Meeting date:  March 18, 2015

To:  SLRD Board

PURPOSE:
The purpose of this report is to advise the SLRD Board about the required consideration of a Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) 5 year review, and to update the Board on the work that staff is undertaking with the RGS Steering Committee in order to assess whether a review is recommended, and what the scope of that work may be.

KEY ISSUES/CONCEPTS:
Section 869 of the Local Government Act (LGA) sets requirements for regional districts with adopted regional growth strategies. Specifically, at least once every 5 years, a regional district that has adopted a regional growth strategy must consider whether the regional growth strategy must be reviewed for possible amendment.

As it has been seven years since the SLRD Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) Bylaw was completed (the RGS Bylaw was completed and received first/second reading in 2008, though not adopted until 2010), the SLRD needs to review the RGS and consider whether a review is required.

In 2014, staff completed a housekeeping amendment of the RGS undertaken to provide for the acceptance of member municipality Official Community Plan Regional Context Statements, and also made some minor housekeeping changes to the RGS. The housekeeping amendment did not involve a comprehensive review of the RGS. The concept of a 5 year review of the RGS is supported by the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development (MCSCD) as well as the RGS Steering Committee*. SLRD staff is working with the RGS Steering Committee to develop a recommended approach for this review which will be presented to the Board.

* The RGS Steering Committee is comprised of the planning director, or another official appointed by the applicable council, of the SLRD, District of Lillooet, Village of Pemberton, Resort Municipality of Whistler, and District of Squamish as well as Brent Mueller, Regional Growth Strategies Manager at the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development (MCSCD).
RELEVANT POLICIES:
Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1062, 2008

BACKGROUND:
Most of BC’s high growth regions – comprising 83 percent of the population – are using regional growth strategies to manage population change and guide decision-making and collaboration. The purpose of a regional growth strategy under Part 25 of the LGA is to “promote human settlement that is socially, economically, and environmentally healthy and that makes efficient use of public facilities and services, land and other resources.”

Covering a period of at least 20 years, the SLRD RGS is intended to “provide a broad policy framework describing the common direction that the regional district and member municipalities will follow in promoting development and services which are sustainable, recognizing a long term responsibility for the quality of life for future generations”. Regular review of this bylaw helps ensure consistency and relevance in planning documents and approaches across the region. It also continues to foster a collective commitment to the RGS vision and supports collaborative governance.

ANALYSIS:
Purpose of a RGS 5 year review
Meet LGA Requirements: the LGA requires a regular review of regional growth strategies, with a review to be considered at least once every five years.
Improve implementation: through implementation of the RGS Bylaw, SLRD staff and the RGS Steering Committee have identified some issues with the RGS, including the Minor Amendment Criteria and Process that may require further revision.
Evolve Policy and Processes: the SLRD has experienced considerable change since the RGS was initiated in 2003. There have also been changes at the provincial and federal level that have impacted regional district planning. Finally, member municipalities, through the RGS Steering Committee, have identified a number of issues to be considered. Consideration of a 5 year review will provide the opportunity to evolve policy and processes to reflect the current and future context.
Continue Collaboration: an RGS 5 year review will continue the collaborative efforts as noted in the RGS Bylaw by continuing to assist all parties with an interest in the region to:
1. Work together to address matters of common regional concern;
2. Demonstrate respect for each other’s jurisdictions and processes;
3. Maintain good communications and coordination with respect to land use and other decisions of a regional and sub-regional nature;
4. Create a long term vision informed by the key principles of sustainability and embark on a path to our future in a manner that finds a responsible balance between the environmental, economic, and social needs of our communities.
Current and Next Steps

1. Develop a Recommended Approach: SLRD Staff and the RGS Steering Committee will continue to work to develop a recommended approach regarding a 5 year review. Whether the review involves a Minor or Major Amendment Process, and what content the review includes as a result, is to be determined. The RGS Steering Committee met on February 19, 2015 and is scheduled to meet again on March 26, 2015.

2. SLRD Board Resolution: As per s. 854 of the LGA, preparation of the regional growth strategy (including a review) must be initiated by resolution of the board. SLRD Staff will present the recommended approach to the Board, for their acceptance, at a future meeting date.

3. Project Initiation: The scope and next steps of an RGS 5 year review will be dictated by whether the proposed review requires a Minor or Major Amendment Process. As noted previously, a recommended approach will be itemized in a future report to the Board.

Submitted by: C. Daniels, Planner
Endorsed by: K. Needham, Director of Planning and Development
Reviewed by: L. Flynn, Chief Administrative Officer