



**SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA ITEM
FOR THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING HELD
THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 2023**

COMMITTEE MEETING OF COUNCIL

Page 05	Supplemental Information	Notice – District of Kitimat Policy Review: Watershed Management & Green Infrastructure, Growth Management, Industrial Lands, Leveraging Local Knowledge
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NOTICE

Date: March 22, 2023
File No: 7.4.14
To: Mayor and Council
From: Tracy Tavares, Deputy Director of Corporate Administration
Re: Public Comment



Staff received the following comment from Lani Gibson on the District of Kitimat Policy Review: Watershed Management & Green Infrastructure, Growth Management, Industrial Lands, Leveraging Local Knowledge Report

Attachment(s): A. Public Comment – L. Gibson – March 18, 2023

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From: [Lani Gibson](#)
To: [Michelle Martins](#); [Gerry Leibel](#); [Mario Feldhoff](#); [Graham Pitzel](#); [Edwin Empinado](#); [Phil Germuth](#); [Terry Marleau](#); [Warren Waycheshen](#); [districtofkitimat](#)
Subject: Public comment for Mayor and Council
Date: March 18, 2023 10:16:26 PM

Hello, I am unable to attend the March 23 meeting regarding the Urban Systems report. Could you please forward these comments to Mayor and Council in case I don't have all of the email addresses correct, as well as to the representatives from Urban Systems who will be leading the meeting? Thank you!

Dear Mayor and Council,

Re: Urban Systems Policy Review report, March 23, 2023 (the "Report")

In 2008, after two years of extensive community engagement, the District of Kitimat ("DOK") Council adopted an Official Community Plan ("OCP") which contains numerous references to the value that the citizens of Kitimat place on the natural environment surrounding our community. To quote from the Report now before you,

One of the OCP's core themes is to 'Protect the Natural Environment'. Kitimat's natural setting and environmental attributes, including the Kitimat River and Kitimat River Estuary, are recognized as critical to sustaining a healthy population, ensuring the viability of local industry, and promoting an outdoor, active lifestyle for residents and visitors. The goal of this theme is to "protect environmental quality by managing uses and activities that impact the river and estuary, local parks and trails, wildlife habitat and air, and to protect people and property from hazards".

Unfortunately, in the 15 years since adoption of the OCP, the DOK has failed to implement any policies to meet the goal of this core theme of our OCP. While many residents appreciate the new solid waste diversion program, and are hopeful that there will soon be an implementation plan for the CEEP, there remains a complete absence of policies and procedures aimed at protecting the sensitive ecosystems within our municipal boundaries such as old growth forests and wetlands, or at safeguarding the biodiversity around the community, which residents cherish. In the meantime, forestry, mining, and oil and gas activities, as well as commercial and residential development, have continued to stretch the boundaries of our human footprint on this valley, often completely destroying natural ecosystems, and also disrupting wildlife connectivity corridors and recreational/cultural access to highly valued areas.

The current state of affairs is not acceptable to the many residents of Kitimat who came forward during the 2006/7 OCP consultations to share their views about the importance of protecting the wild spaces within our municipal boundaries.

Due to the inaction of the District of Kitimat around this core theme of the OCP, the DOK Council received countless delegations in recent years from members of organizations such as the Kitimat Valley Naturalists ("KVN"), Douglas Channel Watch and the Rod and Gun Club ("R&G"), who have pleaded with the DOK Council to create policies and procedures to implement this goal in the OCP. These requests led Council to pass a motion asking that staff engage a consultant to help DOK to answer the following questions:

1. How can the DOK identify sensitive ecosystems, green infrastructure and connecting corridors?
2. How can the DOK develop a Growth Management Strategy?
3. How can the DOK remove barriers and provide incentives for redevelopment of brownfields and adjacent degraded lands?
4. How can the DOK understand the impacts of proposed greenfield development?
5. How can the DOK establish a watershed management / water sustainability plan?
6. How can the DOK ensure that local knowledge is incorporated into decision-making processes when development of greenfield areas is proposed?

The Report currently before you has many excellent recommendations. In particular, the six considerations listed in the Summary on page 26 of the Report (page 33 in your agenda) really "nail it" in terms of pointing to solutions for the current shortcomings and gaps in the DOK's approach to policy development and implementation.

My greatest concern with the Report is that, unlike the report which the Rod and Gun club brought forward, which outlines specific policy options and tools available to local governments in BC to protect their local environment, this Report does not actually answer the six questions that Council posed in their motion.

