



building communities together

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE

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108 GREENBELT COMMISSION

KEEPING THE GREENBELT GREEN

108 Mile House - At its November meeting the 108 Greenbelt Commission reviewed the fuel management work done during the past year.

In undertaking this work, the Commission invited independent recommendations and assessments from three respected local forestry and biological professionals: Chris Betuzzi, Kristi Iverson and Darren Wilkinson. They are each very supportive of the work that has been done, reporting that fire hazards and risks in the addressed areas have been significantly reduced, that disturbance levels to the adjacent grasslands have been minimal and that high aesthetic values have been maintained.

However, they all recommend that the Commission should take a more aggressive approach, selectively thinning coniferous forests in order to further reduce fire risks and at the same time recreate conditions similar to those that occurred prior to European settlement - a time that was prone to frequent fires in the area.

Without the benefit of these fires, fuel loadings have in some areas become extreme; forests have encroached on grasslands and have sometimes become so thick they are choking themselves out to an unhealthy point. They also pointed out that such actions should make the forests more resilient to future forest pest outbreaks, and also provide the best habitat for local wildlife since these are the conditions in which they evolved. While a detailed assessment of the grasslands has not been conducted, the biologist reported the grasslands generally appear to be in good condition with the present level of grazing.

These recommendations along with the findings contained in an updated Community Wildfire Plan will be discussed at a future public meeting.

The Greenbelt Commission is developing the scope of a pilot project approved recently by the Ministry of Forests and UBCM. The pilot project will promote public awareness, education and demonstrate such fuel reduction methods as fuel breaks, spacing and ladder fuel removal, crown cover reduction and mechanical harvesting.

The Commission also received good news from HRDC Canada that their request to extend this year's program was approved. Crews will now continue cleanup work until December 16, 2005.

-30-

Editors: this news release is also online at www.cariboord.bc.ca

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