



building communities together

2023 Business Plan Central Cariboo Recreation and Leisure Services (1553)

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Working in partnership with communities large and small to offer local, sub-regional, and regional services to ensure that the Cariboo Chilcotin is a socially, economically, and environmentally desirable region.

Department/Function Services

The Central Cariboo Recreation and Leisure Services function was established in 2007 by Bylaw No. 4226, which merged the functions for Central Cariboo Recreation (Bylaw No. 3894 – 2004) and Central Cariboo Leisure Services (Bylaw No. 3951 – 2004).

The new Recreation and Leisure Services function has a mandate derived directly from the predecessor bylaws, which is to provide the following services:

- (i) swimming pool complex;
- (ii) twin ice arena facility;
- (iii) recreation and cultural programming;
- (iv) trail development and maintenance;
- (v) sports fields, facility development and maintenance.

The facility management and recreation programming components of the service are provided under contract by the City of Williams Lake. A five-year Facility Management Agreement (2019-2023) is in place that establishes service levels and taxation subsidy targets.

Services are generally provided from the Cariboo Memorial Recreation Complex in Williams Lake which includes the twin arenas, West Fraser Aquatic Centre and the Gibraltar Room multi-purpose space. Following extensive public consultation, concept planning and a referendum in 2014, the aquatic centre underwent a \$14 million upgrade to expand the pool and fitness areas and add in leisure water features such as a water slide and lazy river. A \$4 million infrastructure grant was successfully obtained to reduce the cost to local taxpayers for the major project.

The sub-regional recreation function also includes the Esler Sports Complex, which has slo-pitch (2022-2026), soccer (2022-2026), and minor fastball (2023-2026) fields under use and occupancy agreements with local associations. These groups also receive field maintenance funding through contribution agreements (2022-2024) on an annual basis to complement the work of volunteers and their own financial resources. An occupancy agreement was also established with the local disc golf club (2022-2026) for development of a new course at the complex in 2023. Various other community projects, such as neighborhood outdoor rinks, trails or bike parks are also supported on a project-by-project basis.

Annual contribution agreements are also in place with the Scout Island Nature Centre (2022-2024), Williams Lake Cycling Club (2022-2024) and 150 Mile Greenbelt, Heritage, and Trails Society (2022-2024) to support operation of extensive trail networks maintained by each group.

Participants in the service include portions of Electoral Areas D, E, and F and the City of Williams Lake. Requisition is by way of a tax rate applied to the assessed value of land and improvements utilizing hospital district assessment. The requisition limit is the greater of \$3,500,000 or a rate of \$1.98 / \$1,000 of assessed value.

The Directors for Electoral Areas D, E, and F and the City of Williams Lake are responsible for the governance of this service, which is provided through the Central Cariboo/City of Williams Lake Joint Committee. The Central Cariboo Joint Committee (CCJC) holds an open, public meeting once per month.

Business Plan Goals, Rationale & Strategies

2023 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Undertake a heat recovery project from the ice plant compressors to the domestic pool water at the recreation complex.

Rationale: The innovative heat recovery system will reduce energy use for heating domestic water in the change rooms by capturing lost heat from the arena. Included in this project is an upgrade to air handler units at or near life expectancy should funding allow. Full scope of the project is grant funding dependent and applications have been submitted.

Strategy: Matching capital funding as required is allocated in the financial plan for this project, which will be led by the facility operator. Regional District Community Works Funding is allocated to support the energy efficiency components of these projects.
- 2. Goal:** Install photo-voltaic solar panels at the recreation complex.

Rationale: Solar panel technology has matured in recent years and a preliminary feasibility study was completed at the complex that estimates an annual system

production of more than 300,000 kilowatt hours per year. This would result in an annual savings of \$10,000-\$20,000 per year in electricity costs; savings would also increase as electricity prices rise.

Strategy: Recreation complex staff will work with solar panel system designers and suppliers to optimize the preferred installation. Funding for the project is included in the function capital plan and utilizes Cariboo Regional District Community Works Funds.

