



REGIONAL DISTRICT NORTH OKANAGAN

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MEDIA CONTACTS: District of Coldstream, Mayor Hoyte, 250-545-5304
Regional District North Okanagan, Electoral Area 'B' Director Fleming and
Electoral Area 'C' Director Shatzko, 250-550-3700

Coldstream and Electoral Areas B and C clarify their position with respect to the Greater Vernon Recreation Services Funding

The District of Coldstream and Electoral Areas 'B' and 'C' wish to express our concern about the City of Vernon's proposed two-tiered price structure and the implications for the costs and accessibility of recreation for all users.

As referenced in Vernon staff reports, the proposed structure, will lead to greater uncertainty, decreased usage, increased administrative costs and result in a significantly increased financial burden on Vernon residents.

Coldstream and Areas 'B' and 'C' also wish to be clear that they have historically made, and continue to make presently, significant investments into Greater Vernon Recreation assets, including continuing to pay debt servicing costs on the Kal Tire Place expansion in the amount of \$139,751 in 2023.

What has been proposed by Coldstream and Areas 'B' and 'C' was a fee for service arrangement for funding recreations services. The proposal included:

- A one-time 11% increase in the annual grant amount from \$1,280,644 in 2023 to \$1,421,515 in 2024;
- Annual Consumer Price Index protection in 2025-2026

As previously stated:

"For the District of Coldstream and the Electoral Areas 'B' & 'C', we strongly feel that we have made a compelling offer – significantly more than was provided in 2023, significantly more than CPI and significantly more than will be achievable through a two-tiered fee structure. However, we also have to balance the desire to reach an agreement with our other objectives of financial stewardship and the demands of all the other services that we provide to our public."

An 11% increase in taxation to support enhanced recreation is not an unsubstantial offer. What has been proposed by the City of Vernon would require a cost increase for recreation services to Coldstream and Areas 'B' and 'C' of 27%, funded from taxation.

It should be noted that for the past decade, the City of Vernon has had sole control of the operation, administration and maintenance of recreation in the Greater Vernon area. Coldstream and Electoral Areas 'B' and 'C' are not involved in the operations and consequently were not involved in the decisions that lead to a cost structure resulting in those types of taxation requests.

The District of Coldstream and Electoral Areas 'B' and 'C' continue to believe that their offer to contribute \$1,421,515, plus inflation protection, through their shared grant service to support recreation operations in the City of Vernon respects the economic realities faced in all communities and that the inclusion of this funding will result in a stronger Recreation Service for all jurisdictions, including the City of Vernon. We share concerns that the overall burden to the public will be increased by the administrative challenges of a two-tiered system, and that such a system will result in decreased usage of facilities by the public.

The District of Coldstream and Areas 'B' and 'C' remain open to a fee for service agreement, which can be efficiently accomplished through the established joint service at the Regional District of North Okanagan to fund recreation services with the City of Vernon.

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