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December 7, 2022

File No: 0645

Honourable Minister Nathan Cullen  
Minister of Municipal Affairs  
PO Box 9056, STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Cullen,

I am writing at the direction of the Regional Board in response to correspondence from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, dated November 17, 2022, that was received at the December 01, 2022, regular meeting. The Board authorized the Chair to write letters to the Regional District of North Okanagan, and yourself, regarding the North Westside Governance and Services Study (Study) which was funded by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

The Electoral Area West and North Westside Governance and Services Study Committee was established in 2022 through adoption of a terms of reference that was drafted and approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. Ministry staff attended the committee meetings which were facilitated by consultant Alan Nielson. The final report from the committee was provided to the Regional Board at the September 26, 2022, Regular Board meeting.

The sole recommendation of the Study Committee was to pursue the implications of a realignment of the North Westside from the RDCO's Electoral Area West boundaries and creating a separate electoral area with the Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO). The recommendation of the committee was subsequently forwarded to the Ministry with unanimous support of the RDCO Board.

In considering the final recommendation of the study committee the Board did review the options within the RDCO's authority to alleviate some of the resident concerns. The RDCO has taken or is undertaking several of these options, including:

a) Electoral Area Services Committee

The RDCO Board adopted at its November 24, 2022, meeting the establishment of an Electoral Area Services Standing Committee. Terms of Reference for this Committee will be presented to the Regional Board no later than January 26, 2023.

b) Citizen's Advisory Boards

The RDCO already has several Citizen Advisory Boards in place which include participation by residents and professionals across the region. These include the Central Okanagan Economic Development Advisory Committee, Environmental Advisory Committee, the Agricultural Advisory Committee and specific to Electoral Areas, there is an Electoral Area Planning Advisory Committee.

c) Non-statutory Service Reviews

The RDCO has routinely conducted non-statutory service reviews on a five-year cycle including the services provided to RDCO Electoral Area West.

d) Community Communications and Engagement

Significant efforts have been made since 2021 to increase community communications and engagement. The Regional Board adopted a communications strategy for Electoral Areas and the North Westside in January 2021.

Despite the impacts of COVID-19 and the devastating White Rock Lake wildfire in 2021, the RDCO has also undertaken the following:

- Livestream and video recording of regular Regional Board meetings so residents can see decision-making in action
- Updated website (rdco.com) with specific electoral area pages and features like news feeds, a subscription for e-newsletters (topics including water systems, wildfire recovery, electoral area news, waste reduction and the Study)
- A new online public engagement platform (yoursay.rdco.com) allowing online engagement for North Westside projects. This is also where all documents, video, surveys and news articles were hosted for the Study
- Regular advertising of RDCO activities in the local newspaper, monthly magazine, social media and on bulletin boards located at community mailboxes
- Application of RDCO branding more consistently to all programs and services to help residents recognize where RDCO tax funds are spent
- A statistically valid Citizen survey checking on resident concerns and priorities for future investment
- Updated RDCO road signage for community notifications and projects

At our December 01, 2022, regular meeting, the Board received the correspondence from the Ministry and further resolved to take action in support of the study committee recommendation. In respect of the Ministry led process, and subsequent request for additional information, we will be contacting the Regional District of the North Okanagan Chair and CAO for their perspective on the impacts of a regional district restructure for the North Okanagan.

The RDCO is supportive of a boundary review and requests guidance from the Ministry on next steps required to further the study recommendation.

Sincerely,



Loyal Wooldridge,  
Regional Board Chairperson

cc:

Tara Faganello, Assistant Deputy Minister, Local Government Division

Karen Lynch, Director, Governance and Structure

Brian Reardon, Chief Administrative Officer, Regional District of Central Okanagan