



# Director's Report

Aimee Watson– D

**Report Date:** March 2023

To keep residents informed and seek your input, this is the last report on the 2023 draft budget for Area D. The annual budget is approved at our March board meeting, which is this Thursday the 16<sup>th</sup>.

We held the Annual Public Budget meeting on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. The public present were the library board and the media.

Area D has 17 services that cover the whole electoral area D and a further 7 services that serve defined areas. Of these services, 5 are shared with, and one is contracted to, the Village of Kaslo. The RDCK provides a total of 186 services.

Depending on where you live in Area D, the defined services you participate in may be fire, library, mosquito, or water services. I will break down, by service, what the draft budget is for each.

Before I do so, I want to correct the publication that indicates taxes are going up by 8%. We never do taxation by %, it is always a rate per thousand which is derived the cost of service delivery /total assessment for participating areas. If you want to know exactly what the change from 2023 is vs 2022, use the rate per thousand as that is the actual number used to determine your tax bill. I would also like to correct the headline that sated I said this budget was “fair”. The media asked if I thought this budget was fair, I struggled to answer given all the factors. I indicated that given the demands from both residents, regulators, and cost of service delivery in rural areas, I feel it is as balanced as I could do. I added, there is a lot we have said no too while also advocating for regulations to be amendable to the rural landscape.

The hardest part of this job is serving demands of multiple, diverse communities, everything is considered for viability, relevance of community impact and affordability. We also have too much being pushed to our responsibilities as a local government. For example, local taxation subsidizes recycling at a cost of about \$700,000 across the central sub region to ensure rural residents have service. In my observation, this is a clear download as provincial policy states that the producer pays. We have also seen more responsibility in our fire services, cost of water delivery, requirement to address climate change and emergency management.

Take a read, questions/comments- [awatson@rdck.bc.ca](mailto:awatson@rdck.bc.ca)

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Here is the total 2023 draft budget for Area D using the rate per thousand:

2022: \$671, 442 = 1.387/\$1000

2023: \$729, 556 = 1.293/\$1000

By service, with notes on what is increasing.

### **General administration (GA)**

Every area in the RDCK pays into the GA service. Our finance team has been working towards true cost accounting where total costs are attributed back to the services that use them, such as our IT (information technology), human resources and corporate administration dept's. This is where Directors' costs and expenses are covered, conferences, and initiatives such as the Kootenay Boundary Farm Advisors, Central Kootenay Food Policy Council, and the Accelerate Kootenay programs.

One initiative I am not supporting is a regional Invasive Species program. We did approve an invasive species strategy for all RDCK assets, those costs are housed in the services where those assets are. This regional strategy would be based on private property at a cost of about \$27,000. I will not be supporting this work for two reasons. One, cumulative impacts of everything we financially commit to means I must prioritize, and I would prefer landowners take ownership of their own stewardship opposed to regulation. Secondly, I would rather support a change in our land stewardship ethos across all areas that would create healthy ecosystems than treat the symptoms of unhealthy land management strategies. This strategy includes working on provincial rights of ways, which I support, but not as an expense to local taxpayers, as the Regional District does not own nor operate these services.

Area D contribution:

2022: \$41,444 = 0.08/\$1000

2023: \$48,807 = 0.08/\$1000

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### **Discretionary Grants**

This is taxation for the purpose of providing grants. I have not used this service for that purpose as it is one I have direct control over. I have another grant service, *community development* which are funds received from utilities who do not pay taxes. I use those funds for granting purposes. In the past, I have used this budget line to pay for the ads and sponsorships Area D is annually requested to support, however, I will not be doing that in 2023 given the cumulative demand on taxation.

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### **Rural Administration (RA)**

RA covers half of the rural director's expenses including stipend, bylaw staff and expenses, fire services overhead, election expenses. Much of our wildfire mitigation work is housed in this service, which has predominantly grant funded with staff expenses funded from taxation.

Area D contribution:  
2022: \$72,287 = 0.14/\$1000  
2023: \$76,703 = 0.12/\$1000

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### **GIS Service**

Geospatial Information is our mapping service. This is both the online public mapping service that provides land use regulations and planning by property. We also provide data and mapping services to external agencies such as KiN for their infrastructure management.

This service has a policy of full cost recovery of staff time from services and external entities that use it.

Area D contribution:  
2022: \$10,119 = 0.02/\$1000  
2023: \$9,463 = 0.016/\$1000

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### **Building Inspection**

We have seen a sharp increase in building permits since 2019, which has concurrently increased service demand.