- 3. Goal:** Review the Fees and Charges bylaw for implementation January 2024
Rationale: To ensure all fees and charges align with the terms of the bylaw and maintain a fair and equitable cost for services at the Cariboo Memorial Recreation Complex.
Strategy: Research like facilities, cost structures and procedures for fees and charges associated with the programs and services offered to the region through the Cariboo Memorial Recreation Complex.
- 4. Goal:** Continue to work with an indoor turf facility technical committee to develop options for moving the project forward.
Rationale: An indoor turf facility concept was developed by the Williams Lake Youth Soccer Association and the Cariboo Chilcotin Gymnastics Club, and a technical committee with representatives from the City of Williams Lake and Cariboo Regional District has been struck to consider options for the construction and operations of the proposed turf facility.
Strategy: Review current documents completed to date, including designs and related committee plans. Review and apply for applicable grant funding streams, develop community contacts and network for committee commencement.
- 5. Goal:** Increase outdoor recreation opportunities in all recreational green spaces with grooming of trails, cross country ski trails and snowshoe trails.
Rationale: Due to COVID restrictions, there has been a significant increase in demand for outdoor recreation and the park spaces beside the complex provides an excellent opportunity to develop activities.
Strategy: Recreation complex staff will work with user groups like the Williams Lake Cycling Club, Williams Lake Wanderers, WL Nordic Cross Country Ski Club and like groups or partners to develop outdoor opportunities.
- 6. Goal:** Support an upgrade of the Westsyde Trail Network.
Rationale: The Williams Lake and area trail network is provincially and internationally recognized for its quality and diversity of riding opportunities.
Strategy: Project will be developed by the Williams Lake Cycling Club and supported by funds identified in the Central Cariboo Recreation budget as well as other grant funding to the highest extent possible.
- 7. Goal:** Support development of the disc golf course at the Esler Sports Complex.

- Rationale:** Disc golf is a growing sport and easily available for participants of all ages and skill levels. The Regional District entered into a use and occupancy agreement with the Cariboo Disc Golf Club in 2022 for land at the sports complex to begin course design and development.
- Strategy:** Course development and management will be undertaken by the Cariboo Disc Golf Club and supported by funds identified in the Central Cariboo Recreation budget as well as other grant funding to the highest extent possible.
- 8. Goal:** Support trail development at the 150 Mile House Greenbelt, mountain bike network and other locations within the sub-regional recreation area.
- Rationale:** The 150 Mile Greenbelt, Heritage and Trails Society has a management agreement in place with the province for a large area in the community and plans to improve trail connections throughout. The Williams Lake Cycling Club has a management agreement in place with the province for its network across the Williams Lake valley. Trails in other areas continue to be a high priority with recreation groups and the general public.
- Strategy:** Implementation of the improvements would be funded through the Community Projects budget of the Central Cariboo Recreation function and managed directly by the community groups in consultation with Regional District and City staff.
- 9. Goal:** Complete the wheelchair accessible low mobility trail located at the Esler Sports Complex.
- Rationale:** The Regional District has embraced the universal access outdoor recreation concept and has completed 25 wheelchair accessible wilderness trail projects across the region. This trail location is a larger project than most and will complete a full circuit around the sports complex. Trail development under the same project scope is also planned for the 108 Greenbelt and for Pioneer Park on Dragon Lake.
- Strategy:** The Region has been approved for a federal provincial infrastructure grant to support this project and identified matching funding as required in the sub-regional recreation financial plans. Project management consulting services will be retained for delivery of construction.
- 10. Goal:** Review the recreation services agreement between the Regional District and the City of Williams Lake.
- Rationale:** The current recreation services agreement between the City and the Regional District, which includes management of the Cariboo Memorial Recreation Complex, will expire in December 2023.
- Strategy:** Agreement review will be completed by staff with a proposed renewal brought forward to the joint committee for consideration.
- 11. Goal:** Continue to improve the accessibility of the Recreation Complex for persons with low mobility.

Rationale: Because of its age, the facility has an interior design that may challenge persons in a wheelchair or with other mobility issues. As a critical public amenity, it is important that the complex meet the needs of as many residents as possible, especially those that may have limited options for recreation.

Strategy: Individual projects in 2023 include updating aquatic and fitness equipment. Funding is included in the capital plan to support these works.

- 12. Goal:** Contribute to the Halloween fireworks celebrations at 150 Mile and Wildwood.

Rationale: The recreation budget supports the community celebration event in Williams Lake and it is appropriate that this support also be extended to rural communities within the sub-regional recreation area.

Strategy: A proportional funding allocation is included in the community projects envelope of the recreation financial plan.

