



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Northern Rockies Regional Municipality seeks full review and assurance of accountability on Parker Lake Wildfire investigation**

Fort Nelson, B.C.—June 23, 2026—The Northern Rockies Regional Municipality (NRRM) has formally requested that the Province of British Columbia review the Natural Resource Officer Service’s (NROS) decision to close the 2024 Parker Lake Wildfire investigation and to cease compliance and enforcement activities under the Wildfire Act after learning an administrative/regulatory error in the Wildfire Regulations effectively ended the investigation. The NRRM has asked the Minister of Forests for public disclosure of the investigation’s findings and a written explanation of the legal rationale, accountability plans, and the amendment’s implications for wildfire prevention and enforcement in the NRRM.

The NRRM says the absence of written investigative findings leaves affected residents—some of whom lost homes and structures—without clarity and may impair their ability to pursue civil claims. The Municipality does not agree with the Province’s interpretation of the Wildfire Regulations (prior to an amendment in April 2026 to address the error, which referred to the area as the ‘Town of Fort Nelson’ versus the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality) and has obtained independent legal advice supporting its position based on an analysis of the NRRM’s Letters Patent. Mayor Rob Fraser stated, “Our intent is to seek a fair review process, public clarity, and an appropriate path toward resolution for the community.”

Given the time-sensitive implications for residents to potentially pursue civil claims, the NRRM had asked the Ministry of Forests to respond in writing by June 15, 2026; when that response was not forthcoming, the NRRM has met with local residents who were directly impacted by loss due to the wildfire and is initiating a public information effort to ensure residents have the information they need to pursue civil action if desired. Further, the NRRM intends to continue to press the Province for a formal response, and if required, petition the Court for statutory interpretation regarding the application of the Wildfire Regulation to the NRRM.

In early May 2024, the Parker Lake Wildfire was ignited by a downed power transmission line in a high-wind event, during a multi-year period of significant drought in the region. Within hours of the fire’s initial report, given the proximity to community, the entire community of Fort Nelson (3,300 residents) was evacuated more than 400 kms to the next nearest set of communities, with re-entry occurring 17 days later once essential services had been restored. 11 structures including 4 homes were lost due to the wildfire, as well as damage and content loss for several hundred properties due to extended power and natural gas outages during the evacuation period. Emergency service operations (EOC) costs exceeded \$1.5 million (the activation extended nearly 170 days), and there was a total economic impact to the community of \$6.7 million due to the full stop of industry and economy for the duration of the evacuation. In total, 12,437 ha of private and Crown land were lost to the Parker Lake Wildfire, including the forest and wetlands making up the Parker Lake Recreation Site and 80,000 m<sup>3</sup> of Fort Nelson First Nation/Northern Rockies Regional Municipality Community Forest General Partnership tenure.

*We acknowledge the traditional territories of the Indigenous Peoples of the region including the Dene, Cree, Dunne Tsa’a, Tsáá? Ché Ne Dane, Dene Tha’ and Kaska peoples, many of whom are connected through kinship networks, and the enduring presence of the Métis community all of which have historic, cultural and long-standing connections to the land base in northeast British Columbia.*

**About Northern Rockies Regional Municipality:**

The Northern Rockies Regional Municipality is the local government for the Fort Nelson region in northeast British Columbia, providing municipal services and governance to residents and communities across a large northern territory. The Municipality works to protect community interests, infrastructure, and resident rights while acknowledging the traditional territories and enduring presence of Indigenous Peoples in the region.

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