Ref: 251237

February 5, 2020

Dear Djil Djila:

I am writing to provide you with some background on government and service structures in the Stikine region and to let you know about efforts underway to assess the need for potential boundary changes involving adjoining regional districts. I am respectfully seeking your feedback, including any concerns or interests that your community may have regarding the possibility of including portions of the Stikine region within a regional district.

The Stikine region is the only area of the province that is not part of a regional district or municipality (see map for reference in Appendix 1). When the regional district system was established in the 1960s, the Stikine region did not have sufficient population or property assessments to support being established as a regional district. Regional districts were created to provide local democracy, planning and servicing to communities which were not municipalities, and to also enable those communities to collect taxes to provide for local services they desired.

Without municipalities or a regional district, the Stikine region relies on the provincial government for basic local governance. Over the years the Stikine region has been reviewed for opportunities to have areas evolve to local governance via a regional district and reduce the role of the Province in managing local affairs. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Ministry) provides general oversight and has responsibility for local governance, and assists the Atlin Community Improvement District, which the Province established, to provide some local services.

The Atlin Community Improvement District was established in 1967, shortly before the Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine (RDKS), and encompasses a small portion of the Stikine in the area surrounding the community of Atlin. It offers a few local services such as fire protection, water, street lighting, sidewalks and landfill. It also provides guidance on local land use for the community in the absence of a regional district.

The last significant change to the external boundary of the Stikine region came in 2007 when the boundary of the RDKS was expanded into the Stikine region to take in the community of Dease Lake, in order to address an urgent need for local fire protection. The RDKS now operates the fire service for the Dease Lake community and recovers the costs through taxation of the local community that participates in and benefits from the service.

.../2

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Assistant Deputy Minister
Local Government

Mailing Address:
PO Box 9490 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9N7
Phone: 250 356-6575
Fax: 250 387-7973

Location:
6th Floor, 800 Johnson Street
Victoria BC V8W 1N3

www.gov.bc.ca/mahDecember 3, 2018

Since 2007, there has been continuing consideration of whether further boundary changes should be considered, taking a more holistic approach to governance and services. To that end, a study (enclosed) was completed in 2014 that looked at the financial, service delivery and governance implications of expanding the northwest and northeast boundaries of the RDKS to encompass two areas of the Stikine region that are currently under Provincial jurisdiction (see extension areas map for reference in Appendix 2). The study recommended the RDKS consider combining the new boundary extension areas, electoral area F, and electoral area D together into one large electoral area (an expanded electoral area D).

Under a regional district local governance regime, the primary responsibility for service delivery would shift to the regional district. As occurred when Dease Lake was included in the RDKS, the area would be represented by a locally elected electoral area director who would sit at the regional district board table on behalf of the residents residing in that electoral area. As with areas that are currently within a regional district, the Province would continue to be the decision-maker with respect to all provincial land use decisions that are currently the purview of the Province, such as natural resource sector authorizations on Crown land.

In 2017, staff from the Ministry, the RDKS, the Peace River Regional District and the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN) discussed the respective interests of the regional districts in bringing areas of the Stikine into their boundaries to provide basic local governance and service delivery where needed. No action was taken following these discussions and with local governments into the second year of their 4-year term, the collective view is that now is a logical time to reinvigorate these discussions, including conversations with First Nations in the region.

On the recommendation of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Provincial Cabinet can alter the boundaries of a regional district to include an area not in a regional district. Before the Minister makes a decision on a boundary change proposal, the Ministry gathers the perspectives and concerns of First Nations, neighbouring regional districts and stakeholders so that the Minister's decision can be made with due consideration of the perspectives of those who may be impacted by the boundary change. To that end, the Ministry would like to understand your interests in potential boundary changes and can provide you with further information about the Stikine region and the role of regional districts as requested.

I would appreciate hearing back from you by April 6, 2020. Also, we will be following up with further correspondence when the RDKS and RDBN confirm their respective interests in this matter. At that point, First Nations and relevant regional districts may benefit from government to government discussions about their individual interests in this proposal.

