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West Fraser Centre Update

Quesnel, B.C. – The Cariboo Regional District and the City of Quesnel are currently half way through the Design Development phase of the North Cariboo Arena Replacement project (West Fraser Centre). The North Cariboo Joint Planning Committee received the first of four Quantity Survey (QS) estimates for the West Fraser Centre on Dec. 16, 2014.

The current QS indicates that the estimated project cost is \$22.4 million (not including GST), a number substantially higher than the original project budget of \$17 million. The current QS is the least firm cost estimate because it was undertaken at the very preliminary stages of design based on a series of assumptions. The \$22.4 million figure invited a lot of questions and debate from the Joint Committee but ultimately resulted in a decision to proceed with the project based on the current design criteria to the next stage.

A Quantity Survey is a cost estimate for the project based on the schematic design to date; it is an assessment conducted by a third party contractor that is independent of the architectural firm that created the current design based on community input. There will be three additional QS estimates as the design process unfolds, with the firmest estimate being presented when the construction drawings have been prepared.

The architecture firm for this project, CEI Architecture, responded to the QS by presenting cost-saving options that included ways to downscale the area of the building, the possibility of placing the new arena on the footprint of the existing arena (which would involve the loss of a season for the user groups), and reducing the architectural quality. The Committee made no decision on their report other than a minor modification to the quality of the material to be used for the outside aesthetics of the building.

As a result of this information received in the current QS report, the North Cariboo Joint Committee endorsed the following recommendations:

1. Stay the course, and proceed with the next steps of the project, which is to complete the design development phase and undertake another cost analysis in February. There will be three more project cost estimates presented to the public, with the final estimate being based on the actual construction drawings expected in the coming months and much more accurate than the current report.
2. To hire an owner's representative consultant to ensure that the next stage of the project (design development phase) and costing, proceeds as quickly as possible. This stage should be completed in February.
3. To prepare a submission to the Federal Gas Tax Strategic Priorities Fund in an attempt to secure federal dollars for the project (\$6 million).
4. To re-evaluate the project schedule in early 2015 to determine whether it is still feasible to tender the project in 2015 or if it is necessary to consider the option of tendering the project in early 2016.

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“Although this initial Quantity Survey came in high, the North Cariboo Joint Committee remains committed to this project and as design plans become more refined, I am optimistic the next QS reports will be more in line with our budget,” stated CRD Vice-Chair Ted Armstrong. “This project is very important to the communities of the north Cariboo, and I am sure the West Fraser Centre will be a true benefit to our residents and the region.”

“The West Fraser Centre is a community project first and foremost”, said Mayor Bob Simpson. “We all need to work together to ensure that this project proceeds and results in a facility we can all be proud of.”

Once new information becomes available it will be shared through public information bulletins.

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Editors: This release is available online at cariboord.bc.ca or quesnel.ca