a priority for our region. We understand that this portion of the program may still be under development but would like to understand the program structure as soon as possible. Specifically, we would like to be able to keep community groups that may be eligible applicants informed in a timely manner. At the meeting, it was suggested that perhaps a portion of the funding can be allocated for applications from the central and northern areas of the Province. We would like to advocate for that allocation of funds. We recognize that producer and community groups will have to make applying to the program a priority, but the shorter growing season in this area can greatly reduce the amount of time available for pursuing funding options mid-season. We would like to advocate for a program intake outside of the intensive summer months.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to hearing back from you regarding the details of the Agricultural Water Infrastructure Program as it applies to community agricultural water infrastructure projects, and whether there can be funding set aside for the central and northern areas of the Province.

Sincerely,

Mark Parker  
Chair

# IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

## SECTION 16

### Improvement Districts

Improvement districts are incorporated public bodies designed to provide local services such as water and fire protection to residents within a specified boundary. They share some of the same characteristics as other forms of local government such as their method of incorporation, representation by locally elected officials and the powers to borrow, charge, and regulate the services they provide. However, they do not have the same powers as municipalities and regional districts to deal with broad community issues such as land use planning, and they are not included within the definition of a local government. As of January 1, 2019 there are 203 improvement districts in the province.

### Historical Development

Improvement districts were first established in the 1920s as a method to provide public management for several large irrigation systems in the Okanagan Valley. These systems had been under private management but did not have access to taxation powers.

For a number of years following their introduction, improvement districts continued to be incorporated to manage irrigation or domestic water systems and they were subject to the provisions of the *Water Act* and the *Water Utility Act*. Private water systems were also regulated by the same *Acts* and improvement districts became a convenient vehicle whereby private water systems could be transferred to public ownership when the utility owner became unwilling or unable to operate it.

Improvement districts were gradually given responsibility to administer other local services besides water. This occurred because municipalities were the only other vehicle for providing these services but they were not always a viable solution for small rural communities (regional districts were not created until the 1960s). Therefore, improvement districts became a convenient vehicle for providing other services besides water outside of municipal boundaries. In 1979, the legislation affecting improvement districts was removed from the *Water Act* and the *Water Utility Act* and transferred into what is now the *Local Government Act*.

<b>Incorporation</b>	Improvement districts are incorporated by the Provincial Cabinet through a type of regulation known as Letters Patent. This is the same method used to incorporate municipalities and regional districts. Some of the provisions included in Letters Patent are the legal name of the improvement district, its boundary, a list of services (also known as “objects”) it may provide, and the number of its trustees and provisions for elections. Currently, improvement districts are only being incorporated where there are exceptional circumstances. The last improvement district incorporation was in 1995.
<b>Services</b>	Of the 23 different services that improvement districts may provide the most common one is water. About 79% of all improvement districts have the authority to operate water systems, with the next most common services being irrigation, fire protection, and drainage. About 62% of all improvement districts are authorized to provide only one service. The most services being provided by a single improvement district is seven.
<b>Corporate and Other Powers</b>	In addition to the services and powers conferred by their Letters Patent, an improvement district has all the powers of a corporation and is given wide financial, administrative, and regulatory powers under section 697 of the <i>Local Government Act</i> , as well as the power to make bylaws under section 698. Improvement districts also have authority to expropriate land or works [LGA s. 705].
<b>Connections</b>	Improvement districts vary greatly in size. For example, the largest improvement district that delivers water services provides water to 8,187 connections, whereas the smallest one provides only seven water connections.
<b>Elected Representation</b>	The affairs of each improvement district are directed by trustees who are elected for a three-year term by the eligible landowners within the improvement district. Typically the smaller improvement districts have three trustees but the larger ones have five or more. The election of trustees takes place at an annual general meeting whose date is set by the trustees. Voter eligibility requirements and voting procedures differ from those for local governments in that voting eligibility requires you to be an owner of property, and voting is done at the annual general meeting. The terms of the trustees are staggered so that only one or two positions become vacant each year.
<b>Annual General Meeting</b>	The purpose of the annual general meeting is to provide a report on the condition of the services, a statement of the financial condition of the improvement district, to have the landowners determine the trustees’ remuneration and to elect trustees. The time period for holding the meeting is established in each improvement district’s Letters Patent and is generally between January 1 and May 1.

**Assessment and Taxation**

Improvement districts can use taxes, tolls (user rates), and other charges to recover costs for the services they provide. Those that use taxation have the ability to base it on a number of different factors such as parcels, group of parcels, area, value of land or improvements or personal property, or any combination of them. Improvement districts must prepare, mail and collect their taxes, tolls, and other charges.

