

What's the point?

*If the RDEK can't
make a local land use
decision, why do they
exist? MLA asks*

By CAROLYN GRANT

The RDEK will hear a motion on asking the province to designate Resort Municipality status to the Jumbo Resort area (see related story above). This would result in Jumbo being run by a council of local citizens and a locally based advisory group, which would include First Nations.

The proponent is in favor, saying the creation of a Mountain Resort Municipality would result in a practicable local government structure for Jumbo. Wildsight is not in favor.

And Columbia River Revelstoke MLA Norm Macdonald is not happy about it either, both with the source of the motion, and with the possibility that it might actually pass.

The source of the motion is Sparwood Mayor David Wilks.

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Jumbo vote irks Macdonald

From Front Page

"What right does the Mayor of Sparwood have to put this through again, especially when it was defeated before?" Macdonald asks. "Sparwood is closer to Lethbridge than it is to Jumbo."

The same motion was put before the Board in March 2006 and was defeated with only one vote for it. Wilks also brought it forward that time.

Macdonald says that in talking to various RDEK directors he has a feeling that this motion might just

squeak by this time, and he says he rejects the reasoning they will use. He says he has heard various reasons, one being the cost of the public meetings if the RDEK goes through the regular zoning process for Jumbo, and another being that the RDEK could face a lawsuit if the rezoning does not go through. He rejects those reasons, saying a regular RDEK Board meeting likely costs into the thousands with travel expenses for all members. As well, Macdonald says cost shouldn't be a consideration at all.

"There is a cost to making local decisions," he said. "They are going to use cost as an argument to step away from local decisions. It's indefensible that this motion has come back. Every measure of local opinion has strongly expressed opposition to the Jumbo project. I went door to door in Invermere

during the election campaign and I heard what they think."

He also says that as far as he knows, no lawyer has been asked to even look at the possibility of a lawsuit.

"It's a massive abrogation of responsibility. I'm hearing that Dave Wilks thinks he has the votes."

Macdonald says that the real issue here is whether the RDEK wants to make local land use decisions or not.

"If the RDEK is not going to make zoning decisions locally, then what is the point? This is the most controversial land use decision of the last 15 years. Why would any regional director think that it is appropriate to allow the province to make this decision? If they can't make a decision in a land use vote what is their function? What's the message; that we don't make decisions ourselves?"

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Norm Macdonald

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The motion comes before the RDEK at their monthly board meeting this Friday, August 7.