

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

RURAL/AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, March 9, 2023

PRESENT: Chair Clint Lambert

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

Staff Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer
Cheryl Anderson, Director of Corporate Services
Nellie Davis, Regional Manager of Economic Development
John Illes, Chief Financial Officer
Jason Llewellyn, Director of Planning – left at 12:45 p.m.
Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of Corporate Services

Others Shane Brienen, District of Houston – arrived at 12:48 p.m., left at 12:55 p.m., returned at 1:03 p.m.
Martin Elphee, District of Fort St. James
Andrew Kemp, Engagement Specialist, Immigration Programs, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Immigration Services & Strategic Planning Division - left at 1:14 p.m.
Aireen Luney, Manager of Program Development and Promotion, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Immigration Services & Strategic Planning Division - left at 1:14 p.m.
Linda McGuire, Village of Granisle
Sarrah Storey, Village of Fraser Lake
Deb Zehr, Executive Director, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Immigration Services & Strategic Planning Division. - left at 1:14 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Lambert called the meeting to order at 12:43 p.m.

AGENDA

Moved by Director Parker
Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

RDC.2023-2-1

“That the Rural/Agriculture Committee Agenda for March 9, 2023 be approved.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

MINUTES

Rural/Agriculture Committee Meeting Minutes -February 9, 2022 Moved by Director Parker
Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

RDC.2023-2-2 "That the minutes of the Rural/Agriculture Committee meeting of February 9, 2022 be approved."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Land/Mining Referral

Crown Land Application Referral No. 7410290 and Notice of Work No. 2000276-202201 Electoral Area E (Francois/Ootsa Lake Rural) Moved by Director Parker
Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

RDC.2023-2-3 "That the comment sheet be provided to the Province as the Regional District's comments on Crown Land Application No. 7410290 and Notice of Work No. 2000276-2022- 01."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

DELEGATION

PROVINCIAL NOMINEE PROGRAM - Deb Zehr, Executive Director, Andrew Kemp, Engagement Specialist, Immigration Programs, and Aireen Luney, Manager of Program Development and Promotion Ministry of Municipal Affairs Immigration Services & Strategic Planning Division RE: Provincial Nominee Program – via Zoom

Chair Lambert welcomed Deb Zehr, Executive Director, Ministry of Municipal Affairs Immigration Services & Strategic Planning Division. Ms. Zehr introduced Andrew Kemp, Engagement Specialist, Immigration Programs and Aireen Luney, Manager of Program Development and Promotion, Ministry of Municipal Affairs Immigration Services & Strategic Planning Division RE: Provincial Nominee Program.

Ms. Zehr provided an overview of the BC Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP). The Program is an economic immigration pilot program.

- Ability for the Province to design, administer and determine the criteria to nominate economic immigrants to the government for permanent residency
- The RDBN's past participation in the Pilot Program
- To attract entrepreneurs
- Currently 50 communities represented across the province with populations 75,000 or less.

DELEGATION (CONT'D)

PROVINCIAL NOMINEE PROGRAM - Deb Zehr, Executive Director, Andrew Kemp, Engagement Specialist, Immigration Programs, and Aireen Luney, Manager of Program Development and Promotion Ministry of Municipal Affairs Immigration Services & Strategic Planning Division RE: Provincial Nominee Program – via Zoom (Cont'd)

