



*building communities together*

## **2025 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.***

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### **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 Recreation Management Agreement (2024-2028) 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 \$15 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 (2025-2027) 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 (2025-2027), Williams Lake Cycling Club (2025-2027) and 150 Mile Greenbelt, Heritage, and Trails Society (2025-2027) 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**

### **2025 Goals**

- 1**     **Goal:** Complete construction of the heat recovery project from the ice plant compressors to the domestic pool water at the recreation complex.  
**Rationale:** Detailed designs and equipment procurement for the project were completed in 2024 and construction will occur in 2025 to avoid interrupting the ice season.  
**Strategy:** Grant funding has been obtained from the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program for this project, which will be led by the facility operator. Matching capital funding is identified in the financial plan and Regional District Community Works Funding is allocated to support the energy efficiency components of these projects.
- 2.**     **Goal:** Make improvements and upgrades to the Gibraltar Room.  
**Rationale:** Design and equipment options for this project will be completed in 2024. Improvements to the multi-purpose Gibraltar Room would support its use

for event hosting and performances. Current sound, lighting and stage systems do not meet the expectations of many rental users.

**Strategy:** Implementation will be managed by memorial complex staff with support from consulting services as necessary. Funding for the improvements is included in the facility capital plan.

- 3. Goal:** purchase an electric ice-resurfacer.

**Rationale:** The existing Zamboni equipment is near its limit as the everyday-use machine and experiencing increased maintenance costs. Taking this opportunity to convert to a fully electric machine will integrate with other energy efficiency and greenhouse gas reduction projects, such as the solar panel installation in 2023.

**Strategy:** The equipment purchase will be coordinated by the facility operator and done cooperatively with arenas in 100 Mile House and Quesnel to leverage purchasing discounts. Community Works Funds are identified in the South Cariboo Recreation capital plan for this project.

- 4. Goal:** Develop construction-ready plans for an access road from Highway 20 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:** Engineering consultant services will be retained to complete the designs and submit for a highway connection permit from the Ministry of Transportation. It is still anticipated that the Ministry may assist in some fashion with development of the important community project.

- 5. Goal:** Upgrade trails and jumps at the Boitanio Bike Park.

**Rationale:** Regular annual maintenance of the trails and jumps will ensure the popular bike park is functional; however, an investment to rebuild certain areas every few years will keep the park fresh and interesting and encourage more use.

**Strategy:** Funding to support the upgrade is included in the financial plan as a contribution to the City that recognizes these central assets serve the broader subregional recreation area. The project will be undertaken in consultation with the Williams Lake Cycling Club.

- 6. Goal:** Participate in the design development of a new BMX, skate and scooter facility in Boitanio Park.

**Rationale:** The current skate park facility is well-used and popular with local teens; however, the infrastructure is more than 20 years old and is overdue for upgrade and modernization. Several community organizations and individuals are invested in the project and will be included in this cooperative effort.

- Strategy:** Recreation complex staff will work with community groups and engineering consultants on preliminary concept designs and cost estimates, as well as undertake consultation with First Nations. The concept designs will form the basis for fundraising and grant applications. It is expected that ongoing maintenance of the facility once completed will be included in the subregional recreation budget.
6. **Goal:** Develop partnership programs for seniors with the Senior's Centre, assisted living facilities and First Nation elders' groups.  
**Rationale:** Working cooperatively with these external organizations will provide more opportunities and help increase participation of seniors in healthy social activities.  
**Strategy:** Connections and programs will be developed by facility staff at the memorial complex.
7. **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.
8. **Goal:** Contribute funding to the outdoor rink at the Ottoman rugby fields for matching grants.  
**Rationale:** The fields are operated by the Williams Lake Rugby Football Club and in the off season they maintain an outdoor public rink for community use. The club also plans to apply for a Northern Development grant to support these improvements, which will include the boards, playing surface and lighting.  
**Strategy:** Matching funding is included in the financial plan and will be provided upon a successful NDIT application by the rugby club.
9. **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 2025 include updating the arena stair lift. Funding is included in the capital plan to support these works.

- 10. Goal:** Review the contribution agreements with the Williams Lake cycling Club and Scout Island Nature Centre.  
**Rationale:** The current Fee for Service Agreements with these groups will expire at the end of 2025.  
**Strategy:** Staff will meet with the groups to discuss the agreements and bring forward renewals to the central Cariboo Joint Committee for consideration.
- 11. 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.

## 2026 Goal

- 1. Goal:** Consider a feasibility study for a multipurpose turf and indoor courts building.  
**Rationale:** Discussions of the desire for an indoor fieldhouse have been ongoing for many years. The concept is recognized as a valuable addition of recreation infrastructure for the community providing multiuse and winter season opportunities. These types of facilities can be one of the most cost-effective assets to build and to operate when compared to other indoor recreation centres.  
**Strategy:** Funding for a feasibility study to determine concept design, location, operating plan, and cost estimate will be included in the function capital plan.
- 2. Goal:** Review the occupancy agreements with the leagues operating at the Esler Sports Complex.  
**Rationale:** The current five-year agreements will expire at the end of 2026.  
**Strategy:** Staff will meet with the groups to identify any potential concerns or amendments and bring forward renewals to the Esler Recreation Advisory Commission prior to the Central Cariboo Joint Committee.

## 2028 Goal

- 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:** This major capital goal is subject to acquiring substantial grant funding from external sources. An engineered design and conceptual cost estimate has been completed. The significant cost of this work will also require a transfer from capital reserves in addition to grant funding.

