

Neilson Strategies  
106-460 Doyle Road  
Kelowna, BC  
V1Y 0C2

July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Attention: Allan Neilson

**Re: EA West & North Westside Governance and Services Study Committee – Community Feedback and Urged Actions.**

---

As the North Westside Governance and Services Committee continues to wait for final survey results to be submitted, the following commentary represents conversations between residents and our 12 committee members over the past several weeks. Committee members may have additional items that they will wish to discuss in committee.

Although community concerns somewhat varied by neighbourhood, certain issues were commonly expressed throughout the North Westside community. These concerns relate primarily to fire services, community water systems, road conditions, inefficient government operations, and the RDCO Board voting composition.

Generally, the North Westside residents identify as a rural community with a component of seasonal recreational users. Many residents indicated a greater economic and social affiliation with the North Okanagan than the Central Okanagan. Residents often expressed frustration that they felt that the RDCO has evolved to serve the growing urban needs of the Greater Kelowna Area and that the RDCO does not effectively administer sub-regional and local services to the rural North Westside in an efficient manner.

**Community Concerns:**

The table below outlines the top 12 common community concerns.

Issue	Details
Issue #1: 2017 North Westside Service Study – RDCO Inaction	- Many long term residents of the North Westside were unable to clearly identify any specific changes or action made by the RDCO in the past 5 years to address issues raised in the 2017 North Westside Services Study. Residents often indicated a lack of enthusiasm to participate or provide feedback, as they felt that they were not listened to in the past so why would this study be any different. Some residents did comment that internet broadcast of Board meetings and changes to RDCO website have improved governance transparency. Many residents felt that local services are going backwards and the community is worse off than it was 5 years ago, specifically as it relates to Fire Services.

