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Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Summerland Proposal for Local School Board

SUMMERLAND- In the spring of 2016, many communities in British Columbia faced the possibility of school closures. The District of Summerland faced the possibility of losing Trout Creek school. The provincial government recognized that these closures would have tremendous negative impact on the economic development of these communities and implemented the Rural Education Enhancement Fund to support the schools while assigning MLA Larson to head a task force to develop a rural education strategy. The provincial government recognized that the local school is the center of the community and the local economy.

Summerland's mayor and council are keenly aware of the significant impact to the community should schools close, and they recognize that schools in smaller communities play a much larger role than simply providing education for children. Mayor Peter Waterman states, *"Schools are frequently a community hub and integral for attracting families to ensure community growth and development"*.

Recognizing that further steps are required throughout the province to reduce the administrative costs of school delivery, Summerland's council has approached the provincial government with an idea for a pilot project. The proposed project would merge administrative services of the municipality with the administrative services of a new, local school board. The concept is in a preliminary, introductory stage and council expects to discuss it further at the upcoming UBCM conference in Victoria.

The proposed pilot project would entail the re-creation of a local school board in Summerland – a model similar to that prior to 1996 when Summerland and Penticton school boards were amalgamated. The difference would be that the municipal council and the Summerland School Board would integrate services such as finance, administrative and works staff, equipment, facilities, etc. rather than operating two separate administrations and facilities. Council is excited about the opportunity to discuss the idea with the community, political leaders, teachers and other stakeholders to determine whether moving forward with the project would be a benefit to Summerland and a potential model for other regions of the Province. This idea has not been discussed with the Minister of Education yet. Extensive community consultation is required as there are many unanswered questions that require resolution before

determining if the project is feasible and desirable – such as investigation into any potential impact on the labour force, teachers, school support staff and other factors that would be identified as the idea of the project was developed.

Summerland believes they have an opportunity to pilot this project to determine whether integration of administrative services of municipal hall and the school board office would be a model that other communities could follow potentially decreasing administrative costs and channeling school funding into the schools.

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