



Committee of the Whole Meeting
Supplementary Agenda
September 04, 2025

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS

CIHR Application 'Community of Practice on Climate Displacement'
Letter of Support

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Recommendation

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Minister of Forests - Forest Service Road Usage Response

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Receive

ADJOURNMENT



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Committee of Whole Supplementary

To: Chair and Committee
From: Scott Zayac, Director of Protective Services
Date: September 4, 2025
Subject: **CIHR Application 'Community of Practice on Climate Displacement'
Letter of Support**

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

That the Committee recommend that the Board approve the attached Letter of Support for the application to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research for a Community of Practice on Climate Displacement project.

BACKGROUND

Please see the attached letter for additional information.

ATTACHMENTS:

CIHR application "Community of Practice on Climate Displacement" Letter of Support

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This topic aligns with the following Strategic Focus Area(s) from the RDBN Strategic Plan:
Not Applicable



September 4, 2025

Dr. Heather Castleden, Project Lead
c/o Dr. Margot Parkes – School of Health Sciences
University of Northern BC
3333 University Way
Prince George, BC V2N 4Z9
Via email: margot.parkes@unbc.ca

Dear Dr. Castleden,

I am writing as the Chair of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN), to confirm our support for and involvement as a 'knowledge user' in your application for a CIHR Project Grant entitled: *Generating place-based capacity to address the health impacts of climate-related disasters: Laying the foundation for a national Community of Practice on Climate Displacement using a planetary health framework*.

The RDBN has had a long history of collaborative approaches to addressing a range of climate-related challenges and disasters including drought, floods and wildland fires. This means that it has been interesting to learn about the proposed CIHR-funded project focused on climate-related disasters and health through one of the project members, Dr. Margot Parkes, at the University of Northern British Columbia. Dr. Parkes has invited us to consider being a 'knowledge user' of this project, describing ways that this would create opportunities to participate in knowledge exchange and learning opportunities with the proposed Community of Practice on Climate Displacement.

The RDBN provides local government services to an area of over 77,000 square kilometers, and is home to nearly 38,000 residents. The region includes seven rural electoral areas, eight member municipalities and fourteen First Nations governments. The impact of climate-related disasters for our District is exemplified by the fact that 20% of the land base of the RDBN burned between 2014 and 2024. Informed by the importance of disaster-preparedness and response for our region, I have discussed our potential involvement in this project with the RDBN team, including our Board of Directors, Chief Administrative Officer and our Emergency Management team members. We have identified several reasons that our experience could contribute to and benefit from the proposed Community of Practice:

1. Given the ongoing and increasing impact of climate-related disasters including drought, floods and wildland fires, the RDBN has adopted an overtly collaborative, multi-agency approach, with the goal of ensuring our region is as well prepared as possible to mitigate, respond, recover from, and adapt to these disasters;
2. Over the past several fire seasons, we have worked closely with First Nations on whose territory the RDBN is located. This has included proactive approaches such as emergency management planning, running tabletop exercises, sharing information and issuing joint evacuation notices with First Nations;

3. Ongoing relationships with community groups and training for landholders, and rightsholder to respond to disasters; and,
4. Through our work and collaborations, we are increasingly aware of the health and well-being impacts of climate-related disasters and the importance of including health sector colleagues as part of our efforts to overcome silos, work together, and respond effectively to the needs of the communities we serve. This is especially evident in the mental health impacts of wildfires for First Nations and landholders, whether concerned about impacts to their animals, wildlife, their own properties or the first responders themselves.

Participating in a national community of practice focused on place-based adaptive capacity to address the health impacts of climate-related disasters, would create opportunities for our highly-impacted region to both contribute our experience and learn from the insights, practices and approaches used by other rural, remote and Indigenous communities across Canada. We would look forward to working with the project team to identify connections and initiatives that could benefit the RDBN and the communities we serve.

Informed by these points of connection, and also Dr. Parkes' 15 year history of positive research and collaborations throughout our region (including with the Nechako Watershed Roundtable and the District of Vanderhoof), this letter confirms that the RDBN is willing to be part of the project as a 'knowledge user'. This would involve engaging with the project team during the proposed four-year project and supporting through in-kind contributions of staff time, knowledge mobilization, and looking to move the research results into practice.

We look forward to hearing about the outcome of your application to CIHR, and we look forward to working with you on this important project.

Sincerely,

Mark Parker
Chair

Attachments:
Map of RDBN Wildfire Boundaries, 2010-2024





Reference: 282522

August 21, 2025

VIA EMAIL: wendy.wainwright@rdbn.bc.ca

Mark Parker, Chair
Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
PO Box 820
Burns Lake, BC V0J 1E0

Dear Mark Parker:

Thank you for your letter of July 8, 2025, regarding concerns about Forest Service Road (FSR) maintenance and management following the downturn in northern B.C.'s forest sector. The Ministry of Forests values its partnership with the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN) and appreciates the opportunity to clarify our policies and processes.

