



# Regional Board Report

**TO:** Regional Board  
**FROM:** Brian Reardon, CAO  
**DATE:** October 25, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** North Westside Restructure Planning Grant Update

**Voting Entitlement:** All Directors – Unweighted Corporate Vote – Simple Majority – LGA 208

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**Purpose:** To present correspondence from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Honourable Josie Osborne, approving a \$60,000 Restructure Planning Grant.

## **Executive Summary:**

We have recently received a letter from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs dated October 6, 2021 approving a Restructure Planning Grant to the RDCO in the amount of \$60,000 to facilitate a governance and services study of Electoral Area West, with an emphasis on the North Westside communities. The letter states:

- *The purpose of the grant is to assist the RDCO with education on facets of governance and services in Electoral Area West,*
- *Engaging the public to understand the concerns and interests of North Westside residents,*
- *And identifying robust options within the regional district framework for addressing the most pressing interests of the community.*

It goes on to state:

- *The study is not an incorporation study-it will not provide detailed technical or financial information on the impact of municipal incorporation,*
- *This study will address the misinformation and education issues noted in the 2017 study,*
- *Synthesize the situation and issues to determine realistic options for addressing issues and concerns,*
- *And provide an outline of implementation or next steps.*

The Ministry also indicated they are prepared to be flexible on the timing of the study to ensure RDCO administration can focus on urgent response and recovery matters associated with the White Rock Lake fire.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT** the Regional Board receive the CAO report entitled North Westside Restructure Planning Grant Update dated October 25, 2021, for information.

Respectfully Submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Reardon".

*Attachments:* RDCO Letter to Minister Osborne dated March 29, 2021  
Minister Osborne Letter to RDCO dated April 27, 2021  
Minister Osborne Letter to RDCO dated October 6, 2021  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs Letter to RDCO dated October 12, 2021  
Draft Terms of Reference for the North Westside Study

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## **Background:**

In early January, 2021 Chair Given established the North Westside Provincial Restructure Planning Grant Committee as a standing committee of the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) Board of Directors. As set out in its terms of reference, the Committee's purpose was to advise the Board on funding opportunities available through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs' restructure planning grant program for the North Westside communities of the Central Okanagan West Electoral Area.

The Committee's inaugural meeting was held on January 20, 2021. At that meeting the Committee reviewed the RDCO's *Electoral Area Communications Strategy* that was developed to help strengthen the relationships, levels of trust and communication channels between the Regional District and residents of the North Westside communities. Several of the concerns and issues that the *Strategy* aims to address were highlighted in the *North Westside Services and Community Issues Study* that was undertaken in 2017 with the support of the Ministry.

At its first meeting the Committee also welcomed Ms. Marijke Edmondson, Director, and Mr. Barrie Nicholls, Program Analyst, both of the Ministry's Governance and Structure Branch. Ms. Edmondson and Mr. Nicholls, with input from local government consultant Allan Neilson (Neilson Strategies Inc.), outlined the restructure planning grant framework for the Committee. These speakers helped the Committee understand the importance of examining, prior to any consideration of incorporation, the existing state of local governance and service delivery in North Westside, the concerns and interests of residents with respect to governance and delivery, and the range of future governance and delivery options available.

The Committee met again on February 26, 2021, to consider a path forward. Building on the comments provided in January by Ministry staff, Mr. Neilson reviewed with the Committee the purpose of a Governance and Services Study, identified the participants involved in conducting and overseeing such a study, and outlined the process followed in undertaking the study. Mr. Neilson provided an overview of the 2017 *Electoral Area C (South Shuswap) Governance and Services Study* to illustrate for Committee members the extent of research and assessment involved in such an exercise, as well as the level of community engagement.

At the close of its second meeting, the Committee determined to recommend to the RDCO Board that the Regional District pursue funding for a Governance and Services Study for North Westside. At its meeting on March 11, 2021, the Board received the Committee's recommendation and unanimously approved the following two-part resolution:

*"THAT the Regional District of Central Okanagan Board request the Ministry of Municipal Affairs for funding and support to undertake a Governance and Services Study for the North Westside portion of the Central Okanagan West Electoral Area;*

*AND THAT the Regional District of Central Okanagan Board outline a suggested scope of study to include the following three elements:*

- to document and assess the current state of local governance and service delivery in the North Westside*
- to understand the concerns and interests of North Westside residents with respect to governance and delivery*
- to identify and assess future governance and service delivery options for the community"*

Chair Given sent a letter to Minister Osbourne dated March 29, 2021 making a formal request for a Restructure Planning Grant to undertake a Governance and Services Study for the North Westside (copy attached). A response letter from Minister Osborne dated April 27, 2021 was received by our office stating the Ministry required additional details on the process, scope, budget, and timeline prior to providing a response about funding. Ministry and RDCO staff corresponded and provided additional information during the months of May and June 2021.

