



March 16, 2023

Ref: 271994

Mark Pendergraft, Chair
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
101 Martin St
Penticton BC V2A 5J9

Dear Chair Pendergraft:

The population of B.C. has increased consistently over the past decade and is projected to keep growing in the next 10 years. The provincial government understands the need to facilitate greater housing supply for our growing population. The province will support local governments in addressing the multiple funding and financing constraints to aid in the construction of infrastructure and amenities for all B.C. communities. Local governments' investment in core community infrastructure and amenities increases the amount of land that is ready to be developed to a higher density.

The Government of B.C. has invested considerable resources in infrastructure and amenities in the past 10 years and has strategically leveraged federal funding to that effect. More than \$1.6 billion in federal and provincial funding have been invested in our communities since 2018 through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. However, as there is still more to be done for infrastructure and amenities, the provincial government is pleased to provide the Growing Communities Fund (GCF) for local governments province-wide.

As a one-time grant, the GCF will provide up to \$1 billion through direct grants to local governments to support all B.C. communities, with a focus on those communities that need to increase the pace and scale of housing supply. The principal objective of the GCF is to increase the local housing supply with investments in community infrastructure and amenities. Regional Districts are encouraged to work closely with adjacent local First Nations, in recognition of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, as this collaboration strengthens our communities and regions.

The funding provided through the GCF should be limited to one-off costs needed to build required infrastructure and amenities rather than funding ongoing or operational activities. These funds are to be incremental to currently planned investments and should accelerate the delivery of capital projects.

Eligible costs are as follows:

- Public drinking water supply, treatment facilities and water distribution;
- Local portion of affordable/attainable housing developments;

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- Childcare facilities;
- Municipal or regional capital projects that service, directly or indirectly, neighbouring First Nation communities;
- Wastewater conveyance and treatment facilities;
- Stormwater management;
- Solid waste management infrastructure;
- Public safety/emergency management equipment and facilities not funded by senior level government;
- Local road improvements and upgrades;
- Sidewalks, curbing and lighting;
- Active transportation amenities not funded by existing provincial programs;
- Improvements that facilitate transit service;
- Natural hazard mitigation;
- Park additions/maintenance/upgrades including washrooms/meeting space and other amenities; and
- Recreation-related amenities.

Further to the above note capital costs, one-off costs can include:

- Costs of feasibility studies (including infrastructure capacity assessment); other early-stage development work; costs of designing, tendering and acquiring land (where it is wholly required for eligible infrastructure projects); constructing eligible infrastructure projects; and, in limited situations, non-capital administrative costs where these are necessary, for example adding staff capacity related to development or to establish complementary financing for local government owned infrastructure or amenities.

I am pleased to advise you that Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen is the recipient of a \$4,483,000 grant under the Growing Communities Fund. This amount will be directly transferred to your local government by March 31, 2023.

Under part 7 of the Local Government Grants Regulations, the amount of the grant to each local government is set by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The determination of this amount was based on a formula that applies to all regional districts.

This formula is based on four components: a flat funding amount, a “total population” amount, a “rural population” amount and a “rural population growth” amount. The flat amount is \$500,000. The “total population” amount is \$17 per capita in the entire regional district. The “rural population” amount is \$30 per capita in the rural areas of the regional district.

This approach recognizes that servicing rural residents (unincorporated areas) is generally more expensive on a per capita basis than residents from urban (incorporated areas) due to economies of scale. The “rural population growth” amount is \$1,000 per capita population growth in the rural areas between 2016 and 2021.

As a condition of this funding, the grant must be allocated to an appropriate regional district service by the end of this calendar year. To ensure full transparency regarding the use of funds, your local government will be required to annually report on how it spends this grant. This will be part of the annual financial reporting required under section 377 (1)(a) of the *Local Government Act*. Your local government will provide a schedule to the audited financial statements respecting the amount of funding received, the use of those funds and the year-end balance of unused funds. Your local government must continue to annually report on the use of grant money until the funds are fully drawn down.

Further to the financial reporting, an annual report that identifies work-related Housing Needs Reports and pre-zoning requirements, as applicable, is required. The province also encourages highlighting projects that align with provincial priorities such as CleanBC and childcare; as well as those that align with the province’s Environmental, Social and Governance framework for capital projects.

Finally, requirements will include parameters for public recognition of the funding related to projects. The province must be consulted prior to any proactive media events or news releases related to the project. Funded projects must also acknowledge the province’s contribution through temporary and permanent on-site signage. The provincial government anticipates that the funds will be expended within approximately five years of receipt.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this letter, please feel free to contact the Local Government Infrastructure and Finance Branch by email at: LGIF@gov.bc.ca. Further information on the program will be available on the following webpage: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/local-governments/grants-transfers/grants/bc-s-growing-communities-fund>.

The province welcomes this opportunity to support the growth of the supply of housing throughout British Columbia. We believe that that this funding will contribute to the capacity of B.C. local governments to provide critical services as our province and economy grows.

Sincerely,



Anne Kang
Minister

pc: Bill Newell, Chief Administrative Officer, Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
Jim Zaffino, Manager of Finance, Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

Attachment with Example Calculation for a Regional District with 65,000 People, 30,000 in Rural Areas

If the Regional District rural population (unincorporated areas) grew by 2,000 people between 2016-2021, the total grant amount is calculated as follows:

Component	Calculation	Result
Flat Funding	500,000	\$500,000
Total Population	= 65,000 x 17	\$1,105,000
Rural Population	= 30,000 x 30	\$900,000
Rural Population Growth	= 2,000 x 1,000	\$2,000,000
Total Grant		\$4,505,000