We recognize that closures of local sawmills have led to some gaps in operator-led FSR maintenance, even as rural residents, recreational users and other stakeholders continue to rely on these roads. Ensuring safe and reliable access for all user groups remains a top priority for the ministry. I believe you heard this message from the ministry delegation that delivered a presentation to the RDBN Rural Service Committee meeting in early June, and I appreciate your follow-up questions.

Regarding cost sharing, the Morice Road User Group billing model, administered by Pro-Tech Forest Resources Ltd., allocates maintenance costs based on each company's reported traffic volumes – heavy trucks, pickups, log loads, etcetera. A single user at the end of a road bears full costs until additional users join, at which point Pro-Tech prorates expenses in direct proportion to usage. This administration model is commonly used across the province. The process is transparent. Each road user is sent a monthly traffic count and maintenance cost summary.

For community and recreational access, the ministry classifies certain FSRs as "High Value" when they serve sites featuring established infrastructure such as trailheads, campgrounds and day-use facilities, and when they align with objectives in the Provincial Recreation Sites and Trails Strategy. Our assessment considers actual visitor-use data, facility presence, and strategic importance within the provincial network.

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Mark Parker, Chair

Decisions on which FSRs receive regular ministry maintenance are guided by our Forest Service Road Management Framework. This framework evaluates public safety, economic necessity, environmental sensitivity, cultural values, and partnership opportunities to inform annual maintenance planning and budget allocations.

Finally, as to your concern about safety use for crisis events, I confirm that my ministry collaborates with Emergency Management BC to integrate FSRs into wildfire evacuation planning and firebreak construction. Roads designated as primary evacuation routes undergo annual inspections and priority maintenance to support community safety.

I trust this information addresses the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako's questions. Should you require further details or wish to discuss these matters in greater depth, please contact Neal Marincak, District Manager, Nadina Natural Resource District, at 250-692-1345 or Neal.Marincak@gov.bc.ca.

Again, thank you for writing to share your concerns.

Sincerely,



Ravi Parmar
Minister

pc: Honourable Kelly Greene, Minister of Emergency Management
and Climate Readiness
Makenzie Leine, Deputy Minister of Forests
Mike Hykaway, Assistant Deputy Minister, North Area, Ministry of Forests
Jevan Hanchard, Regional Executive Director, Skeena Natural Resource Region
Neal Marincak, District Manager, Nadina Natural Resource District



July 8, 2025

Honourable Ravi Parmar
Minister of Forests
FOR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Parmar:

Forestry Service Roads Usage and Maintenance

The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN) would like to express its concerns regarding the maintenance and management of Forest Service Roads (FSRs) within the region due to the recent downturn in the forest sector in northern B.C.

On June 5th a delegation from the Ministry of Forests, Integrated Resource Operations Division, Engineering Branch presented to the Board regarding the Ministry of Forests Engineering Roads Funding Policy. During the meeting several concerns were raised about the closure of local sawmills resulting in the end of FSR maintenance by the operators who were previously responsible. However, many of these roads continue to be utilized by rural residents to access their homes, as well as by recreational users and other industrial stakeholders.

There is also an issue of equity between industrial road users. Forestry companies receive a stumpage reduction for road maintenance and construction and some mines receive provincial support to maintain access to the road they use where other resource sectors and/or businesses do not receive similar incentives. It is also challenging to determine the road user group cost breakdowns to maintain the FSRs. Is there a method and tools to ascertain costs associated with maintaining FSRs that could assist user groups? We would like to kindly request clarification regarding these differences and if better equity could be established among resource sectors.

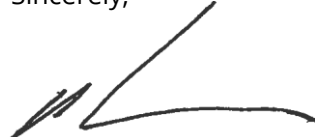
For community, recreational and backcountry users, many of the FSRs are becoming unusable due to a lack of maintenance. Longstanding access is being impacted. We understand that some recreation sites are classified as "high-value" sites, but we would appreciate clarification on the criteria that determines which recreational sites in the province are classified as high-value. What level of recreation activity warrants support from the province to maintain an FSR for community and recreational purposes?

There are some FSRs in the Province that are maintained and some that are not. Is there a framework that guides these decisions?

A final concern is the use of FSRs for emergency evacuation routes and firebreaks during wildfire events. In northern B.C. these routes are often used during emergency events to safely evacuate area residents. We are wondering if these factors are taken into consideration for emergency and disaster management planning.

We recognize there are several considerations involved with the building and maintenance of Forest Service Roads in the Province and we look forward to the Province's response regarding our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Mark Parker
Chair