

An update: Municipal status for Sun Peaks?

Sun Peaks
Governance
November 2009

Introduction

In April 2007, after a comprehensive look at impacts, a local volunteer group – the Sun Peaks Incorporation Study Committee – published its findings about municipal status for Sun Peaks. A newsletter was sent to all owners explaining the findings and public meetings were held to discuss municipal status. In a survey held just after that, over 90% of respondents supported a request for a referendum.

However, because there were several matters still requiring provincial attention (including area First Nations consultation), the Committee felt a decision about a referendum request would be premature.

Now that these issues have been resolved, the Committee, using a grant from the Ministry of Community and Rural Development, has updated its 2007 findings, including financial impacts, and wants to discuss them with residents and owners to help gauge support for a referendum.

Sun Peaks Incorporation Study Committee	
Member	Affiliations
Ines Popig, Co-Chair	Owner; resident; SPRID chair
Darcy Alexander, Co-Chair	Owner; V-P of Sun Peaks Resort Corporation
Adam Earle	Owner; resident; business; SPRID trustee
Mike Forster	Owner; resident; business; SPRID trustee
John Sternig	Regional District Area P director; SPRID trustee
Colleen Hannigan	Owner; resident
Dennis Karpiak	Owner
Kyle McGauchie	Owner; resident; business
Mario Pozza	Owner; resident; SPRID trustee
Al Raine	Owner; resident

SPRID = Sun Peaks Resort Improvement District

Next steps

We are holding public meetings on **November 27th and 28th, 2009** to explain our findings, hear your comments, and answer questions. The Committee will then consider whether to request that the Province hold a referendum so voters can decide about municipal status.

If a referendum is requested and the Province agrees, the vote could be in January 2010. If it passes and the Minister approves, a new municipality could be created by June 2010.

Who could vote in a referendum or election?

Voter eligibility in a referendum is the same as for municipal and regional district elections. For details, please check www.SunPeaksGovernance.com.

Why look at municipal status?

Becoming a municipality would provide the community with various opportunities, including:

- More autonomy to set community policies (the Improvement District has very limited powers now).
- Increased local accountability of decision-makers.
- Improved local services like bylaw enforcement, road maintenance, planning and building inspection.
- Increased flexibility to set service priorities based on unique Sun Peaks needs.
- New funding for tourism-based initiatives (using the resort municipality hotel room tax), for environmental sustainability (using a rebate of the gas tax), and for general purposes (using the Small Community Grant).

Why not be a municipality?

While a municipality *can* do more, it also has more obligations and *must* do more. The municipality would have to provide an array of local services, and finance them too. Roads, for example, would become a local responsibility (they are currently a provincial service).

Who would make decisions?

The local municipal council (a mayor and four councillors) would set policies, finances and priorities for the community. The council would be elected by and accountable to only Sun Peaks' voters. Municipalities have much broader authority than regional districts and improvement districts, and need fewer approvals from outside bodies. There would be less reliance on the Province and Regional District (TNRD).

Sun Peaks would be a Mountain Resort Municipality, a type that recognizes (a) the higher level of amenities and programs that are typically desired in resort communities; and (b) the need to balance and coordinate the wishes of the residents and owners with the development rights the Resort Corporation holds under its long term Master Development Agreement.

Public meetings: 7 PM Nov. 27th & 3 PM Nov 28th at the Delta Sun Peaks Resort
Visit our website to learn more: www.SunPeaksGovernance.com

Service responsibilities

Municipal status means more service obligations. The council would set budget priorities and resources for:

- General administration (now provided mainly by the Sun Peaks Resort Improvement District and the Thompson-Nicola Regional District);
- Fire department (now an SPRID service);
- Building permits and inspection (now a TNRD function);
- Roads (now a provincial responsibility);
- Zoning (now a TNRD function);
- Subdivision approval (now a provincial function);
- Bylaw enforcement (now provided by the TNRD in a limited capacity).

Some services not affected

Sun Peaks would still participate in TNRD area-wide functions like 911 and solid waste management and a member of municipal council would represent Sun Peaks on the TNRD board. Policing would remain a provincial responsibility. Utility providers like water, sewer, and TV cable would not be affected.

Grants and revenue sharing

The Province would provide two kinds of new funding.

- Short term assistance would be worth about \$700,000 (this would be needed to help fund start-up costs like road repairs and municipal offices).
- On-going funding estimated at \$660,000 per year. About half of this must be used for tourism-related programs and amenities (though these also benefit residents); \$65,000 would have to be used for environmental sustainability projects (like transit and walking paths); and the remaining funds could be used without restriction. *These funds are not available to Sun Peaks under the current system.*

A municipality could be created only if the voters approve it in a formal referendum.

Infrastructure required

The municipality would have to budget for three main types of infrastructure and capital.

- Municipal offices (in the short term): The projected budget includes \$1.1 million for a municipal office.
- Short term road works: The projected budget includes just over \$1 million for repairs/upgrades to roads.
- On-going capital (long term): The budget includes \$228,000 annually for roads and capital reserves.

Changes in taxes

We are awaiting provincial confirmation of the complete array of financial components that would help shape the tax impacts of municipal status. These will be clarified

and published before a referendum (if one is to be held). We will have updated results available for the public meetings on Nov. 27th and 28th, and we will post them on the website as soon as they are available. Our latest estimate, based on 2009 data, is that a typical property could see a tax rise of \$79 (up 3%) if a fully staffed municipal office were operating today.

We are awaiting word on our request for additional road funding from the Province. If additional funding can be obtained, the tax impacts will be better than estimated. If a referendum is held, the final impacts will be available *before* the vote.

Special provisions

Given the need to respect the Resort Corporation's development rights under its Master Development Agreement, the Province could build in some special governance provisions.

- It could appoint a seat on municipal council – for example, someone from the Resort Corporation, which would give the company one vote on council (note that the Province already appoints three of the seven SPRID trustees under the current model).
- It could require that the municipal council consult with advisory committees from special groups, like a non-resident, non-voting owners association, Tourism Sun Peaks, and area First Nations.
- It could require provincial approval for municipal land use bylaws to ensure harmony with the Master Development Agreement.

If a referendum is to be held, we will publish more information and hold additional meetings so Sun Peaks electors can learn more about what municipal status might mean.

Does Sun Peaks have to change?

No. The community can carry on under the current model, with services provided by the Improvement District, the Regional District, and the Province.

Want to learn more?

Come to the public meetings on Nov. 27th and 28th (see details below). Our work is posted on our website (visit www.SunPeaksGovernance.com), so please bookmark it for easy reference. We'll update it as we learn more. If you would like to ask a question or make a comment, please feel free to do so (see the box below).

Want to contact us or learn more?

- Email us from the website directly (see "Contact us")
- Email address: askus@SunPeaksGovernance.com
- Mail to: SPISC, c/o Sun Peaks Resort Improvement District, PO Box 1002, Sun Peaks, BC V0E 5N0

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