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For Immediate Release

CRD and CCRHD budgets set for 2019

The Cariboo Chilcotin Regional Hospital District and the Cariboo Regional District Boards approved the 2019 budgets and five-year financial plans at their March 22 Board meetings.

The CCRHD's operating budget for 2019 is \$9.4 million. \$8.3 million of that is funded through taxation, which translates to \$70 per \$100,000 of residential property assessments. CCRHD tax rates have remained consistent at \$70 per \$100,000 for the last several years. The hospital district provides funding towards health services capital expenses and equipment in the region, typically through 40 per cent contributions towards the total cost.

"The Hospital District Board is excited that the Cariboo Memorial and G.R. Baker Hospital upgrade projects continue to move forward. We have been placing aside reserve funds in our CCRHD budgets for the last 18 years towards these projects and we are continuing to do so in this five-year financial plan. We are in a strong position to financially contribute to these vital health investments in the region," states Al Richmond, CCRHD Vice-Chair.

The Cariboo Regional District's operating budget for 2019 totals \$52.9 million. Of the \$52.9 million, \$25 million will be funded through property taxation, which is an increase of \$897,000 or 3.7% from 2018. The remaining funding for the 2019 budget comes through grants, user fees or use of reserve funds.

"It's important for residents to realize an increase in our overall tax requisition doesn't necessarily translate to what they see on their tax bills," explains CRD Chair Margo Wagner. "Each service of the Regional District operates independently, so the tax rate for each resident depends on which services they contribute too. Fluctuations in property assessments and changes in the number of residential or commercial properties that fund the service also impact the tax rates."

The majority of the CRD's services are seeing no tax increase or minimal tax increases to account for inflation. As indicated in the draft budget, the services with the most notable tax or user fee increases are Emergency Planning, Solid Waste Management, Invasive Plant Management, 150 Mile Fire Protection and the Alexis Creek and Red Bluff Sewer utilities. In the final 2019 budget, there are now also notable tax increases for the 108 Mile Ranch and Ten Mile Fire Protection services; whereas, the taxation amounts in the final budget are 4 per cent lower for the Forest Grove Fire Protection Service and 20 per cent lower for the Building Inspection Service than the draft budget outlined.

Major projects funded in the 2019 budget include four fire truck replacements and construction of a dedicated Emergency Operations Centre. The CRD is also establishing three new services in 2019, including the North Cariboo Airport Service, Benjamin Water Service and Lexington Water Service. These new services account for 0.4 per cent of the tax rate increase. Further, just over \$83,000 is allocated towards major grants for community groups and projects through the Regional District's Grants for Assistance program.

"Our overarching goal is to deliver our services cost-effectively with minimal tax impacts, but looking ahead, residents need to be aware that the CRD is reaching the point where tax increases in certain services are becoming necessary to maintain the current service levels. This is a challenge that many local governments are facing with aging infrastructure and changing regulations," says Wagner.

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Wagner also thanks residents for completing the CRD's budget survey. A total of 274 surveys were collected providing insight into budget priorities. In the surveys, the top three services that respondents felt should have increased service levels were fire and search and rescue departments; emergency planning and response; and recreation services. Respondents also identified airport services; garbage and recycling services; and water and sewer services as the top three services to be maintained.

The CRD's 2019 budget reflects these priorities, with the largest shares of the CRD's operating budget going towards recreation services (22%); environmental services (20%), which includes garbage and recycling services; and protective services (17%), which includes fire departments, search and rescue and emergency planning.

The Cariboo Regional District provides 110 services to residents in its 12 electoral areas and to the City of Quesnel, District of Wells, City of Williams Lake and District of 100 Mile House.

More Information

- The CRD and CCRHD's approved 2019 business plans and five-year financial plans: cariboord.ca/budget
- The "2019 Tax Requisition Changes – Details" document contrasts the tax rates for each service from 2018 to 2019: <https://bit.ly/2uodXxi>
- The approved 2019 Grants for Assistance: <https://bit.ly/2HTkCaC>

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