



building communities together

2026 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 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

2026 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Construct phase one of 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: Project is led by Regional District staff with project management consulting support. Funding is allocated for this major capital project in the function financial plan, which will require a significant allocation of Regional District Community Works Funds and a transfer from capital reserves. An engineered design and class A cost estimate has been completed.

- 2. Goal:** Undertake a feasibility study for a new multipurpose recreation facility.
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 is included in the financial plan and could include a design charette process to determine potential concepts, locations, operating plan, and construction cost estimate.
- 3. Goal:** Contribute to the Scout Island Otter Point bridge replacement and low mobility trail upgrade project.
Rationale: The trail network at Scout Island is a well-known and used local recreation asset and is supported by the Central Cariboo Recreation budget through a Fee for Service agreement. The bridge replacement is required to ensure ongoing and safe availability of all public trail areas.
Strategy: The bridge replacement and trail project is led by the Williams Lake Field Naturalists that operate Scout Island and a supporting funding contribution is allocated in the function budget.
- 4. Goal:** Install a vertical lift to the concourse in Arena 1.
Rationale: Improving accessibility for persons of low mobility is an ongoing priority for the recreation complex and a vertical lift will be an important improvement over the existing stair lift currently in use to reach the concourse.
Strategy: The project will be led by recreation complex staff with support as required from consulting services such as architectural design and structural engineering. Funding is allocated in the function capital plan for this project.
- 5. Goal:** Support an Orange Jersey mural at recreation complex.
Rationale: The Orange Shirt Society is a well-known active group in the community and projects such as this mural are important steps towards reconciliation. The Orange Jersey project specifically works with sports events and facilities, so is a good fit for the arena space.
Strategy: Mural design will be led by the society with input and guidance regarding location and form from recreation complex staff. A funding contribution towards the project is allocated in the function financial plan.
- 6. 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.

- 7. 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.
- 8. Goal:** Review and bring forward a new Fees and Charges Bylaw.

Rationale: The current fees and charges bylaw expires at the end of 2026 and requires review and renewal to establish fees for facility access and rentals.

Strategy: An updated bylaw with a new three-year fee schedule will be brought forward by the facility operator for consideration by the joint committee and the Regional District Board.
- 9. 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.
- 10. 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.
- 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: Funding for individual projects in 2026 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.

2027 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Construct phase two of a new access road into the Esler Sports Complex.

Rationale: Phase one of this project is planned for completion in 2026. 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: Project is led by Regional District staff with project management consulting support. Funding is allocated for this major capital project in the function financial plan, which will require a significant allocation of Regional District Community Works Funds and a transfer from capital reserves. An engineered design and class A cost estimate has been completed.

- 2. Goal:** Undertake acoustic treatments of the Gibraltar Room.

Rationale: The Gibraltar Room is an important performance space in the community and ongoing investments are made in improving hosting ability for concerts and recitals.

Strategy: Project will be led by the facility manager in consultation with Regional District staff. Funding is allocated in the function capital plan to complete the project.

- 3. Goal:** Improve landscaping around the front parking lot at the recreation complex.

Rationale: The current landscaping is an ongoing maintenance challenge and potential liability due to extensive use of loose rock.

Strategy: Project will be led by the facility manager in consultation with Regional District staff. Funding is allocated in the function capital plan to complete the project.

2028 Goal

- Goal:** Construct phase three of a new access road into the Esler Sports Complex.

Rationale: Phases one and two of this project is to be completed by 2027 and continuing with phase three will make the access road fully functional with an asphalt surface and compliant with Ministry of Transportation requirements for a public road.

Strategy: Project is led by Regional District staff with project management consulting support. Funding is allocated for this major capital project in the function financial plan, which will require a transfer from capital reserves.

Overall Financial Impact

The 2026 requisition is increased by 4% from the 2025 requisition amounting to \$146,644 for a total taxation of \$3,812,750. An increase of 4% is also included in 2027 and 2028 to facilitate increases in the annual operating subsidy for the Cariboo Memorial Recreation Complex and completion of the Esler Sports Complex Access Road project.

The 2025 requisition was increased by 4% from 2024 requisition.

A 4% increase is included in 2029 and 2030 of the five-year financial plan to account for inflationary increases in annual operational costs and to rebuild capital reserves following draws to support the Esler Access Road project. This taxation increase is combined with ongoing 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 \$2.16 million at the end of 2025 with a planned contribution to reserves of \$400,000. Major transfers out from reserves is planned for 2026 and 2027 amounting to \$1.5 million and \$500,000 respectively specifically to enable the Esler Sports Complex Access Road project. Contributions to capital reserves of \$500,000 per year are planned in years 2028-2030 to rebuild reserves following completion of the project.

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 2025 is \$4.35 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 Boitiano 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. The annual average total for these counts is between 400-500,000 patrons. These original counters are beginning to fail and it is expected new technology will be installed for 2026.

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: Complete construction of the heat recovery project from the ice plant compressors to the domestic pool water at the recreation complex.

- Completed. Construction of the grant-funded project, along with the recent solar panel installation will save approximately \$40,000 per year in utility costs.

Goal: Make improvements and upgrades to the Gibraltar Room.

- Completed. Upgrades were made to the lighting and sound systems as well as the screen projector.

Goal: Purchase an electric ice-resurfacers.

- Completed. A joint purchase was made with facilities in Quesnel and 100 Mile House and supported by Regional District Community Works Funds.

Goal: Develop construction-ready plans for an access road from Highway 20 into the Esler Sports Complex.

- Completed. Design plans and cost estimate are complete; however the highway connection permit is expected to be delayed due to provincial union strike action.

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

- Completed.

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

- Completed. The final design and cost estimate is expected by December.

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

- Completed. Highlights included fitness programs at the new Rotary outdoor exercise equipment for seniors in Kiwanis Park.

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

- Completed.

Goal: Contribute funding to the outdoor rink at the Ottoman rugby fields for matching grants.

- Completed. The rugby club was successful in obtaining a Northern Development grant for the project.

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

- Completed. Highlights include improved signage, arena ramps, lift repair and crosswalks.

Goal: Review the contribution agreements with the Williams Lake Cycling Club and Scout Island Nature Centre.

- Completed. Agreements were renewed for a three-year term.

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

Re-painted pool and arena lobbies.

Sanded and refinished Rink 1 and 2 wooden bleacher seating.

Trained five staff to become Refrigeration Operators - 3 weeks at (120 hours) and received grant funding for 60% of costs.

Hosted Building Service Worker course from Recreation Facilities Association of BC – six staff professionally trained in janitorial skills and building maintenance.