As we have not had a full contingent of building inspectors and the BC Building Code is increasingly onerous, we have added new administrative supports, known as *plan checkers*, to assist applicants in moving through the detailed process.

This service is, on average, funded with 50% user fees and 50% taxation. In addition to ensuring a full staff compliment, we will be moving old hard copy building permits to digital records.

Area D contribution:  
2022: \$28,107 = 0.05/\$1000  
2023: \$33,134 = 0.06/\$1000

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### **Planning and Land Use**

This service houses all electoral areas' (11) planning and regulatory expenses. There are significant pressures to see land use plans reviewed with many requests for new considerations. In 2022, we engaged the public on waterfront development permit areas (DPA's), wildfire DPA's as well as Area H and Area I are embarking on full community plan reviews, Area D is in the queue to move to the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of community planning. I have also requested a service case on the implications of the Unsightly Bylaw to be applied to Area D. Area D is currently a participant in the cost for our bylaw officers (through RA) but the regulatory bylaw for unsightly properties does not apply to Area D.

Area D contribution:  
2022: \$41,379 = 0.08/\$1000  
2023: \$46,312 = 0.08/\$1000

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### **Community Sustainability**

Specific to Area D, I am working with LINKs to support a Grid Resilience program for the Lardeau Valley. 2022 projects in this service were a geothermal assessment, our watershed governance initiative, renewable Kootenay's, and the development of the climate change strategy.

Area D contribution:

2022: \$10,108 = 0.02/\$1000

2023: \$10,504 =0.02/\$1000

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### **Economic Development Kaslo and Area D (EDC)**

This service has taxed \$20,000 in total, shared between Kaslo and Area D, for the past few years. Using these funds, we have leveraged close to \$200,000. Projects were community kitchen capacity, farmer supports, supply chain capacity, chamber capacity development, and website development during COVID for local retailers.

Area D contribution:

2022: \$13,086 =0.02/\$1000

2023: \$12,949 =0.02/\$1000

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### **Advisory and Heritage Planning (APHC)**

Each electoral area has an APH commission. This service enabled funds for meeting and other commission expenses.

2022: \$675 = 0.001/\$1000

2023: \$675 = 0.001/\$1000

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### **Jaws of Life (Kaslo Search and Rescue)**

Kaslo and Area D provide operational funds to KSAR through taxation. They have many projects on the go.

Area D contribution:

2022: \$16,210 =0.03/\$1000

2023: \$18,367=0.03/\$1000

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### **Emergency Communications 911**

This service is the contract for 911 services across the RDCK. We have a contract with Fraser Fort George who manages dispatch.

This is not a service with much discretion as the providers are few and far between. Fees the telecoms charge for the service have diminished as landlines have been switched for cell phones.

There is advocacy work to see the cell phone fees be allocated to local governments who are required to carry this service.

Area D contribution:

2022: \$16,532 =0.03/\$1000

2023: \$20,572 =0.03/\$1000

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### **Emergency Planning**

We will see a lot more work in this service as emergencies are increasing and the Emergency Program Modernization Act will see more responsibility delegated to local governments for mitigation and recovery.

Area D contribution:

2022: \$30,305 = \$0.06/\$1000

2023: \$30,213 =\$0.05/\$1000

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### **Resource Recovery – Central Resource**

Garbage, recycling, hazardous waste roundups, organics, and land fill management costs are all on the rise. We have two new organics facilities, as we are preparing for the provincial ban of organics in landfills. However, Kaslo and Area D are not currently in the service area for organics, nor are they included in the current curbside engagement process. Hauling organics is not cheap and certainly defeats the purpose of reducing emissions. We will see rural based programs being developed post this initial phase of the Organic Waste Diversion Strategy.

Area D contribution:

2022: \$192,490 = 0.37/\$1000

2023: \$217,850 = 0.36/\$1000

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### **Recreation and Parks Kaslo and Area D**

This service funds three regional parks, a municipal park and provides operational funds to 6 recreation facilities. These are: Glacier Creek Campground, Lardeau Park, Ainsworth Wharf, Ainsworth hall, Kaslo Arena, Curling Club, Lardeau Valley Community Club, Argenta Community hall and Johnson Landing Community hall.

