



REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
MINUTES
Thursday, January 15, 2026

Directors Present: Chair Mark Parker
Gladys Atrill
Shane Brienen
Leroy Dekens
Martin Elphee
Judy Greenaway - via Zoom
Clint Lambert
Linda McGuire
Shirley Moon
Kevin Moutray
Chris Newell
Michael Riis-Christianson
Stoney Stoltenberg
Sarrah Storey - via Zoom
Henry Wiebe

Staff: Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer
Cheryl Anderson, Director of Corporate Services
John Illes, Chief Financial Officer
Nellie Davis, Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Rural Services - left at 11:28 a.m.
Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of Corporate Services
Scott Zayac, Director of Protective Services - left at 10:57 a.m., returned at 11:00 a.m.

Others: Susan Stanford, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Citizens' Services -left at 10:56 a.m.
Jeanne Holliss, Executive Director, Connected Communities, Ministry of Citizens' Services - left at 10:56 a.m.
Michael Jeffery, Director, Network BC, Ministry of Citizens' Services - left at 10:56 a.m.
Krista Zens, Director, Data and Analytics, Ministry of Citizens' Services - left at 10:56 a.m.

Megan Chadwick, Director, Community Relations,
Ministry of Citizens' Services - left at 10:56 a.m.

CALL TO ORDER

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

First Nations Acknowledgement

AGENDA & SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

January 15, 2026

2026-COWM-043

Moved by Director Stoltenberg

Seconded by Director McGuire

That the Committee of the Whole Agenda for January 15, 2026 be approved; and that the Supplementary Agenda be dealt with at this meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

MINUTES

Committee of the Whole Minutes - November 6, 2025

2026-COWM-044

Moved by Director Dekens

Seconded by Director Elphee

That the Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes of November 6, 2025 be approved.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

DELEGATIONS

Ministry of Citizens' Services - via Zoom

Susan Stanford, Assistant Deputy Minister

Jeanne Holliss, Executive Director, Connected Communities

Michael Jeffery, Director, Network BC

Krista Zens, Director, Data and Analytics
Megan Chadwick, Director, Community Relations
Re: Cellular Drive Data Study Overview

Chair Parker welcomed Susan Stanford, Assistant Deputy Minister, Jeanne Holliss, Executive Director, Connected Communities, Michael Jeffery, Director, Network BC, Krista Zens, Director, Data and Analytics, Megan Chadwick, Director, Community Relations, Ministry of Citizens' Services.

A PowerPoint Presentation was provided.

BC Cellular Drive Study Overview

- Highway Cellular in B.C.
- Why a Cellular Drive Study?
- Cellular Drive Study Rollout
- Cellular Drive Study Findings
- New Picture of Highway Cellular in B.C.
- Highways with the most significant coverage gaps
- RDBN Highway Cellular Findings
- Cellular Drive Study Dashboard
- Going Forward
- Evolving Satellite-to-Cellular Services.

The following was discussed:

- Breakdown by service provider
 - Depending on service carrier a person travelling the highways may or may not have coverage
 - The dashboard can provide that detail and view road segments closely
- Highway 27 coverage
- Range of signal levels in correlation to bars of service on a phone
- Safety on Highway 16 in the event of an accident
 - Inability to call 911 and having to travel to access cell service
 - Reported incident to Telus
- Intermittent changes in service levels depending on the day
 - Vegetation and high volumes of precipitation may impact cellular service
 - Carriers can have technical challenges
- Ministry of Citizens' Services will bring the Cellular Drive Study forward to the carriers along highways

- 4G vs. 5G access and impacted coverage
 - Carriers are looking into concerns regarding the changes in service levels
 - Changing phone settings from 5G to 4G may improve service levels
- Highway 118
 - Steps to increase coverage
 - Sharing information with Telecommunication carriers
- Satellite cellular coverage
 - Rogers is using for texting
 - Apple has satellite option on newer devices
 - Other Telcoms working on initiatives
 - Unpopulated sections Telcoms investigating satellite options
 - Cellular to satellite coverage
- Study looked at 10kms sections of highway
 - Can be a significant distance in the event of an emergency if it is an area of no cellular coverage
 - Carriers utilize the 10kms distance threshold when reviewing equipment requirements to bridge distances for service levels
- Dashboard is not yet available to the public
 - Snapshot in time
 - Process to release access to the dashboard
 - Reach out to Ministry of Citizens' Services if there is any information from the Dashboard the Board would like to review
- Federal Government readdressing how it amassess cellular data from providers
- Union of B.C. Municipalities work along 911 and land line levy
 - Technological shift in relation to mobile technology
 - 911 levy for cellular providers
- Ministry of Citizens' Service shared the data with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)
 - Use the data to improve how coverage mapping is displayed for Canadians
 - New consultation opening to ask all Canadians and experts in telecommunications
 - CRTC wanting more granular data from service providers
 - Reviewing satellite to cell service mapping
 - Province intending to participate
- Newer devices vs. older devices to access satellite service on cellular devices
 - Ministry of Citizens' Service will provide additional information
- Opportunity for feedback.

