

# Disappointment, joy in aftermath of RDEK vote

*Another vote likely before year-end*

**By GERRY WARNER**

Reaction is strong in the wake of the surprisingly onesided Jumbo decision at the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) directors meeting March 3.

Board directors voted by a 13 to one margin Friday to retain the Jumbo zoning decision locally instead of sending it to the province to decide.

Prior to the meeting, many observers said they were expecting the vote to be as close as one vote either way. But when the time came to raise their hands, only Mayor David Wilks of Sparwood voted in favour of sending the jumbo issue to the province to decide.

East Kootenay MLA Bill Bennett says the vote did not send a good message to investors considering financing job creating developments in British Columbia.

"I'd just like to point out that as a region we're definitely sending out signals that job creation isn't welcome here."

Bennett says East Kootenay residents need to think about the future of their economy "because there's not always going to be a boom. We're not always going to have five per cent, six per cent or seven per cent unemployment.

"We are going to need economic development. Jumbo is just one project, but what I'm beginning to see, I think, is a pattern. The District of Invermere, now the RDEK with a number of different projects, Jumbo, Lot 48 and others is sending out signals that we may someday regret."

Bennett points out the province has already put the Jumbo proponent "through endless public meetings, hoops and loops over 15 years" and now there will be more at the regional district level.

Despite this, he says, "I accept the vote of local government with no hesitation. It was a free vote and they have expressed their view that they want to deal with this project."

Speaking at the Cranbrook City Council meeting Monday, Mayor Ross Priest, who's also a RDEK director, said the vote was not pro or anti-jumbo, just an indication that the RDEK directors wanted the decision to be made locally.

Wildsight spokesman, John Bergenske says he wasn't surprised by the Jumbo decision. "I think the regional district directors recognized that people in the community really want to have their say on this issue, It's as simple as that."

Asked how he thinks the vote will go when the next Jumbo rezoning motion, Bergenske says "I would not assume anything. I think we have put out a solid rational why this area should not be rezoned for development and Jumbo should be kept wild but you never know."

RDEK Chairman Greg Deck says there won't be another Jumbo vote until the board has an application before it from the developer. But this is likely to happen before the end of the year, he says.

"There seems to be a great deal of appetite for the regular hearing process despite what it entails in terms of time and costs but people seem willing to take it on!"

Grant Costello, vice president of Jumbo Glacier Resorts Ltd., couldn't be reached for comment.