<p>Issue #2:</p> <p>Fire Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fire Services was identified as the primary common concern for the North Westside community and has residents demanding immediate administrative attention.</li> <li>- Residents comments included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We are entering the 2022 fire season in even worse condition than last year. We have no Fire Chief.</li> <li>- The local Fire Chief position has been a revolving door under the current RDCO Fire Management. We require a local Fire Chief who has knowledge of backwoods campout areas, on the ground wildfire experience and extensive EMT experience, to ensure we build future capacity for our young firefighters who live in our area. The hiring of retired Vancouver urban firefighters for the North Westside Fire Chief position, with a reporting relationship to the Fire Services Manager in Kelowna, has been a dismal failure.</li> <li>- The White Rock Lake Fire destroyed 75 homes in our community. It was appalling that the Fire boat was used, instead of a backup generator, to fill fire trucks when its water cannons could have actually saved lakeshore homes. We have seen no resignations or acceptance of responsibility by the RDCO Directors, Engineering Group, Fire Management Group or Administration. Where is the accountability for such failure? Legal immunization is no excuse. There are many families in our community who deserve an answer.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Issue #3:</p> <p>Water Systems (Killiney and Westshores)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Significant negative community feedback was received concerning high water utility charges for residents of both the Killiney and Westshore areas. Similar feedback was also received regarding the operational effectiveness and the uncompleted 10 year Killiney water system replacement plan.</li> <li>- Residents often cited the absence of any back-up generators to support power outages at pumping stations (which contributed or partially contributed to the 75 homes lost in Estamont and Killiney communities in the 2021 fire) as a primary example of poor local service response. Some residents did accept 50/50 hindsight while others commented that the North Westside is notorious for power outages and the RDCO was well aware of this risk. Residents are infuriated that pumping stations still continue to have no generators installed. Residents are unaware of any improvements that the RDCO has undertaken to improve these water systems or to improve community fire safety, during this past year.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Union Employees travelling with RDCO vehicles, from Kelowna or Peachland for water testing or system maintenance is wasteful and not cost efficient. Hiring local part time contract employees to do this work would be substantially more effective, as has been demonstrated with the La Casa system.</li> <li>- RDCO and Interior Health with their large city focus on water systems, have spent millions on extremely costly capital projects for our area, with no apparent study or consideration for the “right sized” water system for a small rural community.</li> <li>- Residents commented that operational water fees were 65% lower when the systems were administered by private contracts. What is stopping RDCO from contracting operations?</li> </ul>
<p>Issue #4</p> <p>Road Conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Residents realize that RDCO does not control Highways budgets but depend on RDCO management to be strong advocates on behalf of the North Westside area for other provincially provided services, regardless of the size of the community.</li> <li>- Westside Road (a secondary highway) is crumbling, particularly around Estamont and south of La Casa. The wildfire that burned through our communities in 2021 has added to the disrepair of our roads. Many of our community side roads through West Shores and Killiney Beach have not been well maintained for years.</li> <li>- The AIM contract services for the North Westside are dismal at best. AIM does not appear to have the people or the equipment to provide regular services and continuously fails at timely snow removal or road maintenance on Westside Road, as well as the related “potholed” community main roads.</li> <li>- Untrimmed vegetation growth along Westside Road is restricting visibility for access from residential streets in Lower Killiney onto Westside Road. With 70+ km traffic flowing through our community and drivers blindly pulling onto Westside Road, there is an accident waiting to happen due to this unmaintained condition.</li> </ul>
<p>Issue #5</p> <p>Community Parks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are we really getting good community parks value for the tax dollars spent?</li> <li>- A request for a financial review of the community parks service is required.</li> <li>- Union employees travelling from Kelowna with RDCO vehicles are not cost efficient and do not tackle the actual projects that need replacement or regular maintenance of registered walkways/stairways to the Lake.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The main Killiney and Westshore walkways to Okanagan Lake are in disrepair and some segments are dangerous. Neither the Parks nor the Highways Departments wants to assume responsibility for these pathways or registered walkways. RDCO Community Parks need to pursue this.</li> </ul>
<p>Issue #6</p> <p>Air Quality services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A taxed service that does not serve the North West Side Community. It is an absolute waste of local tax dollars in our rural environment.</li> <li>- Can the Electoral Area opt out of this service?</li> </ul>
<p>Issue #7</p> <p>Dog Control Services and Bylaw Officer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- RDCO should locally contract bylaw enforcement (part time/call out basis) Bylaw officer to deal with dog and other bylaw concerns.</li> <li>- North Westside pays for Dog Control Services but RDCO does not provide an adequate service because it requires too much time for a Kelowna based officer to visit our community.</li> </ul>
<p>Issue #8</p> <p>Home Construction and Development Standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Homeowners who have built or are rebuilding their homes question why their Kamloops or North Okanagan trades have to go to Vernon for road access permit and then to Kelowna for a building or development permit.</li> <li>- RDCO frustrates North Okanagan trades as they are required to attain a business licence for working in the RDCO which makes it more difficult for home builders to attract trades from the North Okanagan to work in the North Westside. This reduces competition and increases building costs for North Westside residents.</li> <li>- City of Kelowna (urban) style development standards are not feasible in a rural community. RDCO bylaws discourage urban sprawl, whereas sprawl in the North Westside is simply considered community growth. Can RDCO consider updating servicing and zoning bylaws for this rural area.</li> </ul>
<p>Issue #9</p> <p>Policing &amp; Ambulance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policing services are typically provided out of Enderby or Armstrong. The RCMP for the North Westside area do have a reporting relationship with RDNO but not RDCO, so we have no discussions with them regarding service call out times for our area.</li> <li>- Ambulance services take us to Vernon. Residents question why are our tax dollars are directed to Kelowna hospitals?</li> </ul>
<p>Issue #10</p> <p>Schools and Bussing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Families expressed frustration regarding school catchment areas and long daily trips for children. 2+ hours a day on a School Bus, over a dangerous road to Kelowna.</li> <li>- Long term residents questioned why children have limited access to Vernon school. In the past kids could attend Vernon schools but now must attend Kelowna area.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Why are our school tax dollars directed to building schools in the Kelowna area, when we need them in Vernon?</li> </ul>
<p>Issue #11</p> <p>Trading &amp; Retail Center</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Residents indicated that the North West Communities have a natural trading relationship with Vernon and Armstrong. Vernon and Armstrong are closer and have better roads to travel on. Families and children participate in recreational activities in these communities.</li> <li>- Primary healthcare services, doctors, medical labs and hospitals are predominately accessed in Vernon.</li> <li>- Employment, banking services, vehicle repairs, groceries and shopping were provided as examples of daily activities generally conducted in Vernon and Armstrong.</li> <li>- Residents stated that they predominately hired Vernon or Armstrong based contactors and trades (for various logistical reasons) and spend the majority of their resources with Vernon merchants.</li> </ul>
<p>Item #12</p> <p>RDCO Board voting composition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- RDCO is predominately composed of appointed municipal Directors and the City of Kelowna by itself, can out vote all other jurisdictions collectively.</li> <li>- RDCO (by way of 7 City appointed Directors) represents a defacto department of the City of Kelowna and has evolved to serve the growing urban needs of the City of Kelowna and the immediate surrounding area.</li> <li>- The North Westside is a rural community with small community issues but does have a wealth of local skills and talent. Much of what this community needs is available via local sourcing. Our budgets, planning and purchasing policies require “right sized” solutions that are aligned with our needs and culture. Imposing urban standards which do not fit a rural application, creates unnecessary costs for the community.</li> <li>- Can the RDCO governance structure be changed to improve services to rural areas?</li> <li>- Can administration policy be changed to better align to serve our rural culture, while continuing to service the greater City of Kelowna area?</li> <li>- The North Westside has economic and social commonalities with the North Okanagan, is it feasible for the North Westside to become an electoral area in RDNO where Board composition is not dominated by a single member?</li> </ul>

**Discussion:**

Members of the Committee have requested the opportunity to discuss and seek greater clarification on the following items at the upcoming Committee meeting on July 20th.

Issue	Discussion
Issue #2: Fire Services	- Can the EA West & North Westside Governance and Services Study Committee do anything in way of formal Resolution to express to the RDCO the importance of backup generators as well as the role of Fire Chief be filled promptly?
Issue #4 Road Conditions	- Is the RDCO aware of North Westside road conditions? Has the RDCO written to MOTI to file formal letter of complaint regarding road maintenance?  (Although this may be a discussion outside the scope of the Committee, it is a current safety issue that was raised by many residents)
Issue #5 Community Parks	- Salaries (inc Payroll Overhead) in the Community Parks Budget total \$133,599.99 in 2021 and exceed 50% of the service budget. How do these costs compare with other Regional Districts serving similar community park areas.  -Can RDCO get Community Parks to maintain registered walkways/pathways and rebuild the stairs to the Okanagan Lake in Killiney Beach?

Thank you,

---

Scott Graham – Committee Chair

---

Josh Galloway – Vice Chair