Chair Parker thanked Assistant Deputy Minister Stanford, Mr. Jeffery, Mss. Holliss, Zens and Chadwick for attending the meeting.

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS

Nellie Davis, Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Rural Services - 2026 Regional Grant in Aid

2026-COWM-045

Moved by Director Riis-Christianson

Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

That the Committee recommend that the Board approve carrying unspent Regional Grant in Aid from the 2025 Budget into the 2026 Regional Grant in Aid budget.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Nellie Davis, Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Rural Services - Community Works Funds for Topley Fire Hall Generator Project - Electoral Areas G (Houston/Topley Rural) and B (Burns Lake Rural)

2026-COWM-046

Moved by Director Riis-Christianson

Seconded by Director Newell

1. That the Board authorize contributing up to \$57,600 of Electoral Area G (Houston/Granisle Rural) and \$14,400 of Electoral Area B (Burns Lake Rural) Canada Community-Building Fund BC allocation monies to a Fire Hall Infrastructure project at the Topley Fire Hall, and further,
(participants/weighted/majority)
2. That the Board authorize the withdrawal of up to \$72,000 from the Federal Gas Tax Reserve Fund.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

John Illes, Chief Finance Officer - Changes in Market and Non-Market Assessments

2026-COWM-047

Moved by Director Dekens

Seconded by Director Wiebe

That the Committee receive the Chief Financial Officer's Changes in Market and Non-Market Assessments memorandum.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Chief Financial Officer Illes provided an overview of the changes in market and non-market assessments.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Loss of major industry
- Outcome with no change to requisition
- Single family residential classes average market increase of 3.64%
- Compared change of requisition for each jurisdiction from 2025 to 2026 and percentage of Total RD Assessments 2026 to 2025
- Simplifying the information in the tax notices provided to residents
- Decrease in non-market assessments and increased market assessment
- Electoral Area E - 2026 Requisition for major services only
 - Includes all assessments
- Taxation increase dependent on requisition for services that the Board is wanting to provide
- Reclassification of farmland to single family residential
- Anticipated major projects for 2026
- Dismantling of mill sites will see a further decrease in industrial taxation
- Hospital District Assessment
- Average house price in Smithers and anticipated taxation
 - Increase in new homes in Smithers
- BC Assessment appeal process
 - Providing BC Assessment information on RDBN website.

Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of Corporate Services - Canada's Remote and Rural Broadband Conference (CRRBC)- Director Riis-Christianson Follow up

2026-COWM-048

Moved by Director Riis-Christianson

Seconded by Director Lambert

That the Committee receive the Deputy Director of Corporate Services' Canada's Remote and Rural Broadband Conference (CRRBC) - Director Riis-Christianson Follow up memorandum.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADMINISTRATION CORRESPONDENCE

Office of the Premier/The Honourable Brittny Anderson, Minister of State for Local Governments and Rural Communities - UBCM Follow-up

2026-COWM-049

Moved by Director Elphee

Seconded by Director Dekens

That the Committee receive the Administration Correspondence from the Office of the Premier/The Honourable Brittny Anderson, Minister of State for Local Governments and Rural Communities regarding UBCM Follow-up.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Ministry of Forests - Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) Program Funding

2026-COWM-051

Moved by Director Lambert

Seconded by Director Wiebe

That the Committee receive the Administration Correspondence from the Ministry of Forests regarding Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) Program Funding.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship - Response - Health and Restoration of the Nechako River

2026-COWM-052

Moved by Director Stoltenberg

Seconded by Director Brienens

That the Committee receive the Administration Correspondence from the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship regarding the Health and Restoration of the Nechako River.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

North Central Local Government Association - 2025 Mental Health and Addictions Accord

2026-COWM-053

Moved by Director McGuire

Seconded by Director Elphee
That the Committee receive the Administration Correspondence from the North Central Local Government Association regarding the 2025 Mental Health and Addictions Accord.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Union of B.C. Municipalities - Canada Community - Building Fund-Second Community Works Fund Payment 2025 - 2026

2026-COWM-054

Moved by Director Lambert

Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

That the Committee receive the Administration Correspondence from the Union of B.C. Municipalities regarding the Canada Community - Building Fund - Second Community Works Fund Payment 2025-2026.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

*** ADMINISTRATION REPORT**

*** Shari Janzen, Community Development Coordinator - 2026 Regional Business Forum**

2026-COWM-055

Moved by Director Storey

Seconded by Director Moutray

That the Committee receive the Community Development Coordinator's 2026 Regional Business Forum memorandum.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

IN-CAMERA MOTION

2026-COWM-056

Moved by Director Stoltenberg

Seconded by Director Dekens

That this meeting be closed to the public pursuant to Sections 90(1)(a), of the Community Charter for the Board to deal with matters relating to:

- Board Relations.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADJOURNMENT

2026-COWM-057

Moved by Director Stoltenberg

Seconded by Director Newell

That the meeting be adjourned at 11:28 a.m.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Mark Parker, Chair

Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of Corporate Services