



NEWS RELEASE

Review of Regional District Governance

October 9, 2007, WESTBANK B.C. The Westbank and District Chamber of Commerce provides the following comment regarding current discussions about the proposed amalgamation of the 3 Okanagan Regional Districts into one Regional District:

The Advocacy Committee of the Westbank and District Chamber of Commerce ("WDCC") is encouraged to hear that the Provincial Government is initiating a review of the growth management and regional governance challenges faced by the Okanagan Valley. Specifically, the WDCC supports the process initiated by the Provincial Government to work with the Boards of the North Okanagan Regional District (NORD), Central Okanagan Regional District (CORD), and the Regional District of the Okanagan Similkameen (RDOS) to review growth management and regional governance issues facing the Okanagan Valley including:

- how the current governance system can be improved
- the streamlining of governance and determining what shared services could be delivered seamlessly. This could include an amalgamation of some or all the functions currently offered by all 3 regional districts into one "seamless" Regional District.
- improved handling of regional issues through a new governance structure. These issues include watershed management, air-shed management, 911, emergency planning and economic development.

Members of the WDCC Advocacy Committee, including Rusty Ensign (Past President) and Mike Scarlett (President) attended a BC Chamber of Commerce meeting with representatives from a wide range of Okanagan Chambers of Commerce and participated in a discussion of a number of regional issues, including the issue of amalgamating the three Regional Districts into one. From this meeting, it became clear to the WDCC Advocacy Committee that the pace of growth being experienced by individual Okanagan communities is putting pressure on the Okanagan as a region, and some form of regional planning body is required.

The Westbank and District Chamber of Commerce supports the review initiated by the Provincial Government regarding the effectiveness of the current Regional District governance structure in the Okanagan because:

- the significant and escalating staff shortages being experienced by Okanagan municipalities and regional districts supports the efficient use of staff by combining duplicated regional district services into one regional district.

- rapid growth in the Okanagan means issues such as transportation, air, water, tourism/ economic development and emergency services require regional cooperation and planning
- the potential cost savings and intangible benefits of one regional district including ... making business investment in the Okanagan easier by having consistent standards, fewer duplicated services resulting in funds being freed up for more productive use, and better coordination of efforts resulting in more effective outcomes.

For further information, please contact Mike Scarlett at 768-0644