- Pilot Program due to end in March 2024
 - o An external 3rd party evaluation is currently being conducted of the program
 - Input from communities valuable
 - o COVID 19 pandemic Impacts to the program and processing times
 - o Received over 118 applications
 - o 37 applications have arrived with families and are establishing business
 - o Some applicants are at the end stage of the program and received permanent residency
 - o Challenges of a pilot program and learning
 - o Managing the need for small communities
 - Relationship building with small communities is a benefit
 - Creating a profile of communities on the Provincial Nominee Program website
 - Noticing a shift of those coming to smaller communities due to on the ground support
 - o RDBN resuming participation in the Program
- Skills attraction a priority
 - o Aware of labour pressures
 - o Design mandate for the BC PNP is used to compliment the federal government administered pathways for temporary or permanent residents
 - Target people in certain occupations or sectors
 - Healthcare workers Health Authorities
 - Early Childhood Educators
 - Veterinarians and veterinarian technicians
 - Currently connecting with those individuals through the BC PNP
 - o Collaborating Connecting with Northern Development Initiative Trust
 - o Continue to connect with federal programs to create pathways to bring workers to smaller centers
- Significant increase of immigrants to Canada and B.C.
- Challenges regarding accreditation for foreign workers
- Concerns about money laundering and sex trafficking through immigration programs
 - o Fraud and Program Integrity
 - o Antifraud and Investigation Unit has been established
- Lack of housing and rental inventory in communities impacting the ability to recruit workers
- Entrepreneur and skilled worker streams
 - o How to increase attraction and retention in small communities
 - o Working to horizontally collaborate between all stakeholders
- Repercussions if BC PNP applicants are unable to complete the program but remain in the community
 - o Process and review of BC PNP applicants.

Chair Lambert thanked Ms. Zehr, Ms. Luney and Mr. Kemp for attending the meeting.

RURAL REPORTS

BC Rural Center "Keeping it Rural" Conference June 1-2, 2023 in Kelowna Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Parker

RDC.2023-2-4 "That the Committee recommend that the Board authorize attendance of Rural Directors at the 2023 Keeping it Rural Conference June 1-2, 2023, in Kelowna, BC."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

AGRICULTURE DISCUSSION

VERBAL REPORTS - Director Parker

Veterinary Shortage and Food Security

- Awaiting finalization of Economic Impact Study
- Conversation with Taylor Bachrach, MP Skeena-Bulkley Valley and he will bring forward the Economic Impact Study and concerns to the Canadian Minister of Agriculture
- Frustration regarding the lack of information from the Province concerning future funding for seats in the veterinarian medicine program at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine on the University of Saskatchewan campus.

Receipt of Verbal Reports Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Riis-Christianson

RDC.2023-2-5 "That Director Parker's verbal report be received."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

REPORTS

Northwest Trade Expo May 5-6 in Smithers Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Greenaway

RDC.2023-2-6 "That the Committee recommend that the Board approve spending \$550 from Rural Government for the rental of an RDBN booth at the Northwest Trade Expo."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

NEW BUSINESS

BC Provincial Nominee Program

Director Parker brought forward the BC Provincial Nominee Program for discussion. He also mentioned having further conversation with Deb Zehr, Executive Director, Ministry of Municipal Affairs Immigration Services & Strategic Planning Division regarding veterinarian shortages and the BC PNP program and skilled workers. The Committee directed staff to bring forward a memorandum at the March 23, 2023 Board meeting for consideration.

Veterinary Drug Regulations

Director Moon spoke of the Veterinary Drug and Medicated Feed Regulation program and that with the veterinarian shortages impacting the ability for farmers to administer medication to their herds this may be an area to research further. She noted that the regulations provide government with an opportunity to administer a veterinarian licence in areas where there are no professionals. Director Moon discussed researching possible options for areas experiencing veterinarian shortages.

Veterinary Drug Regulations Research

Moved by Director Moon
Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

RDC.2023-2-6

"That the Committee recommend that the Board direct staff to further investigate the veterinary drug and medicated feed regulation and licencing requirements."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Wildlife Property Enhancement – Electoral Area A (Smithers/Telkwa Rural)

Director Stoltenberg mentioned that residents in Electoral Area A (Smithers/Telkwa Rural) have started a group to enhance properties for wildlife in the winter months. He noted that the group is wanting to have their properties recognized by the Province and be provided signage to identify the enhancement of wildlife habitat. The group is working to formalize their status as a society. Director Parker mentioned that farm properties have access through the Environmental Farm Plan program where there is signage initiatives that can be accessed to identify reduced impacts on the environment.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Director Parker
Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

RDC.2023-2-7

"That the meeting be adjourned at 1:38 p.m."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Clint Lambert, Chair

Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of
Corporate Services