

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

MEETING NO. 4

Thursday, March 13, 2025

PRESENT:	Chair	Mark Parker
	Directors	Gladys Atrill Shane Brien Leroy Dekens Martin Elphee Judy Greenaway Clint Lambert Linda McGuire Shirley Moon Kevin Moutray Chris Newell – via Zoom Michael Riis-Christianson Stoney Stoltenberg Sarrah Storey – arrived at 10:04 a.m. Henry Wiebe
	Staff	Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer Cheryl Anderson, Director of Corporate Services Megan D'Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator – via Zoom – left at 1:25 p.m. Nellie Davis, Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Rural Services – left at 11:00 a.m., returned at 12:49 p.m. John Illes, Chief Financial Officer Jason Llewellyn, Director of Planning Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of Corporate Services Christopher Walker, Emergency Services Manager – arrived at 10:07 a.m. Scott Zayac, Director of Protective Services – arrived at 10:10 a.m., left at 11:54 a.m.
	Others	Taylor Bachrach, MP Skeena Bulkley Valley – left at 11:54 a.m. Christopher McLean, Regional Manager, Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness – arrived at 10:07 a.m., left at 11:54 a.m. Wayne Salewski, President, Nechako Environment and Water Stewardship Society – via Zoom – left at 10:42 a.m. Jackie Wilson, Partnerships Coordinator, Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness – arrived at 10:07 a.m., left at 11:54 a.m.

CALL TO ORDER Chair Parker called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

FIRST NATIONS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**AGENDA &
SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA**

Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Lambert

2025-4-1

"That the Board Meeting Agenda of March 13, 2025 be approved as amended; and that the Supplementary Agenda be dealt with at this meeting."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

MINUTES

Board Meeting Minutes
-February 27, 2025

Moved by Director McGuire
Seconded by Director Lambert

2025-4-2

"That the Board Meeting Minutes of February 27, 2025 be adopted."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

DELEGATION

**NECHAKO ENVIRONMENT AND WATER STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY – Wayne Salewski,
President – Re: Beaver Dams**

Chair Parker welcomed Wayne Salewski, President, Nechako Environment and Water Stewardship Society and congratulated Mr. Salewski on recently receiving the King Charles III Coronation Medal.

Mr. Salewski provided a PowerPoint Presentation.

Nechako Environment and Water Stewardship Society (NEWSS)

- Beaver Dam Analogues (BDAs) and Climate Change Adaptation "Our History"
- NEWSS 2024
 - o BDA
 - Objectives
 - Strategy
- Two types of stream needs utilizing different techniques
- Knight Creek
- East Murray Creek
- West Murray Creek
- NEWSS – building the BDA
- Bad Beaver solutions

DELEGATION

NECHAKO ENVIRONMENT AND WATER STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY – Wayne Salewski, President – Re: Beaver Dams (Cont'd)

- NEWSS
 - o Scaled up productivity to fit the needs
 - o Second growth plantation thinning and sorting willows by needs – planting or beaver dam
 - o All seasons pond
 - o Timely finish
 - Lessons learned
- NEWSS – BDAs and additional features including monitoring wells and over wintering ponds
- BDA Monitoring Program
- Monitoring includes Electrical Resistivity Tomography – ERT
- NEWSS – BDAs values to the agriculture community
- Thank you to funders & supporters
- PIT (Passive Integrated Transponders) tags and telemetry stations and monitor fish as they go up and down.

The following was discussed:

- How fish populate the created BDA ponds
 - o Ponds created to the side of streams
 - o BDAs are at bank level
 - o Freshet moves fish in and out
 - PIT tagging fish to understand movement
 - Population of fish in a 1–2-year cycle and 5 year cycle
 - o Water holding and preventing debris torrent
 - o Planting larch along riparian areas
 - Provide deciduous cover
 - Shade lines critical
 - Knowledge gaining opportunity
 - Potential acidity changes to the water and soil in consideration of Larch dropping its needles every year
 - In test phase and monitoring
 - o Planting of willows allows for the migration of different species of trees that are not washed away
 - o Creating water healthy systems
- Funding for improving fish population
 - o Considering benefits and funding for agriculture purposes
 - o Creating a healthy and good aquifer
- Consideration of introducing (forcing) water into aquifers
 - o Government drilling
 - o Three test wells in the Omineca area
 - o Two additional test wells moving through the approval process
- Building baseline information for the future

DELEGATION

NECHAKO ENVIRONMENT AND WATER STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY – Wayne Salewski, President – Re: Beaver Dams (Cont'd)

- Chilako River
 - o Repairing riparian areas
 - o Seeds come and draw 100s of species of plant life
 - o Slow water movement
- Ducks Unlimited
 - o Contributors have dropped dramatically
 - o NEWSS has a good relationship
- Foreign ownership of land
 - o Challenges
 - o Lands owned in Area F under foreign owners – one corporation replaced 32 family farms
 - o NEWSS requested the Honourable Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture to discuss the issue when she visits the region
- Providing support for the initiative and future advancement of the program.

