

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING

Thursday, January 9, 2025

PRESENT: Chair Mark Parker

Directors Gladys Atrill
Shane Brienen – via Zoom – arrived at 10:29 a.m., left at 12:08 p.m., returned from lunch at 12:56 p.m.
Leroy Dekens
Martin Elphee
Judy Greenaway
Clint Lambert
Linda McGuire
Shirley Moon
Kevin Moutray
Chris Newell
Michael Riis-Christianson
Stoney Stoltenberg
Sarrah Storey – via Zoom – left at 10:49 a.m., returned at 10:50 a.m., left at 11:18 a.m., returned at 11:20 a.m.
Henry Wiebe

Staff Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer
Cheryl Anderson, Director of Corporate Services
Nellie Davis, Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Rural Services – via Zoom and in-person
Tori Hallman, First Nations Liaison, left at 12:08 p.m.
John Illes, Chief Financial Officer
Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of Corporate Services
Scott Zayac, Director of Protective Services

Others The Honourable Ravi Parmar, Minister of Forests – arrived at 10:55 a.m., left at 12:08 p.m.
Greg Brown, Ministerial Advisor, Ministry of Forests – arrived at 10:26 a.m., left at 10:45 a.m., returned at 10:55 a.m., left at 12:08 p.m.
Ryan Chapman, Deputy Fire Centre Manager, Northwest Fire Centre, Ministry of Forests – arrived at 10:55 a.m., left at 12:08 p.m.
Tara Dunphy, Director Strategic Initiatives and Forest Landscape Planning, Skeena, Ministry of Forests – arrived at 10:55 a.m., left at 12:08 p.m.
Neal Marincak, District Manager, Nadina Resource District, Ministry of Forests – arrived at 10:55 a.m., left at 12:08 p.m.
Ian Meier, Acting Deputy Minister, Ministry of Forests – arrived at 10:55 a.m., left at 12:08 p.m.

Others (cont'd) Janelle Paulson, Manager First Nations Relations, Ministry of Forest – arrived at 10:34 a.m., left at 12:08 p.m.
Cindy Shelford, Burns Lake – arrived at 10:28 a.m., left at 12:08 p.m.
Dalphena Snively, Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural)
Shawn Trottier, Resource Manager, Nadina District, Skeena Region, Ministry of Forests – arrived at 10:28 a.m., left at 12:08 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Parker called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

FIRST NATIONS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

AGENDA

Moved by Director Moutray
Seconded by Director McGuire

C.W.2025-1-1

“That the Agenda of the Committee of the Whole meeting of January 9, 2025 be approved.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

MINUTES

Committee of the Whole
Minutes – November 7, 2024

Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Elphee

C.W.2025-1-2

“That the Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes of November 7, 2024 be approved.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

STAFF INTRODUCTION

Chair Parker introduced Tori Hallman, First Nations Liaison.

OATH OF OFFICE

Cheryl Anderson, Director of Corporate Services administered the Oath of Office to Dalphena Snively, Alternate Director, Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural).

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS

Travel Authorization (RBA)

Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Greenaway

C.W.2025-1-3

“That the Committee recommend the Board authorize the reimbursement of expenses in the amount of \$2,860 for Director Atrill’s attendance at the celebration of life for past Premier Horgan.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS (CONT'D)

Local Service Area Contract -Burns Lake and District Rebroadcasting Moved by Director Riis-Christianson
Seconded by Director Greenaway

C.W.2025-1-4 "That the Committee recommend to the Board to authorize the Chair and CAO to enter into the Local Service Area Contract with the Burns Lake and District Rebroadcasting Society."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Discussion took place regarding staff conducting a survey to determine resident use of the rebroadcast of television channels and radio channels in the region.

2024 Wildfire Season Summary Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Dekens

C.W.2025-1-5 "That the Committee receive the Emergency Services Manager's 2024 Wildfire Season Summary memorandum."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Discussion took place regarding the issuing of Alerts and Orders and the rescinding of the Alerts and Orders over weekends. Staff have had discussions with BC Wildfire Services regarding the process.

Growing Opportunities Newsletter – Issue 23 Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Lambert

C.W.2025-1-6 "That the Committee receive the Regional Agriculture Coordinator's memorandum."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADMINISTRATION CORRESPONDENCE

Regional District of Kootenay Boundary – Cooperative Community Wildfire Response (CCWR) Program Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Lambert

C.W.2025-1-7 "That the Committee receive the correspondence from the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary regarding Cooperative Community Wildfire Response (CCWR) Program."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

PRESENTATION

Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer/John Illes, Chief Financial Officer Re: 2025 Budget

CAO Helgesen provided an overview of the budget considerations and process.