However, if an improvement district provides fire protection or street lighting, they have the option of having the tax levied and collected by the province on their behalf. Of the 40 improvement districts in this situation, almost all of them use the province to levy and collect their taxes. For improvement districts that levy and collect their own taxes, the Homeowners Grant does not apply and the due date does not have to be July 2. If improvement districts levy and collect their own taxes and a bill remains unpaid for more than 24 months, the improvement district can proceed to tax sale to recover the amount owing. If the property is sold at tax sale, the one-year period of redemption does not exist like it does for municipalities, and the tax sale is absolute.

**Finance**

Improvement districts may borrow funds from a financial institution by adopting a loan authorization bylaw and registering it with the Inspector of Municipalities. Unlike local governments, improvement districts cannot borrow through the Municipal Finance Authority so they do not have the advantage of borrowing at interest rates lower than commercial rates.

**Role of the Ministry**

Improvement districts have some oversight by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Some bylaws passed by the trustees must be registered with the Inspector of Municipalities and the bylaws are not in effect until this approval is obtained. In addition, the audited financial statements and the minutes of the improvement district's annual general meeting are reviewed by, and filed with, the Ministry each year. The Ministry encourages the responsibility for improvement district services to be transferred to local governments where there is local support for it.

Updated November 2018



## Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural/Agriculture Committee

**To:** Chair and Committee  
**From:** Megan D'Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator  
**Date:** May 9, 2024  
**Subject:** **BC Vegetable Marketing Commission - Update**

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**RECOMMENDATION:** (all/directors/majority)

Receive.

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### BACKGROUND

Further to direction provided at the March 7, 2024, Rural/Agriculture Committee Meeting, the BC Vegetable Marketing Commission has been contacted twice by email to request a delegation to this Committee, with no response thus far.

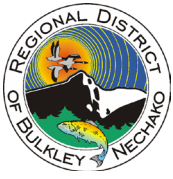
In addition, the announcement made by the BCVMC was discussed at a meeting on April 10, 2024, between RDBN Directors and Michelle Koski, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) and Brent Barclay, MAF Director of Agriculture Development (North). In follow up, MAF staff let us know that they had spoken to the Chair of the BCVMC who indicated that they “will be doing outreach and FAQ in the very near future to better explain who will be impacted and how it will work for producers”. MAF indicated that they would be interested in producer feedback on these activities.

In the meantime, we have received correspondence from District C Farmers’ Institute (Prince George area). They have been in touch with Andre Solymosi, BCVMC General Manager to request more information from the BCVMC.

According to information that has been gathered by James Steidle (article in Prince George Citizen<sup>1</sup>) and a collaboration of producers that belong to an organization called Everyone at the Table based out of Prince George, the regulation is applicable for producers that grow more than a tonne of combined regulated vegetables. Producers that meet this criterion and gross more than \$5,000 need to be licensed. Larger producers would face increasing costs and paperwork and would not be able to sell to larger, local retail stores without the development of a northern marketing agency.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/opinion/james-steidle-local-growers-could-take-financial-hit-8529763>



## Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural/Agriculture Committee

**To:** Chair and Committee  
**From:** Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development  
**Date:** May 9, 2024  
**Subject:** Grant in Aid Under \$2,500 Approval Update

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**RECOMMENDATION:** (all/directors/majority)

Receive.

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### BACKGROUND

The following Grant in Aid requests of \$2,500 or less were approved by Electoral Area Directors via email between January and March 2024.

Community Group	Project	Amount
<b>Area A (Smithers/Telkwa Rural)</b>		
Bulkley Valley Rod and Gun Club	Signage for Wildlife Foraging Project	\$2,225
Pacific Northwest Science Fair	2024 Fair	\$1,500
Ground Breakers Agriculture Association	Youth on Farms Program	\$1,000
Smithers Ski and Snowboard Club	Purchase of a jib board	\$800
Bulkley Valley Community Arts Council	Fundraiser Masquerade	\$2,000
Smithers and District Chamber of Commerce	2024 Business Excellence Awards	\$2,000
<b>Area B (Burns Lake Rural)</b>		
Eagle Creek Recreation Commission	Trail work and horseshoe pits	\$1,246
<b>Area C (Fort St. James Rural)</b>		

Fort St. James Sled Dog Association	2024 Caledonia Classic	\$2,000
Fort St. James Secondary School	2024 Bursary	\$1,000
Fort St. James Secondary School	Ski and Snowboard Provincials	\$1,000
<b>Area D (Fraser Lake Rural)</b>		
<b>Area E (Francois/Ootsa Rural)</b>		
Eagle Creek Recreation Commission	Trail work and horseshoe pits	\$1,246
<b>Area F (Vanderhoof Rural)</b>		
Vanderhoof Chamber of Commerce	Business Excellence Awards	\$300
Vanderhoof International Airshow	2024 event	\$2,500
<b>Area G (Houston/Granisle Rural)</b>		
Granisle Public Library	Computer Upgrade	\$2,500