

MEDIA RELEASE

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METRO VANCOUVER AND THE CITY OF ABBOTSFORD REACH AGREEMENT TO AMEND PARKLAND INTERESTS

Metro Vancouver Regional District (MVRD) has reached an agreement with the City of Abbotsford, which enables the City to withdraw from Metro Vancouver's regional parks function and explore new park partnerships with the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD). Once approved, the City of Abbotsford will no longer participate in, or financially contribute, to parks within Metro Vancouver and can allocate resources to parks within its own municipality and region.

A bylaw enabling Abbotsford's withdrawal underwent a first reading today by Metro Vancouver's Board. The Board also endorsed a proposed Order in Council for the Province's consideration that would enable Metro Vancouver to own and operate parkland located outside its geographical boundaries, without requiring membership of the City of Abbotsford in the MVRD parks function.

The Fraser Valley Regional District and the City of Abbotsford support the bylaw amendment and the proposed Order in Council.

"This agreement is ultimately aimed at enhancing stewardship and improving economic efficiencies of park systems throughout both Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley," said Greg Moore, Chair of Metro Vancouver. "Metro Vancouver will be able to invest more funding into future parkland acquisitions to enhance its regional parks system, while continuing to collaborate with the City of Abbotsford and the FVRD on Experience the Fraser and related projects."

Metro Vancouver's 24 regional parks and 4 greenways includes parkland located within the municipal boundaries of the City of Abbotsford. The City is represented on MVRD's Regional Parks Board and the Regional Parks Standing Committee. For all regional services other than parks, Abbotsford is a member of the FVRD with political representation on the FVRD Board. The implementation of the agreement for service withdrawal will result in cost reductions and governance improvements for both parties.

"The City of Abbotsford is supportive of MVRD's proposed amendment to its Regional Parks Service and the conditions set forth in the Order in Council," said Henry Braun, Mayor, City of Abbotsford. "The lands and interests that will be transferred to Abbotsford will remain as parkland in our community for future generations to enjoy, and the City will experience a positive economic impact from this change. This is a win-win situation for everyone involved."

Under the agreement, Metro Vancouver will transfer parkland outside the regional district to the City of Abbotsford. These lands and built assets include Matsqui Trail, Sumas Mountain and the eastern portion of Glen Valley Regional Park referred to as Poplar Bar and Duncan Bar, including Crescent Island. Aldergrove Regional Park, which straddles the Township of Langley and Abbotsford, will continue to be owned and operated by MVRD as approximately 75 percent of users reside in Metro Vancouver.

Metro Vancouver will provide a one-time financial contribution to the City to return its portion of MVRD Regional Park Reserve Funds and one year of transitional funding.

“This agreement will enhance both the scope and scale of parks throughout the MVRD and FVRD,” said Jason Lum, Chair, FVRD. “We look forward to entering into a sub-regional parks function with the City of Abbotsford that returns ecologically precious parkland to recreational users in the Valley and better reflects our geographical boundaries.”

Discussions surrounding Abbotsford’s withdrawal began in 2014 as a result of recommendations in Metro Vancouver’s Regional Parks Service, which examined the long-term regional parks function, its relevance in the future and how growth of the function would be managed.

Media Contact:

Don Bradley, Metro Vancouver Media Relations, 604.778.2821, don.bradley@metrovancover.org

Metro Vancouver is a federation of 21 municipalities, one Electoral Area and one Treaty First Nation that collaboratively plans for and delivers regional-scale services. Its core services are drinking water, wastewater treatment and solid waste management. Metro Vancouver also regulates air quality, plans for urban growth, manages a regional parks system and provides affordable housing. The regional district is governed by a Board of Directors of elected officials from each local authority.