As a preliminary step, I look forward to hearing from you and discussing your interests about the future of local governance for the Stikine region. We will be reaching out again.
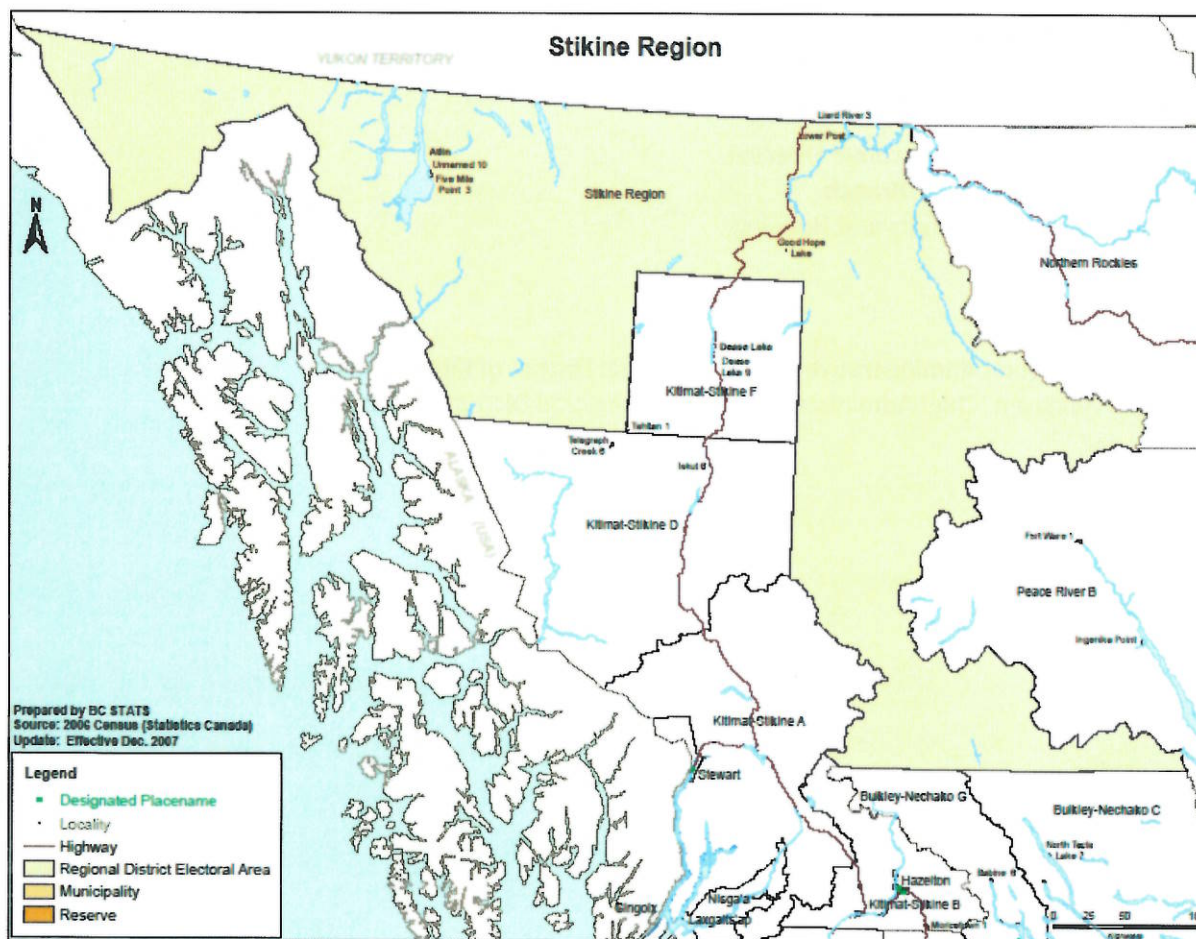
Sincerely,

Marijke Edmondson, A/Executive Director
Governance and Structure Branch
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Enclosure

CC: Ron Poole, Chief Administrative Officer, Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine
CC: Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer, Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako

Appendix 1 – Map of Stikine Region

Appendix 2 – Map of Proposed Extension Areas