- RDBN Budget Process
- 70-80 services that have individual budgets
 - o Major/minor services
 - Some services are mandated by province
 - Some services are named 'major' but are voluntary services on behalf of residents
 - o Voluntary services
 - Minor services
 - Residents want a service and pay for it
 - RDBN provides 60-70 services
- Assessments.

CAO Helgesen and CFO Illes provided a PowerPoint presentation.

Budget 2025

- Annual Budget
 - o Cost to deliver services plus the value of all assessed property in service area equals the mill rate
 - o Mill rate for every residential property in the RD is the same
- Budget submissions to province
 - o RDBN March 31
 - o Municipalities May 15
- Property Tax Notice
 - o RDBN in comparison to Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine, Cariboo Regional District, Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, Province of B.C., Capital Regional District
- Average Municipal Variable Rate Tax with Composition
- 2024 Average RD Tax as a portion of Average Total Taxes
- 2024 RDBN Taxes Requisitions as portion of Total
- Types of Service in the RDBN Budget
 - o Major Shared
 - o Major Rural
 - o Minor
- Major versus Minor
- Major Shared Services
- Composition of Major Shared Services
- Taxes per Avg House – Vanderhoof
- Major Services
- Composition of major Rural Services

PRESENTATION (CONT'D)

Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer/John Illes, Chief Financial Officer Re: 2025 Budget (Cont'd)

Discussion took place regarding:

- Average hospital tax
- Provincial Comparative tax data
 - o Local Government Data Entry (LGDE) Program
 - Staff will forward information to RDBN Directors and member municipality finance departments.

Break at 10:55 a.m.

Reconvened at 11:00 a.m.

DELEGATION

MINISTER OF FORESTS – the Honourable Ravi Parmar Re: Forestry in the Region

Chair Parker welcomed the Honourable Ravi Parmar, Minister of Forests.

Minister Parmar introduced Ian Meier, Acting Deputy Minister, Greg Brown, Ministerial Advisor, Ryan Chapman, Deputy Fire Centre Manager, Northwest Fire Centre, Tara Dunphy, Director Strategic Initiatives and Forest Landscape Planning, Skeena, Neal Marincak, District Manager, Nadina Resource District, Janelle Paulson, Manager First Nations Relations, Shawn Trottier, Resource Manager, Nadina District, Skeena, Ministry of Forests.

Minister Parmar commented:

- Requested the Forestry portfolio from Premier Eby
- Worked with Ravi Kahlon, current Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs under Doug Donaldson, past Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development
 - o Worked with communities with sawmill closures
- Experience coming to rural northwest and north central BC
- Sworn in by Premier Eby November 18th
 - o November 19th asked if would consider Minister of Forests portfolio
- Ministry of Forests key pillars
 - o Restoring confidence in the Ministry of Forests
 - o Standing up for workers and communities
 - o Honouring commitments as government
 - Declaration of Indigenous peoples
- Recently visited Prince George and Vanderhoof
 - Communities are hurting from sawmill closures
 - Met with United Steel workers Union representatives and others

DELEGATION (CONT'D)

MINISTER OF FORESTS – the Honourable Ravi Parmar Re: Forestry in the Region (Cont'd)

- Heard that the social license has been broken
- Work will be to restore confidence
- Stand up for workers and ensure communities are represented in discussions
- can only be done hand in hand with First Nations looking forward
- Will be meeting with Canfor
- Taking on a number of initiatives over next couple of weeks centered around what the next 100 years will look like
 - o want to lay a pathway collectively for successors to have a strong, sustainable, robust forestry sector
 - o Industry investment
 - o Spoke about Past Premier Horgan's recognition of northern B.C.
 - o Looking forward to continued engagement.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Houston/Granisle and area
 - o Resource based community
 - o Resource dollars provided to the province
 - o Industry closures over the past years including the recent loss of Houston's Canfor Sawmill
 - o Minister Parmar spoke of looking at opportunities
 - Discussions regarding local job creation and value added manufacturing with Mayor Brienens
 - Eye opener to tour the Canfor sawmill site
 - In the past largest producer in the world
 - Opportunities moving forward
 - BC Timber Sales review
 - Job creation and sustainability
 - While in Fraser Lake looked at commercial thinning
 - Sustainability practices – key
- Need for a pragmatic and realistic approach
- Resource Benefits Alliance
- Forestry and future of forestry are a way to support a good community
- Scientists in the community of Smithers
 - o Combine to build opportunities
 - o Smithers offers a "think tank" approach
- Education
 - o Focusing to ensure people believe and are committed to the region