### **Overall Financial Impact**

The 2025 requisition is increased by 4% from the 2024 requisition amounting to \$141,004 for a total taxation of \$3,666,106. This increase is required to support the significant increases in the annual operating subsidy for the Cariboo Memorial Recreation Complex and contributions to capital reserves.

The 2024 requisition was increased by 8% from 2023 requisition amounting to \$261,118

A 4% increase is included each year in 2026-2029 of the five-year financial plan to account for inflationary increases in annual operational costs and delivery of priority capital projects. This taxation increase is combined with major capital investments in energy efficiency, which should reduce operating costs and help absorb additional expenses.

A renewal Recreation Management Agreement between the Regional District and the City of Williams Lake for another five-year term was completed in 2024 and updated subsidy targets are included in the financial plan. The taxation subsidy paid to the City of Williams Lake for operational costs was increased by 12% in 2024 to \$2,353,248 and increased 3% each year thereafter amounting to \$2,648,601 in 2028.

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 a significant increase in revenue due to the upgraded aquatic centre, which opened in 2017 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 \$1.5 million over the five-year plan. This includes capital spending at the Cariboo Memorial Recreation Complex and the Esler Sports Complex, but does not include the sports field road access project which is subject to acquiring substantial grant funding to proceed.

The service has projected capital reserve funds of \$1.575 million at the end of 2024 with a planned contribution to reserves of \$250,000. Contributions to capital reserves of \$400,000 per year are planned throughout the financial plan to support future projects and to be used as leverage funds for grant applications.

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 2024 is \$4.65 million.

### **Significant Issues & Trends**

2024 was the inaugural season for the Williams Lake Mustangs, a new Kootenay International Junior Hockey League franchise, and hosting the team will affect the revenue and expenses for the Cariboo Memorial Recreation complex. Teams are also located in Quesnel and 100 Mile House for the establishment of excellent junior hockey rivalries in the Cariboo.

The renewal of a Recreation Management Agreement with the City of Williams Lake will stabilize operating subsidy costs for the function for the five-year term of the agreement.

The operating budget also includes 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.

Counters were installed on the three entrances to the Cariboo Memorial Recreation Complex in 2013. October 2021 to 2022 increased by 5% to 435,150. This past 12 months saw another increase of **11% for 483,016**. 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. 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:** Proceed with detailed designs for heat recovery project to capture energy from the ice plant compressors to the domestic pool water at the recreation complex.

- Completed. Construction of the grant-funded project is planned for 2025. Staff were also asked to present the heat recovery and solar panel projects at the BCRPA and UBCM conferences.

**Goal:** Develop design options for an upgrade to the Gibraltar Room.

- Completed with consulting resources in conjunction with the arena sound system.

**Goal:** Upgrade the remaining lights to LED at the complex.

- Completed.

**Goal:** Support development of the disc golf course at the Esler Sports Complex.

- Completed. The Cariboo Disc Golf Club hosted a tournament in August with a full card of 75 participants.

**Goal:** Increase outdoor recreation opportunities in all recreational green spaces with grooming of trails, cross country ski trails and snowshoe trails.

- Completed. Covid Funding helped support the purchase of a Snowdog Groomer and snowshoes. Grooming of Boitanio Park and Snowshoe rentals



will be additional features to support the snow rails currently used for outdoor winter opportunities.

**Goal:** Resurface the pickleball and tennis courts at Kiwanas Park.

- Completed.

**Goal:** Develop partnership programs for seniors with the Senior's Centre, assisted living facilities and First Nation elders' groups.

- Completed. A partnership with the local Rotary club resulted in new outdoor exercise equipment for seniors in Kiwanas Park.

**Goal:** Support an upgrade to the Westsyde Trail Network.

- Completed. Matching funding was provided to the WL Cycling Club for a Northern Development grant to rebuild the Backdoor trail.

**Goal:** Support trail development at the 150 Mile House Greenbelt, mountain bike network and other locations within the sub-regional recreation area.

- Completed.

**Goal:** Complete the wheelchair accessible low mobility trail located at the Esler Sports Complex.

- Completed. An opening for the trail was held in August.

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

- Completed.

**Goal:** Increase outdoor recreation opportunities in all recreational green spaces with grooming of trails, cross country ski trails and snowshoe trails.

- Completed.

**Goal:** Review the field maintenance funding contribution agreements with groups at the Esler Sports Complex.

- Completed. Renewal agreements are included in the 2025 financial plan.

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

- Completed. Contribution made to the Wildwood Volunteer Fire Department Association Society.

### **Other Accomplishments**

2024 was the inaugural season for the Williams Lake Mustangs, a new Kootenay International Junior Hockey League franchise. A five-year use and occupancy agreement

was negotiated with the team allocating exclusive use of office and change room space, advertising rights and ice time allocation at the Cariboo Memorial Recreation Complex.

Teams are also located in Quesnel and 100 Mile House for the establishment of excellent junior hockey rivalries in the Cariboo.

Reinforcement of Rink Boards and Replacement of Top and Bottom Puck Board as well as a refresh of the Players Boxes on Rink 1.

Successful Ammonia Plant Inspection by WorkSafe BC.

Successful Ammonia Plant Audit with TSBC.

New Concession Operator at CMRC.

Successful Participation during the EOC for the River Valley Fire in July 2024.

Working with the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Sport on host readiness programming.

Successful Union negotiations with the City of Williams Lake and the IOUE 2024.

Production of 2 Active Living Guides and one Brochure for the programs and services at the CMRC as well as a monthly newsletter showcasing programs and events.