

CHAIR REPORT UP TO & INCLUDING JANUARY 13/21

It seems a while since I did a report to the Board, and I hope that you all had an enjoyable Christmas and a Happy New Year, all be it a very different celebration than we are used to experiencing. I want to thank all of you for following the Provincial Health Officers guidelines to not travel during the holiday season, I know it was hard for many, including myself, but your compliance has not gone unnoticed.

In December we had updates in the south and centre from Dawson and MOTI on the upcoming winter season, and the work being done to mitigate road slippage issues. We are expecting to hear from the Province shortly, who has the successful bid on fixing the West Fraser road, and hopefully the Quesnel Hydraulic will be on that list shortly to get repaired. I have also been involved in several other calls with MOTI and road maintenance companies over the remnants from the spring freshet of 2020, regarding road slippage, flooding, bridge damage and landslides. Unfortunately, the issues continue into the winter, and we have had to deliver sand and sandbags on December 28 to the Forest Grove Fire hall #2, and to a ranch in the Chilcotin on January 11, 2021, for flood mitigation. MLA Doerkson has been very engaged with staff, Electoral Directors and myself, as he familiarizes himself with the freshet issues remaining.

A letter has recently been sent to Ministers Farnworth, Fleming, Conroy & Osbourne (cc'd to both MLA's representing the CRD) and signed by Mayor Mitch Campsall, Chief Helen Henderson & myself, expressing our concern over the upcoming freshet and the need for those Ministries to be apprised of what we foresee our challenges will be during freshet. Tsq'escenemc First Nations have already reached out to EMBC regarding their concern over the level of water in Bridge Creek for this time of the year.

TANEx continues the work to supply the CRD with a needs assessment for improved connectivity, and Director LeBourdais along with our IT staff, have been front and centre in this work. I had a long conference call with the CCCTA over the broadband and cell issue within the CRD, as well as the FSR road issue pertaining specifically to tourism and egress. Both of these contribute dramatically to how successful tourism will be in the CRD moving forward.

The recent announcement from Interior Health declaring a COVID-19 outbreak on the Tsq'escenemc First Nation (Canim lake), has proven challenging, as local non-First Nation residents are naturally scared and concerned that the pandemic has struck so close to home. Chief Helen Henderson, and her staff, have been exemplary in keeping other Govt. officials at all levels apprised of the situation, and this leadership has enabled us to get ahead of any potential ill feeling amongst the non-First Nation residents. I am heartened by the support the Tsq'escenemc are receiving from my electoral area and beyond, both on social and local media.

I have also engaged MP Doherty in our struggles with Transport Canada, on the never-ending logistical requirements to fulfil the necessary documentation required by Transport Canada, in regard to the Anahim Airport. This issue has the potential to have a severe impact on tourism access to the West Chilcotin, as well as Bella Coola, along with fire fighting and medivac flights. The airport at Bella Coola, frequently has weather related challenges with regard to flights, and Anahim is the only other option. MP Doherty has sent a letter to Transport Minister Omar Alghabra, expressing his concern over the issues taking place at that airport. I will keep you posted on that file.

I had a one on one phone call with Minister Osbourne on January 12/21, the main purpose being to discuss the upcoming freshet and its specific impact to many other Ministries that will be an integral part of our response. We also had discussion on the expectation for Regional Districts to have the ability to function as Municipalities in several areas, despite the legislation restrictions we are governed under. Realizing that many of the topics we discussed were outside her Ministry, she appreciated being kept apprised of what we anticipate is going to be a challenging freshet, as she is then able to advocate for us with her colleagues in Victoria.

I was heartened to hear some Municipal Affairs staff on the last Flood and Wildfire review Committee meeting on December 17/20, as this has not happened before, but Minister Osbourne indicated on our call that this would continue. I have also now involved CAO MacLean and Ms. Masun on these calls as we get into operational guidelines. The new Emergency Program Act continues to be 'tweaked' and is now not expected to be enacted into law until spring of 2022.

If there are any concerns or questions you may have arising from this report, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,