DELEGATION (CONT'D)

MINISTER OF FORESTS – the Honourable Ravi Parmar Re: Forestry in the Region (Cont'd)

- Minister Parmar
 - o Difficult task as politicians building trust in the industry, sector and community
 - Social license – complex
 - o Outlook of Minister Parmar’s constituents in Langford on Forestry
 - o Old Growth on the coast vs. in northern B.C.
 - o Visited the Bulkley Valley Research Centre
- Fort St. James forestry sector
 - o Past challenges
 - o Significant number of logging trucks per day travelling through main street
 - o Value added projects in Fort St. James
 - Deadwood Innovation
 - Minister Parmar indicated he is looking forward to visiting
- Impacts to the Agriculture Sector with the sawmill closures due to the lack of shavings for bedding material
 - o A number of factors to consider
 - o Minister Parmar
 - Value added will be a top priority
 - Attending the BC Natural Resources Forum in Prince George next week
 - Past Provincial funding for value added innovation and the outcome of job creation
 - Huge focus from Ministry of Forests to continue to grow value added sector and get most value out of logs
 - Upcoming challenges in 2025
 - Softwood Lumber Agreement
 - o Forming an advisory committee with strong representatives
 - Tariffs
 - Attending meetings in Washington, DC USA February 12th
- Benefits of small sawmills to communities
- Agriculture sector dollars from the B.C. Auction Barn in Vanderhoof
 - o Critical necessity for shavings for Agriculture industry
 - Challenges for the Agriculture Sector to access shavings
 - o Utilizing cattle for fire mitigation
 - o Value of the Agriculture Sector to the Forestry Sector
 - o History of homesteading beginning with agriculture and leading to forestry
 - o Large number of farms/small businesses in the Vanderhoof area supporting the region
 - o Minister Parmar spoke of the opportunity to learn and will exchange contact information

DELEGATION (CONT'D)

MINISTER OF FORESTS – the Honourable Ravi Parmar Re: Forestry in the Region (Cont'd)

- Ian Meier, Acting Deputy Minister
 - Ministry of Forests is working with Cattlemen's Associations to utilize sheep and goats forage to mitigate wildfires
 - Working closely with the Invasive Species Council
 - During wildfires working with the Ministry of Agriculture in relation to livestock bedding and fee
- Important to understand the connection and correlation between forestry and agriculture
 - Ranchers and farmers often also work in the logging industry
- Tara Dunphy, Director Strategic Initiatives and Forest Landscape Planning, Skeena, Ministry of Forests
 - Lakes Resiliency Project
 - Working group includes well versed local ranchers
 - Role of cattle to break up fire fuels/role for managing invasive plants
 - Remote Collar Pilot Project by the BC Cattlemen's Association
- Chinook Emergency Response Society (CERS)
 - Working with Ministry of Forests BC Wildfire Service to utilize forest service roads for livestock vegetation with the ability to utilize for fire guards
 - Opportunities for a variety of solutions
- Old Growth Management Areas (OGMAs) bordering communities and critical infrastructure
 - Dead fibre becomes a fire hazard
 - Local First Nations concerns
 - Three Nations Water System on the Southside of Francois Lake
 - Managing Old Growth Management Areas
- Electoral Area E (Francois/Ootsa Lake Rural)
 - 2nd most burnt area in the Province
- CERS proactive approach to fire response
 - Support from the Ministry is welcome
- Minister Parmar flew over Electoral Area E and will follow up
- Broken Social License
 - *Forest Act* and statues not working for small communities
- Optimism regarding Minister Parmar's comments
- Burns Lake Community Forest
 - Initially a pilot project
 - Largest community forest
 - Community forests provide stability for local communities
 - Minister Parmar noted they are looking to expand community forests
- Consideration for small outlying communities such as Granisle when decisions are being made for communities with sawmill closures such as Houston and Fraser Lake
 - Reliant on goods, supplies and services
- Importance of continued maintenance of Forest Service Roads (FSRs) that are utilized as secondary egress routes e.g. Granisle
 - Budget considerations can be challenging to maintain FSRs

