

Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development
BRIEFING NOTE FOR MINISTER

Ref #: 154568

FOR DECISION

Date: November 25, 2013

Title: Okanagan Falls Governance Study

Issue: The Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen has requested a restructure process for Okanagan Falls to be funded by the Ministry.

Background: Okanagan Falls is an unincorporated community located in Electoral Area 'D' of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS). The core population is approximately 3,500 with an additional 1,000-1,500 in surrounding communities including Kaleden and Skaha Estates. Local services are provided by multiple providers, including the Regional District, improvement districts and the Province. There are three population clusters in the area of Okanagan Falls that share different combinations of services.

The last attempt at incorporation in Okanagan Falls, which was contentious within the community, ended in a failed referendum in 1989. Since that time, the community has seen significant change in terms of evolution of the local economy, demographics and demand for local government services.

Coinciding with a period of fiscal constraint within the restructure program budget, requests for an incorporation study were deferred in both 2010 and 2012. The Electoral Area Director and RDOS Board renewed the request at the 2013 Union of BC Municipalities Convention. The UBCM follow-up letter confirmed that a decision on whether to fund a study would be made in the near future.

s13, s17

s13, s17 . A governance study would outline the current governance regime, underscore commonalities, differences, benefits and drawbacks of the current system and compare those to municipalisation. Built in would be a process to determine the level of support for municipalisation in each of the distinct areas. All of this information would inform the Minister's decision on whether to proceed to an incorporation study or to encourage less fundamental changes within the rural governance framework to address the areas of local interest and concern.

Mandate Considerations: An incorporation study could require First Nations consultation if it could lead to a provincial decision which may adversely affect s.35 Aboriginal rights.

Liquefied Natural Gas Considerations: None.

Fiscal Considerations: Beyond the cost of a study, s13, s17 there are no immediate fiscal impacts. If subsequent decisions lead to incorporation of a municipality, there could be a number of direct consequences to the Provincial budgets, which would vary in scale depending upon the area ultimately considered for municipalisation:

- Reduced longer-term road maintenance costs within Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure operations and capital budgets;
- Potential longer-term reduction in Provincial police costs if all three communities were included, or a slight to moderate increase in police tax revenue if fewer communities were included;
- Reduced rural tax revenue; and,
- Increased costs to the Ministry's small community grant budget.

Discussion:

s13, s17

s13, s17

While formal requests from the RDOS Board and EA Director have, to date, sought an incorporation study, staff-level discussions with the EA Director after the 2013 UBCM Convention seem to indicate that funding for a governance study would also be positively received.

Options:

s13, s17

Recommendation: s13, s17

Honourable Coralee Oakes, Minister

Date:

Approved / Not Approved

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Last update:21/11/2013 - Jeff Nielson