



DAVE LAZZARINO/PHOTO

**MLA COLUMBIA RIVER-REVELSTOKE** Norm Macdonald speaking to the crowd outside after the decision. After a tense voting session, the Province will now appoint the land planning committee.

# Jumbo closer to becoming municipality

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More than 100 people waited outside the offices of the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) last week listening to loud speakers give a glimpse of the action inside. What they heard was emotional and emphatic speeches from residents and business owners either voicing their support for or their condemnation of the proposed request to the province that was raised by RDEK director David Wilks. After a tense voting session that had to be done twice to check the result, Jumbo is one step closer to becoming a municipality. A vote of eight to seven was recorded supporting the motion for the RDEK to request that the province

make the land proposed for the Jumbo Glacier Resort a mountain resort municipality. What this means is that planning of the land will be out of the hands of the RDEK and will be managed by a committee appointed by the province. This process was done once before but was rescinded after the environmental assessment began, a new element to government legislation that took nine years to finish. Among the supporters was Grant Costello, Senior Vice-President of Glacier Resorts Ltd. and the man behind the resort proposal. "It was very tense," said a relieved looking Costello who has been working to build the resort for the better part of the past 20 years. "We're gratified that this decision has reinforced the original

decision that brought the project forward because now we can rest assured that the reasons we went forward after 1996 are still in place." There were presentations before the decision that pointed to the economic benefits of a resort being built. Dave McGrath was one valley resident who pointed to job creation and questioned the prolonging of the process. "Isn't 18 years enough?" he asked. Other attendees were not so content. Pat Morrow, a local photographer and filmmaker with experience documenting development projects throughout the world, compared building the resort community to "opening a Hummer factory on the eve of peak oil." He suggested that

development would only push up local prices and drive out current residents and asked that the government look toward more creative forms of job creation including through eco-tourism. A letter was read on behalf of director Uta Juras that called to question the legitimacy of a committee that was appointed by the province and therefore was not accountable to voters in the area. Director Gerry Taft agreed with this. He spoke at length to the RDEK's need to give more time to understanding the overall implications of the decision before making it, including whether the appointed committee would seek a seat on the RDEK even though the area may have no registered voters to account for at all as most residents will be seasonal. In the end, most did not

see this as an end point but as another step in a longer process. "Naturally, I was very disappointed," said RDEK director for Area G, Gerry Wilkie, who voted to reject the proposal. "But I think the board has miscalculated. It's certainly not the end of the issue." Norm Macdonald, MLA for Columbia River-Revelstoke echoed this sentiment as he addressed the crowd outside. "It's a complete abrogation of their responsibilities," he said. "It's a sad day for some of the elected officials who turned their back on the responsibilities that they have." As for the future, designer of the proposed resort community, Oberto Oberti said it well: "For 18 years people have asked me 'What is next?' We'll see."