Area D contribution:

2022: \$153,853 = 0.30/\$1000

2023: \$156,599 = 0.26/\$1000

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### **Kootenay West Transit**

I struggle with transit in a rural area. Residents want transit and with many necessary health needs centralized in our larger urban centers, it's important. However, ridership is very low and costs of operations very high. This service is one that does not have a lot of discretion on my part as its operations are governed through the West Kootenay Transit Committee covering Kootenay Boundary through to the east of the Central Kootenay. It is a shared service with BC Transit, local government covers operations and bus shelters, BC transit manages employees and buses. As the push to reduce emissions increases, so does the push for transit to replace vehicle use. I do not see this as a viable option in rural sparse communities where the travel distance and subsequent operational costs are much higher. Gas is the biggest driver of this year's budget increase.

Area D contribution:

2022: \$42,347 = 0.08/\$1000

2023: \$45,311 = 0.07/\$1000

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### **Conservation Service**

This is a grant program non-profit, and First Nations can apply for conservation work within the areas of A, D, E and now H. It is a parcel tax of \$15. As it is a parcel tax, there is no rate per thousand.

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### **Mosquito Control – Lardeau Valley & Pineridge**

For those in the LV, this will be the largest component of your tax bill. Changes in this service include shifting from helicopter to drones for aerial applications when ground is not accessible, working with the community to identify areas of high larvae counts, and increasing residential education on how to personally reduce breeding habitat. The Lardeau Valley service has always been subsidized with Area D Community Development grants. This year, that amount is \$40,000.

Lardeau Valley

2022: \$68,000= 1.05/\$1000

2023: \$70,000= 0.91/\$1000

Pineridge

2022: \$13,300 =0.36/\$1000

2023: \$13,324= 0.29/\$100

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### **Library**

Kaslo and Area D provide operational funds to the Kaslo Library. Their annual grant was increasing by 4% on annual basis, this year the request was a 6% increase.

Area D contribution

2022: \$68,000= 1.05/\$1000

2023: \$70,000= 0.91/\$1000

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### **Water**

Area D has two of 19 RDCK owned water systems, Woodbury, and MacDonald Creek, and over 100 independent community systems I support through community development and community works grants.

Water systems are mixed service with parcel tax and user fees to support operations and assets. In general, user fees are for operations and maintenance, parcel tax is your capital management funds. All infrastructure owned by local government require asset management plans, which in turn determines an annual contribution to manage assets.

### **Woodbury**

Woodbury is undergoing major capital upgrades (2023), with an unexpected water line relocation project in 2022. We received funds for the capital work in 2022, but due to delays through permitting with IHA, we have been delayed until this year. This work was 100% funded by a federal grant.

The waterline relocation work incurred an \$80,000 expense to the service. Capital work was funded with Area D community works funds and legal/staff time funded through reserves.

2022 Parcel tax: \$17,466 (\$377 per)

2022 User fee: \$34,150

2022 Area D Community Works grant: \$47,000

2023 Parcel tax: \$17,466 (\$377 per)

2023 User fee: \$35,095

2023 reserves balance: \$109,653

### **MacDonald Creek**

The RDCK owns and manages the infrastructure on this water system, but operations are contracted with the Village of Kaslo. The Village is doing major upgrades to its facility, Area D is contributing \$60,000.

RDCK bills for infrastructure, VoK bills for service. I do not have the VoK portion of this budget.

Area D (Allen Subdivision only)

2022 taxation: \$6,242

2022 parcel tax: \$24,532

2023 no change

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### **Fire**

Area D has two fire services, Kaslo and Area D full service and Woodbury/Ainsworth response only. Fire is an increasingly expensive service to provide with heavy pressure on our volunteers.

Regulations are not different for volunteer vs staffed services, and rural areas are predominantly volunteer based.

### **Kaslo Volunteer Fire Dept (KVFD)**

Mayor Hewat and I agreed several years ago that the KVFD should at least have a paid full time Fire Chief. We slowly increased the salary item to be a full-time paid position. This service covers the entire Village of Kaslo and Area D from Twin Bays to Cowan Rd. This FD also provides First responder service to all of Area D but taxation is limited to the fire service boundary. We do have direction to staff to prepare a service case analysis for an Area D wide first responder service.

Area D contribution

2022: \$187,026 = 0.78/\$1000

2023: \$193,949 = 0.68/\$1000

**Ainsworth Woodbury** is a contract, response only service. The contract is split between Kaslo VFD and the Balfour VFD.

2022: 23,957 = 0.28/\$1000

2023: 23,980 = 0.25/\$1000