The consultants who wrote the Report recommend "shifting away from a piecemeal approach and adopting a more comprehensive planning approach. Prior to the development of topic specific plans or strategies (i.e., industrial land strategy), it is imperative to first establish an overarching community vision to guide subsequent policy direction in the District."

While I agree strongly that a holistic approach must be taken to planning for the future of our community (e.g., plans and policies that simultaneously address the desire for future industrial development and the desire for protection of our wild spaces), if the intention of the

suggestion to "first establish an overarching community vision" is to engage in a deep OCP review process, or any other broad community engagement, which could easily take another two years, then I strongly disagree with that suggestion. Although much has changed in Kitimat since 2008, the desire on the part of citizens to "protect the natural environment" can only have grown in the past 15 years, as more and more people have become aware of the ecological crises facing us - catastrophic biodiversity loss and rapid climate change.

In addition to whatever direction you might give to the consultants to address the six excellent recommendations on page 26 of the Report, I humbly request that you consider asking the consultants to report back to you on the possibility of undertaking the following steps in order to take immediate action to implement the policies that citizens have been asking you for at least the past 15 years to implement:

1. Make the Rezoning and Development Permit Application processes for the wild spaces surrounding our community more robust. In other words, ensure that the process for rezoning or getting a DP in these wild areas is somewhat more rigorous than for applications pertaining to land within the developed footprint of the community. For example, just as it is standard in many DOK processes for a proponent to reimburse the DOK for legal and advertising costs, it should be standard for the DOK to seek a fee from the proponent to offset some of the cost of engaging its own experts (e.g., biologists, hydrologists, geologists) when new development is proposed in a previously undeveloped area. It should also be standard for DOK staff and proponents to specifically investigate and report to Council and the public as to how the proposed development in a "greenfield" area will impact biodiversity (e.g., sensitive areas and wildlife and plant species corridors) as well as recreation, hunting/gathering, and cultural activities.

This can be easily accomplished by designating the undeveloped areas of Kitimat as an "Environmental Development Permit Area", and drafting a bylaw to outline the additional steps that staff and proponents must take during rezoning and development application processes.

2. Establish a process for consulting as early as possible with citizens who hold valuable local knowledge pertaining to Kitimat's wild spaces, waterways and wildlife. Although the Report contains many excellent examples as to how the DOK can engage citizens more deeply in policy development generally, the Report fails to address the intent of question six in the Council motion, which was to ensure that people who have decades of intimate experiences with the local landbase (such as members of KVN and R&G) are meaningfully consulted at the very start of discussions between a proponent and DOK staff so that their knowledge can be incorporated into the planning of the project.

3. Simultaneously start two deep engagement and planning processes, and invite the Haisla Nation Council ("HNC") to collaborate with you, with the goal of completing these processes by the end of your term in 2026:

a) hire experts to conduct an Industrial Land Supply analysis, including information on the estimated development costs for various greenfeild areas (note: DOK Council has been warned by economic development experts that this kind of detailed planning and information is essential to attracting investors); and including a scheme to incentivize the reclamation and redevelopment of brownfeild areas (perhaps with support from the province in the form of provincial incentives for industries that fit within the CleanBC plan and wish to take over lands in Kitimat such as the former Eurocan site);

b) hire experts to bring together all existing data held by DOK, HNC, local industries, the province, and local naturalists, hunters and foragers, in order to delineate a "protected area network" within Kitimat's municipal boundaries which would include environmentally sensitive areas (important habitat/feeding grounds, old growth forests, etc.), corridors for wildlife and plant species to travel between those areas, and identification of areas that are important for recreation, hunting/gathering and cultural practices.

With the recent announcement of several million dollars granted to Kitimat by the provincial government, you have an opportunity to set aside a line item in your 2023 budget to begin work on these three items. With support and oversight from Council, these three steps could be accomplished before the end of your term. Thus, you could leave a legacy for the citizens of Kitimat of not only having finally addressed the core theme/goal of "protecting the environment" in the 2008 OCP, but even more importantly, you will have done so in collaboration with the Haisla Nation, and in a way that also takes into account the needs of future industrial developers.

My intent in bringing forward these suggestions is not to stop industry or to impede in any way future economic opportunities for our community. On the contrary, my intent is to suggest to you some options which would allow you to proactively plan for both industrial development and the protection of the environment so that when an opportunity comes to our community we are ready for it, and the process is not mired in conflict and divisive debate.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lani

Lani E. Gibson (she/her)

[REDACTED]

Kitimat BC, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I live and work on unceded Haisla Nation territory