



# REPORT

To: Chair and Directors

Report Number: FN-BRD-225

From: Kari Barber, Financial Services Manager

Date: August 17, 2023

**Subject: Growing Communities Fund Allocation Opportunities**

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## **RECOMMENDATION #1: [Corporate Unweighted]**

That the Regional Board allocate \$500,000 of the Growing Communities Fund to Function 200 – Regional Parks for future projects approved by the Regional Board.

## **RECOMMENDATION #2: [Corporate Unweighted]**

That the Regional Board allocate \$750,000 of the Growing Communities Fund to Function 300 – Emergency Planning for the design and construction of a standalone Regional Emergency Operations Centre.

## **RECOMMENDATION #3: [Corporate Unweighted]**

That the Regional Board allocate \$1,133,000 of the Growing Communities Fund and all interest earned on the Growing Communities Fund operational reserve to Function 500 – Regional Solid Waste to assist with cost of siting a new landfill in Chetwynd.

## **BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:**

At the May 4, 2023 Regional Board Meeting the Regional Board passed the following resolution:

*MOVED, SECONDED, and CARRIED*

*That the Regional Board authorize that a report be brought forward to the August 17, 2023 Regional Board meeting with recommendations on opportunities for the allocation of the Growing Communities Fund.*

The Peace River Regional District (PRRD) received a one-time grant of \$2,383,000 from the Growing Community Fund (GCF) in March 2023. Requirements include that the grant be fully allocated to eligible regional services prior to December 31, 2023 and must be spent by 2028. The grant intends to address the increasing need for infrastructure and amenities to service population growth. The funding is meant for eligible capital infrastructure projects; however, other eligible costs include feasibility studies; other early-stage development work; costs of designing, tendering, and acquiring land; and constructing eligible infrastructure projects. The funding can be used for any capital project that has not been completed.

The funding must be allocated to specific projects by the Regional Board for regional priorities and cannot simply be allocated to electoral areas. The Province has confirmed with staff that “It is not meant

to simply be allocated among electoral areas according to a formula, it is meant to finance projects that will enable service for the construction of much needed housing". Contributions to third parties cannot be made, except municipal contributions to housing projects and infrastructure owned by the PRRD when the municipality participates in the service and First Nations infrastructure when it is a shared service or there is a service relationship. The ministry has stated it may reclaim any of the funding that is not used for the intended purposes.

Eligible infrastructure projects include:

- Public drinking water supply, treatment facilities and water distribution.
- Development finance portions of infrastructure costs that support affordable/attainable housing that may include Development Cost Charges or subdivision servicing charges payable.
- Childcare facilities.
- Municipal or regional capital projects that directly or indirectly service First Nation communities.
- Wastewater conveyance and treatment facilities.
- Storm water management.
- Solid waste management infrastructure.
- Public safety/emergency management equipment and facilities not funded by senior level government.
- Local road improvements and upgrades.
- Sidewalks, curbing and lighting.
- Active transportation amenities not funded by senior level government.
- Improvements that facilitate transit service.
- Natural hazard mitigation.
- Park additions/maintenance/upgrades including washrooms/meeting space and other amenities.
- Recreation related amenities.

The recommendations are to allocate the funds to regional functions that benefit the entire regional district, which will decrease taxation for the entire regional district. Details of the specific projects will be included in Supplemental Requests presented to the Regional Board as part of the budget process.

#### **Recommendation #1:**

Potential uses of the GCF funds for Regional Parks include improvements included in the 2018 Montney and Blackfoot Regional Park Design Studies and new Regional Design Studies for Spencer Tuck Regional Park and North Peace Fall Fair Grounds Regional Park. Further examples could include:

- Blackfoot Park - \$100,000 for a new picnic shelter and/or upgrades to the playground areas
- North Peace Fall Fair Grounds - \$100,000 for a Regional Park Design Study to allow for strategic capital planning for the future of the Grounds. This work would be completed following the feasibility study currently underway.
- Spencer Tuck Park – Allocation of \$200,000 for the boat launch and a new Regional Design Study to allow for strategic capital planning for the Regional Park.

#### **Recommendation #2:**

At the May 18, 2023 Regional Board Meeting the Regional Board passed the following resolution:

*MOVED, SECONDED, and CARRIED*

*That the Regional Board receive a report on creating a standalone Emergency Operations Centre.*

The estimated budget for a standalone Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is \$750,000.

**Recommendation #3:**

The Chetwynd Landfill is expected to reach the end of its life in 2028. The project is expected to cost approximately \$6M and be funded from a combination of requisition, and transfer from Capital Reserve.

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

1. That the Regional Board provide further direction.

**STRATEGIC PLAN RELEVANCE:**

- Not Applicable to Strategic Plan

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION(S):**

The balance of the Growing Communities Fund Reserve at July 31, 2023 is \$2,408,186.84 and has earned interest of \$25,186.84

**COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATION(S):**

None at this time.

**OTHER CONSIDERATION(S):**

None at this time.

External Links:

1. [Growing Communities Fund \(GCF\) Frequently Asked Questions](#)
2. [Growing Communities Fund, FN-BRD-217](#)