

DATE: November 17, 2020

TO: Chair and Directors
Electoral Areas Services Committee

FROM: James Warren
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

FILE: 5330-20/RUBSEP

Supported by James Warren
Deputy Chief Administrative
Officer

J. Warren

RE: Royston/Union Bay Sewer Extension Project – Commitment to Work with K'ómoks First Nation

Purpose

To confirm the Comox Valley Regional District's (CVRD) commitment to continue to work with K'ómoks First Nation (KFN) to advance and implement a sewer servicing solution for the south region.

Recommendation from the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the Comox Valley Regional District remains committed to working with K'ómoks First Nation towards implementation of the Royston/Union Bay Sewer Extension Project;

AND FURTHER THAT this commitment will take the form of exploring all opportunities to fund the project, lobbying provincial and federal government for their support of the project, and working with provincial staff to advance the project towards implementation;

AND FURTHER THAT this recommendation form the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding between Comox Valley Regional District and K'ómoks First Nation;

AND FINALLY THAT this report and recommendations be shared with K'ómoks First Nation.

Executive Summary

The Royston/Union Bay Sewer Extension Project is the culmination of unprecedented cooperation, political determination and partnership in the Comox Valley. Project implementation will help provide sustainable, ongoing environmental protection for Baynes Sound and its abundant aquatic resources and provide for meaningful reconciliation with KFN by moving forward in partnership on a project that positively impacts the entire Comox Valley community and supports KFN in meeting its social, environmental and economic goals.

Baynes Sound is a prized natural feature of the Comox Valley with significant recreational, cultural and economic value, producing over 50 per cent of British Columbia's cultured shellfish. Cumulative impacts from poorly functioning septic systems in the Royston and Union Bay area pose a risk to shellfish, the environment and human health. After several decades of extensive study work, consultation and requests for senior government support, an integrated regional model for wastewater management has emerged as the only viable long-term solution for sewer servicing in the Baynes Sound region.

The KFN are well advanced in their treaty negotiations with the province. With treaty, the KFN will gain ownership and control over additional lands and resources in their traditional territories, including lands south of Royston. The development of KFN's south lands will provide on-going

financial benefits and economic opportunities for the KFN and support them in their right to becoming a self-sufficient and self-governing nation.

The CVRD is committed to reconciliation and relationship building with the KFN and support KFN in building capacity towards independent government and future economic stability. The Royston/Union Bay Sewer Extension Project provides a long-term viable option for sewer servicing of KFN’s south lands and compliments the extension of water services already committed to, therefore realizing the full potential of these lands. The project will also help to restore the natural environment of Baynes Sound and ensure ongoing safe access for the KFN to shellfish for food, social and ceremonial purposes as well as support their extensive aquaculture interests in Baynes Sound.

Senior government funding will be critical to the implementation of this project. The CVRD, in partnership with KFN, has submitted an application to the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program Environmental Quality stream. A preliminary decision on this funding application is anticipated by the end of 2020. No matter the outcome of this funding application, project implementation remains a CVRD Board strategic priority.

The recommendations proposed in this staff report are intended to reaffirm the CVRD’s commitment to work with KFN towards project implementation; these recommendations are to endure until the project is complete. Continuing efforts towards project implementation are anticipated to include the following:

- Explore all opportunities for funding the project, including grants, loans, and partnership funds.
- Continue lobbying efforts to impress upon the provincial and federal governments the importance of this project as a key community priority.
- Work with provincial government staff to advance the project towards implementation.

To facilitate ongoing communication and collaboration, this project will be a standing agenda item at monthly CVRD/KFN meetings. The CVRD will also work with the KFN to capture the recommendations of this report in a Memorandum of Understanding.

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Government Partners and Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

Comox Valley Sewage Commission	✓
K’ómoks First Nation	✓