Chair Parker thanked Mr. Salewski for attending the meeting.

DELEGATIONS (CONT'D)

Taylor Bachrach, MP Skeena-Bulkley Valley – Re: Update

Chair Parker welcomed Taylor Bachrach, MP Skeena-Bulkley Valley.

MP Bachrach provided the following update:

- Current U.S. economic climate and uncertainty
 - o Pulling people together and talking Canadian interests
 - o Working to determine the potential impacts to northern BC
 - o Potential impacts of a tariff war on both sides of the U.S. and Canadian Border
 - o Inflation pressures
 - o Softwood Lumber Agreement
 - o Aluminum and Steel
 - More impact on Aluminum exports than steel
 - Reached out to Rio Tinto and the Aluminum Association
 - Accessing other markets
 - Access to Tidewater
- Upcoming Canadian Federal Election
- RDBN Rail Safety Report

DELEGATIONS (CONT'D)

Taylor Bachrach, MP Skeena-Bulkley Valley – Re: Update (Cont'd)

- Federal Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities
 - o Railway Safety and the Effects of Railway Operations on the Surrounding Communities in which they Operate Report
 - 33 recommendations that the Federal Government has yet to implement
 - o Reconvened new hearings on how communities can respond to spills and fires and other events caused by transporting dangerous goods via rail
 - Hearings were not completed prior to the proroguing of the Federal Government
 - Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs provided testimony
 - o Lac-Mégantic
 - o Impacts from Liquid Propane spills or explosions
 - Immediate need to evacuate residents up wind of the disaster
 - Significant risks
 - Future increase of propane and ammonia transportation
 - o Kitselas First Nation conducting its own study on Rail Safety and has hired a leading expert from Italy
 - Lesser events that would have impacts
 - o Who is responsible for rail safety events
 - Federal Government responsibility
 - Rail companies
 - o Volunteer and Rural Fire Departments abilities to respond to a rail safety event
 - o Port Expansion
 - Environmental Assessment Process
 - Limited in scope and pertains to the Port itself and does not address communities along the Highway 16 corridor
 - o Tabletop exercises/training
 - Planning for significant events rather than small scale events
- Immigration
 - o Focused on immigration recently
 - o November 2024 Federal Government brought in sweeping changes to immigration policies
 - Reducing the temporary population from 6.5% to 5%
 - Reducing the population in 2025 and 2026 by 450,000 people per year
 - Must become permanent residents or will need to leave Canada
 - o Communities in northern BC dependent on temporary residents as part of work permits
 - Challenges for businesses
 - Impacts to families that have settled in the region
 - o Reform needed for Canada's Temporary Worker Program
 - o Determining strategies to bring voices together to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

DELEGATIONS (CONT'D)

Taylor Bachrach, MP Skeena-Bulkley Valley – Re: Update (Cont'd)

The following was discussed:

- Past commitment from the Federal Government for funding at the start of the Pine Beetle epidemic
- Recruitment of professionals from the U.S.
 - o B.C.'s Minister of Health focusing on recruitment of physicians
 - o Province wide marginal progress reducing the need for a family doctor
- Impacts to communities from a rail safety event involving propane or other dangerous goods
 - o Consideration of a community emergency warning system
 - o Evacuation protocols
 - o Preplanning for events
 - o Building infrastructure close to rail lines
 - o Emergency Operations Centers located near rail lines
 - o Downloading of responsibilities to local government
 - o Tabletop exercises demonstrate the catastrophic impacts of a rail event
 - o Increased rail traffic with future Port expansions and the need to have safe rail transportation
- Terrorism concerns regarding rail
- Impacts to communities from dangerous goods within communities
- Foreign ownership of property
 - o Discussed what has occurred in the Robson Valley
 - o Past presentation by the RDBN to the Senate of Canada
 - o Each Province has different regulations
- Export of aluminum
- Immigration
 - o Creating a model based on Canadian residents/employees
 - o Temporary workers and immigration are a factor to building healthy communities
 - Fulfil worker shortages due to employee shortages and need for labour force
 - o Ensuring immigration plays an appropriate role and respects human rights
 - o Challenges for immigrants and temporary workers to navigate the Canadian immigration system
 - Lack of capacity to handle the number of cases
 - o Suggestion to implement a moratorium on immigration to allow for communities to address the current number of immigrants in Canada
 - o The number of business owners that are immigrants to Canada
 - Huge part of the diversity and spirit of communities
 - o Accessing Immigration services is challenging as the closest to the region is Prince George
 - Suggestion for a travelling immigration service
 - o Ukrainian refugees wanting to return home – unsafe to do so
- Town of Smithers input to the Federal Transportation Committee regarding small airports
 - o Struggle with the monopoly of larger airlines

