

Dear Chair Margo and CRD Board Members, Dear Darron;

I, an Area D resident, am writing in strong support of the proposed parks and trails coordinator position. As a Provincial Trails Advocate and CEO of First Journey Trails, I have firsthand experience in the complexities of trail planning, construction, and ongoing management across British Columbia. I have worked in recreational infrastructure development also in my role as the Chair of the Cariboo Mountain Bike Consortium, a past President of the Wells And Area Trails Society, a Director with the WL Mountain Bike Club and the co-founder of the Indigenous Youth Mountain Bike Program. I regularly highlight the importance of the proposed service function in most of my workshops, seminars, webinars and conferences throughout Canada and the US.

Having a dedicated professional in this position would greatly enhance the efficiency and quality of the trail networks in our region. My work with over 30 Indigenous communities and countless municipal stakeholders has highlighted the importance of having a clear point of contact within regional authorities to streamline project delivery. This proposed role would allow for improved communication, better contract management, and more consistent engagement with professionals like myself who handle large-scale planning and construction projects.

Trail development is intricate, requiring not only a deep understanding of environmental, cultural, and social considerations but also expert project management skills. Currently, the fragmented approach to contracting often results in delays, miscommunication, and missed opportunities for both communities and professionals. A parks and trails coordinator would bridge this gap, ensuring smoother project execution, better resource allocation, and long-term sustainability of trail networks.

Trails, like any other essential asset, require consistent management and maintenance that cannot be left solely to volunteers. While our region has invested millions in trail construction, the ongoing upkeep has been undervalued, and without a proper management function in place, this investment risks deterioration. A dedicated position is critical to ensure these assets are preserved, enhancing their long-term benefits for the community.

A recent 2024 IPSOS poll found that nearly 90% of British Columbians favour increased government investment in outdoor recreation. Trails are more than just paths, they are vital infrastructure that improves our quality of life and stimulates economic growth. Local businesses benefit from well-maintained trails, and many professionals relocating to BC cite outdoor access as a key factor in their decision.

In regions like the Cariboo, trails play a critical role in attracting and retaining professionals, particularly in healthcare. For instance, the Cariboo Memorial Hospital in Williams Lake faces ongoing staffing shortages, and outdoor amenities like trails make the area more appealing to new recruits. Partnerships, like the one between Kitimat, Northern

Health, and the Haisla Nation, illustrate how collective resources can create more welcoming environments for healthcare professionals and others. Access to outdoor spaces enhances both community well-being and professional retention efforts.

This position also offers substantial advantages for collaboration with local and Indigenous communities, reinforcing reconciliation efforts. My involvement in the Indigenous Youth Mountain Bike Program and reconciliation-focused projects like those in Bella Bella have shown me how vital it is to have someone within local government who fully understands and can actively coordinate with diverse partners.

I would like to see this position created in close collaboration with the Williams Lake First Nation, ensuring their voices, perspectives, and cultural knowledge have a significant and meaningful impact on the planning, management, and development of trails in the region. This partnership would not only strengthen reconciliation efforts but also highlight Indigenous leadership in outdoor recreation and land stewardship.

In conclusion, establishing this role would significantly elevate the quality of parks and trails in the Cariboo Regional District. It would also create an environment where contracts with professionals like myself are handled more effectively, ultimately benefiting the community and contributing to the region's outdoor recreation and economic growth.

I will soon start a regular column in the Williams Lake Tribune "Trailhunter Chronicles", addressing many of the issues mentioned above in more detail.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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