DELEGATION (CONT'D)

MINISTER OF FORESTS – the Honourable Ravi Parmar Re: Forestry in the Region (Cont'd)

- Minister Parmar
 - o spoke of the importance of having infrastructure to bring people to communities
 - o the Honourable Brittany Anderson, Minister of State for Local Governments and Rural Communities has been tasked with visiting communities
 - Will be visiting following the BC Natural Resources Forum in Prince George, January 14-16, 2025
 - o Indirect job losses in communities when a sawmill closes
- Sawmill closures directly impact the available contractor equipment and operators in a communities to fight wildfires
- Importance of utilizing wildfire salvaged timber and fibre
- Chair Parker will provide a copy of the RDBN Strategic Plan
 - o Strategic Focus Area #1 is Relationships with First Nations
 - RDBN needs to be included when discussions are being held between the Province and First Nation communities
- Minister Parmar
 - o Investment in BC Wildfire
 - o Recognized the need to include communities and contractors
 - o Reconciliation
 - Meaningful conversations when everyone is in the same room.

Chair Parker thanked Minister Parmar and his team for attending the meeting.

Break for lunch at 12:08 p.m.

Reconvened at 12:50 p.m.

PRESENTATION (CONT'D)

Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer/John Illes, Chief Financial Officer Re: 2025 Budget (Cont'd)

CAO Helgesen and CFO Illes continued the PowerPoint presentation.

- All RDBN major Services
 - o Tax based on a mill rate (rate per \$1,000 of assessed value).
- Some services
 - o Tax on the value of land and improvements
 - o Others just the value of improvements.
- BC Assessment values all property classes and provides updates each January.
- A few Minor Services
 - o Charge a parcel tax, or
 - o Flat rate per property in the service area.
- RDBN has 64 Minor Services in 2025
- Property Classes in the RDBN

PRESENTATION (CONT'D)

Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer/John Illes, Chief Financial Officer Re: 2025 Budget (Cont'd)

- Regional District Multipliers
- Municipal Multipliers 2024
- Representative House Values in the RDBN
- 2024 Environmental Services Taxes
- Environmental Services Taxation
- Each Bylaw creates a "Service Area"
- Each jurisdiction billed so that each property of the same class (and value) will pay the same amount
- Next Steps.

Discussion continued:

- Tax collection disparity
- Determining the most equitable tax collection system
- Municipal requisitions for RDBN services they participate in
- Property zoning
 - o Residential Agricultural (ALR)
 - o Managed Forest Service Land – rarely used
- Weighted average taxes
- Crown owned infrastructure such as the BC Hydro's Transmission system expansion
 - o Grant in lieu of taxes
 - o Privately owned powerlines – contribute to taxation as a utility
- Multipliers and how municipalities determine multipliers
- Initiatives underway to reform the *Local Government Act* including taxation
 - o Potential impacts if Regional Districts could determine their own multipliers
- Environmental Services taxation and user pay
- Total requisition to be invoiced and percentage paid by residential class
- Non-market change roll comparison
 - o Summary by Regional District
 - o Summary by Electoral Area
- Environmental Services taxation and potential partnerships with First Nations for services
 - o Staff working with Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

ADMINISTRATION REPORT (CONT'D)

2025 Completed Assessment Moved by Director Stoltenberg

Roll and Requisition Impacts Seconded by Director Elphee

C.W.2025-1-8

"That staff bring back a budget that captures the non-market changes from the 2024 Completed Assessment and that, in addition, provides an inflation allowance of 3.0%."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADMINISTRATION REPORT (CONT'D)

Discussion took place regarding:

- Inflation allowance of 3.0%
- Canadian inflation rate – January 1 – November 30, 2024
- Impacts of inflation rates to salaries
- Determining future pressures from sawmill closures
- Northwest B.C. Funding Agreement
- Awaiting release of the Consumer Price Index
- Market price indicator
- Staff will bring forward additional information during budget discussions in March 2025.

2025 Minor Service Budgets Moved by Director Riis-Christianson
Seconded by Director McGuire

C.W.2025-1-9 “That the Committee receive the Chief Financial Officer’s 2025
Minor Service Budgets memorandum.”

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADJOURNMENT Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Wiebe

C.W.2025-1-10 “That the meeting be adjourned at 2:10 p.m.”

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Mark Parker, Chair

Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of
Corporate Services