DELEGATIONS (CONT'D)

Taylor Bachrach, MP Skeena-Bulkley Valley – Re: Update (Cont'd)

- Passenger Rail struggles
 - o History of passenger rail transportation
 - o Privatization of rail between Toronto and Quebec City and the potential impacts to Via Rail across Canada
- International student restrictions
 - o Impacts on programming at post-secondary education facilities
 - o Unintended consequences
 - o MP Bachrach has had discussions with the College of New Caledonia and University of Northern BC
- Need for rail companies to have an awareness of sparks created by rail traffic and the potential wildfire risk and addressing the risk.

Chair Parker thanked MP Bachrach for attending the meeting.

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS

Resolutions for Submission Moved by Director McGuire
To the North Central Local Seconded by Director Dekens
Government Association (NCLGA)

2025-4-3 "That the Board submit the Essential Service Levels of Inland Ferries resolution to the North Central Local Government Association."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Minerals North - April 30- Moved by Director Moon
May 2, 2025 – Prince George, Seconded by Director Stoltenberg
BC

2025-4-4 "That the Board authorize attendance of Rural Directors wishing to attend Minerals North from April 30-May 2, 2025 in Prince George, B.C."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Smithers and Area Victims' Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Services Service Establishment Seconded by Director Atrill
Amendment Bylaw 2058

2025-4-5 "That the Smithers and Area Victims' Services Service Establishment Amendment Bylaw No. 2058, 2024 be adopted this 13th day of March 2025."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS (CONT'D)

RDBN Regional Public Transit and Para-Transit (Highway 16) Service Establishment Amendment Bylaw No. 2055 Moved by Director Storey
Seconded by Director McGuire

2025-4-6

"That Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Regional Public Transit and Para-Transit (Highway 16) Service Establishment Amendment Bylaw No. 2055, 2024 be adopted this 13th day of March, 2025."

(Participants/2/3/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Community Works Fund for Burns Lake Public Library HVAC Replacement

Moved by Director Riis-Christianson
Seconded by Director Wiebe

2025-4-7

"1) That the Board authorize contributing up to \$100,000 in Canada Community Building Fund BC monies, split 50/50 between Electoral Areas B (Burns Lake Rural) and E (Francois/Ootsa Lake Rural) to the Village of Burns Lake for a Cultural Infrastructure project and further,

(All/Directors/Majority)

2) That the Board authorize the withdrawal of up to \$100,000 from the Federal Gas Tax Reserve Fund.

(Participants/weighted/majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Break for lunch at 12:00

Reconvened at 12:50 p.m.

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS (CONT'D)

Grant to Village of Burns Lake -Faces and Places Moved by Director Riis-Christianson
Seconded by Director Wiebe

2025-4-8

"That the Board approve a grant of \$5,000 to the Village of Burns Lake, split 50/50 between the Electoral Areas B (Burns Lake Rural) and E (Francois/Ootsa Lake) Economic Development Services for a Faces and Places marketing project."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS (CONT'D)

Grant to Village of Burns Lake Moved by Director Riis-Christianson
-Website Redesign Seconded by Director Wiebe

2025-4-9 "That the Board approve a grant of \$10,000 to the Village of Burns Lake, split 50/50 between the Electoral Areas B (Burns Lake Rural) and E (Francois/Ootsa Lake Rural) Economic Development Services for a Website Redesign project

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Lakes District Airport Society Moved by Director Wiebe
-Letter of Support Request Seconded by Director Greenaway

2025-4-10 "That the Board provide a letter to the Lakes District Airport Society to support its BC Air Access Program Fund."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Stuart Lake Seniors Moved by Director Elphee
Association-Letter of Seconded by Director Greenaway
Support Request

2025-4-11 "That the Board provide a letter to the Stuart Lake Seniors Association to support its funding applications for its Social Well-Being Project."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

UBCM – 2025 FireSmart Pilot Moved by Director Lambert
Program Regional District Seconded by Director Riis-Christianson
Cooperative Community
Wildfire Response Organizations
Application

2025-4-12 "That the Board supports the submission of the application to the UBCM - 2025 FireSmart Pilot Program for Regional District Cooperative Community Wildfire Response Organizations (UBCM-CCWR) on behalf of the Regional District Bulkley-Nechako.

