

For immediate release
June 12, 2013

SLRD FORMS STANDING COMMITTEE TO STRENGTHEN REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN AREAS A, B AND THE DISTRICT OF LILLOOET:

Improving communication and expanding partnerships noted as top goals

Pemberton, BC – The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) has formed a Standing Committee, the Northern Economic Development and Initiatives (NEDI) Committee, to help foster balanced, equitable and sustainable economic development in the northern sub-region of the SLRD. The committee is composed of elected officials from Areas A and B of the SLRD and the District of Lillooet and is supported by staff from both organizations.

The Committee's first order of business was to review and prioritize the recommendations of the recent Economic Development Assessment, Strategy and Action Plan. The report, commissioned by the SLRD late in 2012 and developed by EDCD Consulting, identified several priority goals including increasing community involvement and communication, strengthening and expanding partnerships and increasing support for the tourism and agriculture sectors. Close to 250 residents and businesses from across the northern sub-region of the SLRD had direct input into the Economic Development Strategy through a community consultation process that included focus groups, one-on-one interviews and online surveys.

"There is tremendous potential here to create a vibrant, healthy and prosperous region," says Marg Lampman, District of Lillooet Councillor and Chair of the SLRD's NEDI Committee. "The framework is in place, but to succeed we'll need to harness the energy, talents, vision and goodwill of the entire community."

The initiative is in its early stages, however as the project moves forward in the coming months, the partnership model will evolve; the hope is to create an innovative multi-stakeholder economic development structure with a broad range of stakeholder representation from both the public and private sectors, First Nations, community organizations and the public at large.

"Regional economic development is a complex challenge that cannot be addressed effectively by any one organization or sector," says Debbie Demare, SLRD Director of Area A and member of the NEDI Committee. "Our greatest opportunity for regional economic transformation is to work together and support each other."

A series of Community Information Sessions will be held this summer to provide citizens, businesses and community groups with an opportunity to learn more about the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan, ask questions, provide feedback, and contribute new ideas. A community visioning session is also being planned for later this summer with the goal of engaging people from across the sub-region in the process of creating a shared vision and charting a course for further action. Additional opportunities for continued community and stakeholder involvement will be announced as the initiative gains momentum.

For more information on the Northern Economic Development and Initiatives Committee or the Economic Development Assessment, Strategy and Action Plan, visit www.slrd.bc.ca.

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