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Elected officials raise regional concerns at UBCM CRD awarded for partnerships

Victoria, B.C. – This week, the Cariboo Regional District (CRD) Board of Directors represented the region at the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) convention which took place in Victoria from Sept. 26 to 30, 2016. During the convention, CRD Board members spoke to their resolutions, met with provincial ministers and staff and were honoured for their partnerships.

The CRD submitted three resolutions and all received endorsement from the UBCM membership. The first two resolutions seek requirements to consult local governments and communities on industrial projects and the establishment of a system to replace medical supplies used by first responders when providing emergency health care to B.C. Ambulance Service patients. The third resolution, which passed after a few changes, lobbies for commitments to increase transparency and third-party consultation in treaty negotiations.

Throughout the week, CRD Board members and staff met with five provincial ministers to discuss regional concerns. On Tuesday, Sept. 27, Electoral Area B and F Directors, Jerry Bruce and Joan Sorley, and Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Janis Bell met with the Minister of Energy and Mines, the Honourable Bill Bennett, and the Minister of Environment, the Honourable Mary Polak, to discuss the need for inclusive and thorough legislation regarding community consultation processes for mining applications and major projects occurring throughout the province. They also urged Minister Polak to explore available options, treatments, and funding programs to help restore the water quality of Bouchie Lake.

The Minister of Health, the Honourable Terry Lake, met with the Cariboo Chilcotin Regional Hospital District (CCRHD) Chair John Massier and Vice-Chair Margo Wagner along with CAO Bell and City of Williams Lake Mayor Walt Cobb to ask them to approve upgrades for the Cariboo Memorial Hospital and capital improvements for GR Baker Memorial Hospital. The CCRHD Chair and Vice-Chair also had meetings with Interior Health and Northern Health to discuss these same topics, as well as concerns over booking MRIs with Northern Health.

On Wednesday, Sept. 28, the Honourable Todd Stone, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, met with Chair Richmond, Electoral Area C Director John Massier and CAO Bell regarding development of a turning lane on Highway 26 to provide a safer access to Barlow Creek Elementary School. They raised additional concerns over the proposed colours for signs along the Gold Rush Trail.

Chair Richmond, Director Massier, CAO Bell and District of Wells Mayor Robin Sharpe met with the Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, the Honourable Steve Thomson, and urged him to continue with maintenance of the 8400 Road and bridge and keep that connection open between the communities of Wells, Barkerville and Likely, B.C. They also asked Minister Thomson to open the Purden Road connecting Highway 16 and Wells.

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Other meetings were held during UBCM with staff from five provincial ministries:

- Electoral Area D Director Steve Forseth met with staff from the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development and the Ministry of Education to discuss transferring the former Wildwood Elementary School property to the Wildwood Community Association.
- CAO Bell met with Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development staff to seek approvals for changes to the CRD's Building Inspection Service Areas.
- Community Development Institute Co-Director Marleen Morris met with staff from the Ministry of Small Business, Red Tape Reduction on behalf of the CRD regarding the region's new economic development project, Cariboo Strong.
- Electoral Area H and L Directors, Margo Wagner and Brian Coakley, met with staff from the Ministry of Technology, Innovation and Citizens' Services and the Executive Director from Network BC about improving accessibility to high-speed broadband connectivity and cellular coverage throughout the Cariboo-Chilcotin region.

Thursday morning during the Community Excellence Awards Breakfast Reception, the Cariboo Chilcotin Regional Hospital District (CCRHD) received the UBCM Excellence Award in Partnerships for their collaborative efforts on the Quesnel Primary Care Clinic project. This model interdisciplinary medical care facility opened in May 2016 and was jointly funded by Northern Health and the CCRHD.

CCRHD Chair John Massier spoke highly of the partnerships behind this project's success: "I would like to thank all our partners that made the clinic possible including Northern Health, the 17 CCRHD Directors, the City of Quesnel and the medical community of Quesnel. Special thanks to our local MLA Coralee Oakes who agreed to move her Constituency Office out of the building so we could renovate for the permanent location of the Quesnel Primary Care Clinic."

"The CRD Board had another productive year at UBCM; we all came away encouraged by our discussions with Ministers and Ministry staff about important issues for the Cariboo region," stated CRD Chair Al Richmond. "I would like to applaud our regional partners, Board and our staff for taking concepts and turning them into award-winning efforts as seen in the Quesnel Primary Care Clinic."

In honour of his term as UBCM President, Chair Richmond received a UBCM Lifetime Membership. He will continue to represent the CRD on the UBCM Executive Board this year as Past-President. This is Chair Richmond's eighth consecutive year on the UBCM Board.

In 2008, Chair Richmond was elected to the UBCM executive as the Electoral Area representative and served in that capacity until elected 3rd Vice-President in 2012. During his 2015-2016 term as President he represented UBCM on the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Board, the Fire Chiefs Association of BC Board and the Provincial Fire Service Advisory Committee.

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