Further, the Board authorizes staff and understands that if the grant is approved, the RDBN will receive and manage all grant funding, and commits to any associated ineligible costs and cost overruns."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS (CONT'D)

2025 Budget Update

Moved by Director Dekens
Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

2025-4-13

"That the Board receive the Chief Financial Officer's 2025 Budget Update memorandum."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Director Stoltenberg requested staff change the Bulkley Valley Regional Pool and Recreation Centre Budget by allocating the New Capital Items budget line amount to the Contribution to Capital Reserve line amount.

Northwest BC Regional Funding Agreement (RBA) Long-term Development Plan

Moved by Director Storey
Seconded by Director Atrill

2025-4-14

"That the Board receive the Chief Financial Officer's Northwest BC Regional Funding Agreement (RBA) Long-term Development Plan memorandum."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Discussion took place regarding:

- Electoral Area Directors having available funds for projects
- RBA Long-term Development Plan and Appendix 2 from the RBA Agreement
- Utilizing RBA funding for environmental services, housing, parks and trails, fire trucks and asset management
- Director Riis-Christianson requested staff change the Regional Parks and Trails Burns Lake, Area B, Area E Northwest Revenue Sharing line item to \$400,000 split equally between Areas B and E for 2026 to 2028.

Premier's Task Force on Agriculture and Food Economy

Moved by Director Dekens
Seconded by Director Moon

2025-4-15

"That the Board receive the Regional Agriculture Coordinator's Premier's Task Force on Agriculture and Food Economy memorandum."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS (CONT'D)

The following was discussed regarding the Premier's Task Force on Agriculture and Food Economy:

- Lack of northern representation
- Sending a letter to the Premier and Minister of Agriculture
- Percentage of agriculture and beef and grain production in northern B.C. requesting northern representation
- Requesting that a clear form of communication be provided by the Task Force to the entire Province.

Write a letter to the Premier Moved by Director Dekens
and the Minister of Agriculture Seconded by Director Moon
Premier's Task Force on
Agriculture and Food Economy

2025-4-16

"That the Board write a letter to the Honourable David Eby, Premier and the Honourable Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture and Food expressing concerns regarding the lack of northern representation on the Premier's Task Force on Agriculture and Food Economy and requesting that a representative be appointed from the Peace River region and northwest B.C.

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Items to be brought forward
To the public agenda from
Special (In-Camera) Meeting

Moved by Director Moutray
Seconded by Director Storey

2025-4-16

"That the Board receive the Deputy Director of Corporate Services' Items to be brought forward to the public agenda from Special (In-Camera) Meeting memorandum."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADMINISTRATION CORRESPONDENCE

Ministry of Forests – RDBN
Letter to the Minister of
Transportation and Transit
– Replacement of a Legacy
Culvert within Burns Lake
Community Forest

Moved by Director Riis-Christianson
Seconded by Director Lambert

2025-4-17

"That the Board receive the correspondence from the Ministry of Forests in response to the RDBN letter to the Minister of Transportation and Transit -Replacement of a Legacy Culvert within Burns Lake Community Forest."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADMINISTRATION CORRESPONDENCE (CONT'D)

Columbia Shuswap Regional District – Cooperative Community Wildfire Response Program Moved by Director Dekens
Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

2025-4-18 “That the Board receive the correspondence from the Columbia Shuswap Regional District regarding Cooperative Community Wildfire Response Program.”

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Audit Planning Letter Moved by Director Storey
Seconded by Director Elphee

2025-5-19 “That the Board receive the Chief Financial Officer’s Audit Planning Letter memorandum.”

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

NEW BUSINESS

Current Economic Concerns and Purchasing Review Director Riis-Christianson spoke of the current economic concerns regarding the tariffs being implemented by the U.S. and the issues taking place.

Purchasing Review Moved by Director Riis-Christianson
Seconded by Director Moutray

2025-5-20 “That the Board direct staff to conduct a high-level review of the Regional District’s 2025 budget to identify:
1. The impact recently announced and proposed US tariffs and Canada/BC counter-tariffs may have on regional district operations and expenditures in the coming year; and,
2. Strategies the regional district can employ to mitigate the impact of tariffs and counter-tariffs by supporting Canadian companies and reducing, postponing, or eliminating purchases of goods and services made in the United States or sold in Canada by US companies.”

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

NEW BUSINESS (CONT'D)

CAO Helgesen discussed leading staff through possible impacts and monitoring the everyday changes. Discussion took place regarding

- the work being done by UBCM, FCM and the Province
- Staff communications with GFOA (Government Finance Officers Association of BC)
- The importance of shopping local
- Supporting local businesses and purchasing the products currently on their shelves
- Village of Burns Lake Council passed a resolution regarding purchasing local and domestically wherever possible
- New West Partnership Trade Agreement (NWPTA).

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Greenaway

2025-4-21

"That the meeting be adjourned at 1:43 p.m."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Mark Parker, Chair

Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of Corporate Services