In a letter dated October 6, 2021 (*copy attached*) Minister Osbourne provided a response to the Regional Board's March 29, 2021 letter requesting a Restructure Planning Grant. In this letter Minister Osbourne has approved funding in the amount of \$60,000 to facilitate a governance and services study of Electoral Area West, with an emphasis on the North Westside communities.

#### *Purpose of Grant:*

The purpose of the grant is to *"assist the RDCO with education on facets of governance and services in Electoral Area West, engaging the public to understand the concerns and interests of North Westside residents, and identifying robust options within the regional district framework for addressing the most pressing interests of the communities."*

#### *Scope of Study:*

The scope of the study is currently in draft form based on conversations between Ministry and RDCO staff. The reporting schedule needs to be confirmed prior to the final scope or Terms of Reference for this study being forwarded to the Regional Board for approval. RDCO staff will bring this forward at the earliest opportunity. That said, the October 6, 2021 letter from Minister Osbourne states:

*"This study will address the misinformation and education issues noted in the 2017 study, synthesize the situation and issues to determine realistic options for addressing issues and concerns, and provide an outline of implementation or next steps. Considerations that may be identified in the study include local community size, community vision, community tax base trends, community business, industry, economic growth, and community interests."*

#### *What the Study Is Not:*

Minister Osbourne's letter states:

*"The study is not an incorporation study – it will not provide detailed technical or financial information on the impact of municipal incorporation."*

### Terms and Conditions of Study:

In the letter received from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs dated October 12, 2021 the following terms and conditions have been established:

- a) the grant funding must be used solely for the purpose of this project and for defraying the costs of undertaking, completing, and providing written reports to the Ministry on the Study;
- b) the grant funding must be used only for reasonable costs and expenses related to the Study that are incurred between October 7, 2021 to October 15, 2022; and
- c) the following reports must be submitted to the Ministry programs staff by the specified dates:
  - An *Interim Progress Report*, on or before February 28, 2022, comprised of the consultant's proposal accepted as the basis of a contract for the Study and/or a preliminary outline of the Study work plan.
  - A *Draft Report*, on or before July 31, 2022 comprised of a draft of the report prior to public presentation.
  - A *Final Report*, on or before September 30, 2022, comprised of a copy of the final report presented to the RDCO Board.
  - An *Account of Study Expenses*, on or before November 30, 2022, comprised of a summary of all project expenses and confirmation that either all grant funding has been expended or an unused portion of the grant funding that will be returned to the provincial government. Unused grant funding should be returned in the form of a cheque made payable to the Minister of Finance no later than November 30, 2022

### Offer of Timeline Flexibility:

The Ministry recognizes that the community and RDCO will be continuing to deal with the aftermath of the White Rock Lake wildfire throughout the year ahead and has offered flexibility on the timeline requirements noted above. Once we have retained the services of a consultant to perform the work, we will be able to confirm the reporting schedule and identify any concerns at that time.

That said, we are cautiously optimistic that the September 30, 2022 deadline for presenting the Final Report to the Regional Board will be met.

### Planned Next Steps:

Subject to receiving any specific concerns or direction from the Board, staff are planning on the following next steps:

1. Present Minister Osbourne's October 6, 2021 letter for information to the Regional Board,
2. Obtain a copy of the Ministry's Approved Scope for the Study,
3. Develop a communications strategy and reach out to the North Westside community to inform them what we know now, what the anticipated next steps are and what the process will likely be,
4. Retain the services of a consultant/subject matter expert to undertake the study,

5. Once reporting dates are estimated/confirmed we can finalize the Terms of Reference for the study and bring them forward for Regional Board approval,
6. Once the Terms of Reference have been approved by the Board the \$60,000 grant funds will be transferred to the Regional District,
7. The RDCO will set up the Governance and Services Committee as outlined in the Terms of Reference,
8. RDCO staff will coordinate study workplans from consultant and RDCO staff in 2022, and
9. Launch the Study process.

### **Financial Considerations:**

In accordance with the commitments included in Minister Osbourne's letter dated October 6, 2021, the Province has approved a \$60,000 Restructure Planning Grant. These funds will be used to pay for consultant's fees to undertake this study and meet the deadlines established in the terms of reference for this study.

As stated in Minister Osbourne's letter, undertaking a restructure study is a major endeavour and requires a significant commitment of local and provincial staff time and resources. The "significant commitment" is currently undefined.

From previous experience undertaking these types of studies, we anticipate RDCO funding and staffing requirements will be for communications, GIS analysis, hall rentals, information boards, general administration and coordination and reporting out to the Board. If supported by the Board, these costs will form part of the 2022 work plan and budget process.

### **Organizational Issues:**

This study will be a significant undertaking and if supported by the Board will be included in the 2022 work plan and budget process.

### **External Implications:**

This study will involve a significant outreach to the residents of the North Westside communities and will hopefully generate a lot of information sharing and public engagement.

### **Alternative Recommendation:**

This report is intended to be for information only at this time. Should the Board wish to provide specific direction to staff, a motion to that affect would be in order.