2024 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Construct a new access road into the Esler Sports Complex.
Rationale: Use of the sports complex continues to grow and additional improvements and capital investment will further increase traffic to and from the site in the coming years; however, the current access is a winding, narrow residential route along upper Hodgson Road and is not adequate. Creating a safer, shorter access route directly off Highway 20 was a key component of a development plan completed in 2007.
Strategy: An engineered design has been completed and construction of the project is subject to securing grant funding. The significant cost of this work may also require a transfer from capital reserves for matching funds.
- 2. Goal:** Upgrade the remaining lights to LED at the complex.
Rationale: Upgrading the lighting system will reduce energy use and maintenance costs.
Strategy: Project will be implemented by the facility operator and is included in the function capital plan with an allocation of Cariboo Regional District Community Works Funds.

2025 Goal

Goal: Upgrade the Direct Digital Control (DDC) for the ice plant at the complex.

Rationale: Upgrading the DDC system will reduce energy use and maintenance costs.

Strategy: Project will be implemented by the facility operator and is included in the function capital plan with an allocation of Cariboo Regional District Community Works Funds.

Overall Financial Impact

The 2023 requisition is increased by 2% from 2022 requisition amounting to \$64,000 for a total taxation \$3,263,983. A 2% increase is included in 2024-2027 of the five-year financial plan to account for inflationary increases in annual operational costs, several major capital projects and to rebuild reserves in anticipation of a large infrastructure project in the next 5-10 years.

The 2022 requisition was increased by 2% from the 2021 requisition.

The operational costs to the function increased significantly in 2019 due to additional staff and higher utility costs for the new West Fraser Aquatic Centre as well as new regulatory requirements for the ammonia ice plant. These updated subsidy cost targets are reflected in the five-year Facility Management Agreement with the City of Williams Lake. The taxation subsidy paid to the City for operational cost increases at 1.75 percent per year over the term; starting at \$1,947,773 in 2019 to \$2,087,738 in 2023. All revenue generated at the Recreation Complex is retained by the City under the terms of the management agreement to directly offset operating expenses.

There was also a significant increase in revenue due to the upgraded aquatic centre and these revenues do off set approximately 50% of the increased operating cost; however, the remaining cost increase continues to be covered by a higher taxation subsidy.

The five-year capital plan for the function has varied annual investments amounting to \$1.59 million over the five-year plan. This includes capital spending at the Cariboo Memorial Recreation Complex and the Esler Sports Complex.

The service has projected capital reserve funds of \$1.05 million at the end of 2022 with a planned contribution to reserves of \$200,000. Contributions to capital reserves of \$300,000 per year are planned in 2023-2027 for a total of \$1,500,000 over the five-year plan.

All outstanding debt for the recreation function was paid off in 2016 and new borrowing for the pool upgrade project was undertaken in 2017. The total amount borrowed for the pool upgrade is \$6.5 million and is scheduled to be paid off in 2037. Remaining debt projected at the end of 2022 is \$5.22 million.

Significant Issues & Trends

Throughout 2021 and the winter season of 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant challenges for operation of the recreation centre and resulted in higher operational costs, event cancellations and lower customer and rental revenue, which in turn had to be balanced with appropriately reducing expenses.

The operating budget also includes for the first time the maintenance costs for the Boitanio Park disc golf course as well as the pickleball/tennis courts and adjacent water park. These recreation assets are recognized to be of a broader subregional benefit and are proposed to be allocated under the Central Cariboo Recreation budget to achieve cost sharing between the City and the Regional District.

The newly upgraded West Fraser Aquatic Centre opened in December 2017 following more than six years of public consultation, design and construction. The new leisure pools and fitness spaces have attracted many more patrons than were previously using the complex regularly. While this has increased revenues by more than 50%, the cost of staffing and utilities has also substantially increased resulting in a rise in operating costs for the aquatic centre.

Another emerging major infrastructure project is the proposed construction of an indoor turf facility in Williams Lake. A multi-purpose building would provide many varied recreational activities during the shoulder seasons and winter months. A technical committee led by the Williams Lake Youth Soccer Association was struck in 2019 to begin the concept development process, including design, location, as well as construction and operating costs. It is expected this will be the mid-term top priority for a new recreation infrastructure project.

Counters were installed on the three entrances to the Cariboo Memorial Recreation Complex in 2013. The people counter recorded 414,414 visitors in the year from October 2020 to October 2021. This is an increase of 8% over the year before demonstrating important regular community use of the facility. October 2021 to 2022 increased by another 5% to 435,150. It is anticipated these numbers will continue to rise.

