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For Immediate Release

## CRD to conduct financial audit of Barlow Creek VFD budget

*Williams Lake* – At today’s Cariboo Regional District Board meeting, the Board of Directors decided to hire an external auditor to review the Barlow Creek Fire Protection service budgets for the 2016 and 2017 fiscal years. The decision was made in-camera and then released from in-camera to advise the public.

The Barlow Creek Fire Protection service saw a tax increase in the 2018-2022 five-year financial plan, due to the service’s expenses being significantly higher than budgeted in both 2016 and 2017. Upon initial investigation, the additional spending was mainly on training, equipment and maintenance for the fire department.

“We have conducted an initial review of the service’s expenses, but there are some questions that remain unanswered. We are conducting a more thorough financial audit so that we can provide our residents with a transparent and detailed accounting for the expenses,” explains Chief Administrative Officer John MacLean.

“This audit is not about pointing fingers or finding blame. We recognize that as an organization we have a responsibility to be good stewards of the public’s money and provide financial oversight. We are already taking measures to prevent this from happening again and we hope the audit will bring forward recommendations in that regard as well.”

CRD staff are currently reviewing and improving the financial management systems with all CRD fire departments to ensure that the budgets accurately reflect the true costs of operating a fire department and that expenses stay within revenues. The 2019-2023 five-year financial plan for all services, including the Barlow Creek Fire Protection service, is being prepared. The provisional five-year financial plan will be approved by the board and made available for public consultation at the Dec. 7 Board meeting.

### Quick Facts:

- The Barlow Creek Fire Protection Service Ad Valorem Taxes increased by 30% (\$82,276 to \$106,959) in 2018 as compared to 2017. The ad valorem tax requisition is set to increase an additional 2% in each of the final four years of the 2018 Five Year Financial Plan, which was approved by the Board in March 2018.
- Barlow Creek Fire Protection Service residents also pay a parcel tax of \$24.78 in each year of the 2018 Five Year Financial Plan, which is unchanged from the 2017 parcel tax rate.
- The ad valorem tax translates to a 2018 residential tax rate which is \$77.75 per \$100,000 of net taxable assessed value of improvements only for each property in the fire protection area. This compares to the 2017 rate of \$59.81.
- For a house valued at \$200,000 (improvements only, i.e. excluding the land value) the total of ad valorem and parcel taxes would be \$180.28 in 2018 compared to \$144.40 in 2017, which is an increase of \$35.88 or approximately 25%.
- There are 836 properties within the Barlow Creek Fire Protection Service.

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