



Date: 24/01/2024

To: Chair and Directors, Cariboo Regional District Board

And To: Murray Daly, Chief Administrative Officer

From: Gerald Pinchbeck, Manager of Communications

Date of Meeting: Cariboo Regional District Board_Feb09_2024

File: 0400-60/2024/NCLGA

Short Summary:

AIS – NCLGA Resolution on Water Infrastructure Funding

Voting:

Corporate Vote - Unweighted

Memorandum:

At the June 22, 2023 Committee of the Whole meeting, the Board held extensive discussions about the future costs for upgrading the Cariboo Regional District's water systems. Of particular concern were costs to upgrade treatment systems for manganese removal to comply with a recently revised requirement.

The [Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water](#) were updated in 2019 to include a greatly reduced Maximum Acceptable Concentration ("MAC", 0.12 mg/L) and Aesthetic Objective for manganese (0.02 mg/L). The [Guideline Technical Document for Manganese](#) notes that "some studies in humans suggest an association between manganese in drinking water and neurological effects in children; however, they can only be used to support the choice of the key health effect. The effects observed in children are consistent with the neurological effects reported in the key animal studies used to establish the MAC."

In the Cariboo Regional District, there are currently six water systems which are subject to regular or ongoing Water Quality Advisories due to manganese levels exceeding the MAC: the City of Williams Lake, City of Quesnel, Benjamin, Horse Lake, Russet Bluff, and Gateway community water systems. The City of Williams Lake has secured funding for a new water treatment plant, and the City of Quesnel is in the preliminary design stage for its own system. No design work has been completed for the other water systems, which are managed directly by the Cariboo Regional District.

The cost of removing manganese through a water treatment and filtration system is significant, and because of the financial constraints of these small systems, may be financially unfeasible when including capital costs. Staff have provided high-level estimates of \$1.55 million to construct water treatment plants for the CRD's systems to meet the MAC for manganese.

No resolutions appear to have been passed by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities pertaining to this issue. Similarly, no resolutions from the North Central Local Government Association which were not subsequently endorsed by UBCM speak to this specific issue.

The Union of BC Municipalities has endorsed several resolutions pertaining to water regulations, infrastructure funding for local governments, and responses to changing statutes and regulations. However, there are no resolutions which link changes in drinking water quality guidelines to funding from other levels of government for treatment system upgrades. Resolution [2012-B16](#) [Funding for Water Infrastructure Projects] called for enhanced funding programs to support local governments' ability to supply clean and safe drinking water. Resolution [2011-B107](#) [Water Regulations] only calls for funding from the Province to reflect the true costs of upgrading aging water infrastructure. Resolution [2008-B21](#) [Funding Infrastructure to Meet Water Quality Standards] called on the Province to match any federal Community Works Funding that communities used to meet water quality standards set by health authorities; the Province's response to this was to note that no local government contribution was required for Community Works Funds to be used.

It should be noted that there have previously been federal and provincial funding programs to support investment in water treatment plants and systems, in addition to the Community Works Fund (2014-2024) and Growing Communities Fund (2023). However, there are currently no grant programs which would fund water treatment systems, and most require local governments to contribute a portion of the total project cost. These funding streams are also awarded on a selective basis, and due to limited funding envelopes and broad criteria, not all eligible projects are funded. Further, the short time frame between funding being available and the long time frame for adequately designing, planning, and costing projects complicates any grant funding opportunities which may arise.

In consideration of previous advocacy efforts, acknowledging prior funding opportunities, and a reasonable approach to future efforts, the following resolution would best reflect the Board's intent:

WHEREAS the Government of Canada, through Health Canada, is responsible for establishing the standards for drinking water quality as codified by the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality;

AND WHEREAS the Province of British Columbia has adopted the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality as the standard for drinking water quality under the Safe Drinking Water Act, which community water systems are required to meet;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the North Central Local Government Association and Union of BC Municipalities call on the Government of Canada and Province of British

Columbia to provide predictable, long-term, and stable funding for local governments to upgrade community water distribution and treatment systems to enable compliance with the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality and all subsequent amendments thereto.

Attachments:

None.

Financial Implications:

None.

Policy Implications:

None.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

- ☒ **Infrastructure and Asset Management:** To establish a systematic, predictable approach to managing the regional district's assets and infrastructure that builds on current asset management data and condition assessments.
- ☐ **Enhanced Communications and Engagement:** To build trust and credibility of the regional district by enhancing our communications and engagement with citizens, stakeholders, and volunteers.
- ☐ **Effective and Responsive Land Use Planning and Development:** To ensure our land use planning and development is responsive to future growth and housing needs, anticipates risks and hazards associated with climate change and provides efficient and consistent processes for landowners and developers.
- ☐ **Relationships with First Nations:** To foster a healthy and inclusive region by building and strengthening our relationships with First Nations and embracing the principles of reconciliation.

The Board has committed to developing a better understanding of the Cariboo Regional District's current infrastructure funding deficit, ongoing renewal, and longer-term management approach to capital investments. Doing so requires significant funding to be available in order to meet these commitments, which must be raised through taxation, service fees, debt, or external funding sources. If funding were to be secured which was predictable, reliable, and stable, it would allow stronger planning mechanisms to be in place for upgrading and replacing aging infrastructure systems.

CAO Comments:

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Options:

1. Endorse the recommendation;
2. Endorse an alternative resolution;
3. Defer.

Recommendation:

That the Board endorse the following resolution and refer it for consideration at the 2024 North Central Local Government Association Annual General Meeting:

WHEREAS the Government of Canada, through Health Canada, is responsible for establishing the standards for drinking water quality as codified by the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality;

AND WHEREAS the Province of British Columbia has adopted the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality as the standard for drinking water quality under the Safe Drinking Water Act, which community water systems are required to meet;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the North Central Local Government Association and Union of BC Municipalities call on the Government of Canada and Province of British Columbia to provide ongoing, long-term, and stable funding for local governments to upgrade community water distribution and treatment systems to enable compliance with the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality and all subsequent amendments thereto.