



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 19, 2009

March 19 Board Meeting Highlights

Board Approves 2009 Budget; 16-97 Economic Alliance Seeks Regional District Support; Strategic Community Investment Funds Agreement; Support for McLeod Lake Community Applications

Board Approves 2009 Budget

The Regional District of Fraser-Fort George Board of Directors have approved the 2009 Operating Budget and Five Year Financial Plan. Operating expenditures for the Regional District in 2009 will total \$25.3 million, of which \$14.5 million will be funded through property taxation. The 2009 budget is a slight increase over the 2008 budget, which was \$23.9 million with \$14.3 million of that covered through property taxation.

The tax requisition level in the budget reflects increased support for several Fire/Rescue Protection Services, Heritage Conservation, Regional Grants in Aid, Regional Parks, the Prince George and District Library Services and Electoral Area Community Grants.

Chairman Art Kaehn says the Board remains committed to keeping tax requisition levels fiscally responsible, especially in light of the current economic situation. "There were considerable pressures for the budget in 2009, mainly due to increases in contracted services. However, the Regional District worked to offset the impact of those increases with other revenue sources such as grants and surplus."

16-97 Economic Alliance Seeks Regional District Support

Representatives from the 16-97 Economic Alliance provided an update on the group's activities over the past year and requested \$20,000 from the Regional District to support the group for 2009. The Alliance is a network of economic development practitioners in north-central BC working together to develop initiatives and strategies to strengthen the north central BC economy. Over the past year, the group has worked to identify 9 industry clusters in the region. Clusters are important because businesses find competitive advantages to locating close together with suppliers and fellow competing businesses, and because they provide access to more suppliers and customized support services. Significant work has taken place over the past year to support the ongoing development of the mining cluster. In 2009, the group plans to continue to work to support the development of the identified clusters, and strengthen its regional network to create more opportunities to work with organizations such as Beetle Action coalitions.

Strategic Community Investment Funds Agreement

The Province has advised that some key local government grant transfers are being restructured; specifically the regional district sharing grant is being replaced by a Strategic Community Investment Fund. The board approved entering into an agreement with the Province that commits the Regional District to develop a plan that sets out intended use of the funds, specifying performance targets and public reporting on meeting those targets.

Support for McLeod Lake Community Applications

The Board agreed to lend its support to two different applications to the Northern Development Initiative Trust from the community of McLeod Lake. The first application is from the McLeod's Lake Post Historical Society for an Economic Diversification Infrastructure Grant that would help offset costs for restorations and improvements at the site of the historic McLeod's Lake Post. The other application is from the McLeod's Lake Centennial Club for Community Halls and Recreation Facilities program. Funding from that program will cover renovations and improvements to the existing community hall.

Community & Recreation Grants

The Board approved the following requests for Community and Recreation Grants:

- \$5000 to the Salmon Valley PAC for playground replacement costs
- \$3000 to the Salmon Valley Communication Association for furnace and outside plug in costs
- \$2000 to the Ness Lake Recreation Commission for Insurance for recreation activities
- \$8800 to the Pineview Recreation Commission for Insurance deductible and repairs and equipment for sewer line
- \$20,000 to Fraser Basin Council to complete mitigation work to Naver Creek
- \$2500 to the Hixon Community Association for a sound system and microwave oven
- \$6600 to the Hixon Community Association for insurance
- \$2500 to the Giscome Elementary School for swimming program costs
- \$5032 to the District of Mackenzie Fire Department for rescue equipment costs
- \$14,400 to the Mcleod's Lake Centennial Club for operating expenses and material costs

For further information, please contact
Reneé McCloskey
Manager of External Relations
Regional District of Fraser Fort George
(250)960-4453