In addition to the recent Sam Ketcham Pool upgrade, other parts of the Recreation Complex continue to receive renovations and improvements; however, the aging structure, utility services and equipment in the facility continue to be a challenge. Increased operating and maintenance costs are to be expected, and significant capital investment will be necessary to maintain the complex in future years.

The continued delivery of an effective and coordinated sub-regional recreation and leisure service is expected to remain a high priority for the public and elected officials. The benefits of developing a recreation service that takes advantage of the Cariboo Memorial Recreation Complex as an information hub and a centre for activity programming is evident. Integrating public recreation properties, both from the greater Williams Lake area and those within the city itself, makes sense to improve the management, public investment and overall enjoyment of these community assets.

To this end, additional resources have been discussed to potentially be included in the recreation services management agreement with the City of Williams Lake, tasking the City with providing the increased support and being the liaison for volunteer groups managing these public recreation assets.

Another strategic priority for the Central Cariboo Recreation function is to continue to provide support for mountain bike trail infrastructure that is appropriate for this popular recreational activity. Mountain biking in the Cariboo provides a considerable benefit to many communities. For local residents, studies consistently indicate that trails provide a venue to participate in an active and healthy lifestyle and increase the desirability of living in the area. In recent surveys conducted in the Cariboo region, mountain bike infrastructure was a prominent priority amongst respondents, who ranked mountain bike trails in the top five activities they participate in. Ongoing investments in the Central Cariboo trail networks will support continued recreational opportunities as well as ongoing efforts to diversify the regional economy into this fast-growing sector.

The Cariboo Regional District is a signatory on the Province of BC/UBCM Climate Action Charter and has committed to continuing work towards carbon neutrality in respect of corporate operations.

Measuring Previous Years Performance

- Goal:** Install photo-voltaic solar panels at the recreation complex.
- Not completed. The project was deferred in favour of other priorities and will be included as a goal in 2023.
- Goal:** Support the development of a new parking area in the Williams Lake mountain bike network.
- Planned for completion in November. Final approval for the project from MOTI is pending.
- Goal:** Support trail development at the 150 Mile House Greenbelt, mountain bike network and other locations within the sub-regional recreation area.
- Completed. New culverts and trail upgrades were completed at the 150 Mile trails and a refurbishment of the outdoor rink at Russet Bluff.
- Goal:** Build a wheelchair accessible low mobility trail at the Esler Sports Complex.
- Partially completed. Design of the project is complete and phase 1 construction is planned for November.
- Goal:** Support the leagues at the Esler Sports Complex for a major irrigation system upgrade project.
- Completed. Replacement of failing older equipment will reduce the ongoing maintenance costs for the associations.
- Goal:** Continue to work with the indoor turf facility technical committee to develop options for moving the project forward.
- Not completed. Now identified as priority goal for 2024.

Goal: Increase outdoor recreation opportunities in the park, such as disc golf and cross-country ski tracks.

- Completed.

Goal: Constantly evaluate COVID-19 plans and modify operations for safety and to maximize opportunity.

- Completed.

Goal: Continue to improve the accessibility of the Recreation Complex for persons with low mobility.

- Completed. The facility purchased a new water wheelchair and a new lift for the accessible change room.

Goal: Upgrade arena boilers and install heat exchangers to capture arena heat for the pool water.

- Completed the heat exchangers; this process provided information to extend the life of the boilers. One heat exchanger is left for 2023 replacement.

Goal: Contribute to the Halloween fireworks celebrations at 150 Mile and Wildwood.

- Completed. Contribution made to the Wildwood Community Association.

Other Accomplishments

- Successful expansion of the Cariboo Winterland experience for public, family skates, rentals, and School District #27
- Expanded Family Day Celebrations to include the Family Rail Jam Competition and training event
- Swimsuit spinner installed in the family changeroom
- Mud Puddle Run – First family run through Fox Mountain bike trails
- Participation and Recreation Month Celebrations in June
- New Bike Park sign for the Boitano Bike Park
- Excellent Canada Day Celebration
- Full summer daycare and adventure summer programs
- Successful Golden Buckle four-week Challenge
- Replacement of one variable frequency drive in the ice plant
- New filter media in the swirl pool filters
- New Halloween outdoor festival and family dance
- Renewal of the Joint Use Agreement between the City, Regional District and School District #27, TRU and the District of 100 Mile House will be in place for a four-year term by December 2022