



Dec. 7, 2018
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For Immediate Release

Chair looks back on CRD's 50th year

Williams Lake, B.C. – Cariboo Regional District (CRD) Chair Margo Wagner delivered a year-end report at today's Board of Directors meeting in Williams Lake. The full transcript of her address follows.

Members of the Board, Members of the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the last Board meeting of every year, the Chair delivers a report with a review of the Regional District's accomplishments in the previous year. I can't believe we're here in December again.

This year is a special year to commemorate since it was our 50th year providing local government services to the region. To celebrate, we held birthday parties, events and a photo contest. Staff held a spirit week and an internal photo contest to celebrate as well. Thank you for being part of this milestone for the regional district.

A main theme for this year has been rebuilding. 2017 ended with a focus on recovery and public consultation following our unprecedented wildfire season and that continued to be a primary focus into 2018. Early in 2018, the Board reviewed three main reports on our emergency response, communications and recovery efforts and the Emergency Preparedness Committee prioritized the recommendations and developed an action plan.

In the midst of our review, our Emergency Operations Centre was activated for spring flooding and then for wildfires two months later. I consider it a success that we have been able to make progress on the recommendations while supporting the region's recovery and responding to subsequent emergencies. Some of those actions include staff training, a FireSmart wood waste disposal program, improvements to our EOC processes and developing a crisis communications plan.

We are committed to continued work on the recommendations from the 2017 wildfires review. A majority of that work depends on securing funding and, to date, we have applied for 1 million, three hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars (\$1,325,000) in funding from the Canadian Red Cross and the Union of BC Municipalities to support our priorities, with plans to apply for more. Continuous improvements in emergency preparedness, response and recovery remain a priority for the Regional District.

This past year brought a variety of referendums. The CRD started the year with extensive public consultation on the proposed South Cariboo Recreation Centre Expansion, which went to referendum in June. While it was a close vote, the majority of residents decided against the project. We also successfully held a referendum to purchase two new fire trucks for the Interlakes Fire Department and to establish a North Cariboo Airport Service to provide a contribution for the Quesnel Regional Airport.

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The Regional District has also continued efforts to communicate and engage well with our residents. We've held engagement processes around several projects, including the referendums held this year, and the Cariboo Regional District Library's strategic plan. We hosted two information fairs on emergency preparedness in the spring in Electoral Areas I and L. Incorporating learnings from the 2017 wildfire season, we made efforts to improve our emergency communications and our residents indicated they did see an improvement comparing the 2017 and 2018 wildfire seasons in our survey this fall.

There have also been numerous other successes and growth in our services in 2018, such as:

- Establishing new water services for the Benjamin subdivision in Electoral Area A and the Lexington area in Electoral Area F;
- Adding three new wheelchair accessible trails to our network in Big Lake, Bull Canyon and Moffat Falls;
- Opening a new branch of the CRD Library in Interlakes;
- Completing water system improvements for 108 Mile Ranch and 103 Mile residents;
- Forming a North Cariboo Agricultural Advisory Committee;
- Finalizing the Lac La Hache Official Community Plan; and
- Purchasing new fire trucks for the Ten Mile, Interlakes and 108 Mile Volunteer Fire Departments.

Our Board members have been very busy this year with training, attending events, supporting our constituents, serving as representatives on external committees and groups and, of course, during the fall election period.

This year, the CRD attended the Electoral Area Directors and Local Government Leadership Academy Forums in Vancouver in February and the North Central Local Government Association Convention and Annual General Meeting in Fort Nelson in May. In June, the Chair and Vice-Chair attended the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Conference in Halifax. At all these events, delegates and their partners were able to attend some great workshops, business sessions and, of course, some spectacular entertainment and social events.

In September, the Board of Directors attended the annual Union of British Columbia Municipalities convention and AGM in Whistler. Throughout the convention the CRD met with provincial ministers and staff, attended workshops and spoke to CRD resolutions, which all received endorsement. We also celebrated with Director Al Richmond on his 25-year service award from UBCM and with former Director Ted Armstrong on his 40-year service award from NCLGA.

Some other highlights from 2018 have been:

- assisting numerous non-profit groups and supporting funding requests for community initiatives through our grant writing program for a total of \$1.8 million in grant funding applications;
- applying to several different provincial and federal funding programs such as BC Air Access, Northern Development Initiative Trust and the BC Rural Dividend fund for nearly \$1.8 million;

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- plus applying for the aforementioned \$1.3 million from UBCM and Red Cross towards emergency response and recovery efforts; and
- receiving approximately \$1.8 million from the Community Works Fund to support green initiatives and energy efficiency projects.

As we reflect on our accomplishments and successes, we can see that our partnerships, service delivery, communications and governance have grown and developed significantly over the past 50 years. Through the dedication of previous and current Board and staff members, we have built a strong foundation as a local government.

I would like to welcome you all, new and returning Directors, to the term ahead. I know we are all committed to continuing the CRD's momentum through our next four-year term, and through the CRD's next 50 years, as we strive towards our goal of ***Building Communities Together.***

Thank you.

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