

Columbia River Basin Sounding Board Group: Terms of Reference

Background

The Province has initiated a Columbia River Treaty (Treaty) Review process (Review) to evaluate future decision options, including possible continuation, amendment or termination of the Treaty. The Ministry of Energy, Mines and Natural Gas is the coordinating agency for the Treaty Review and has established a Treaty Review team.

The Columbia River Treaty Review provides an opportunity for the Province to engage with Columbia Basin residents. The Province's public engagement is designed to:

- be a meaningful and constructive process to increase the Province's understanding of Basin residents' interests and values;
- to ensure the implications of Treaty options on those interests are well understood by, and communicated to Basin residents; and
- that Basin residents have full opportunity to provide input and help inform provincial recommendations on the Treaty.

The Review also provides an opportunity for the Province to engage with the Columbia River Basin First Nations and a separate First Nations consultation is underway.

The Columbia River Treaty Review team consulted with the Columbia River Treaty Local Governments' Committee and Columbia Basin Trust on the public consultation process. Phase 1 public consultations, to identify local interests, was carried out in seven Columbia Basin communities in May/June 2012. Basin residents also provided feedback on how they wanted to be consulted in the future. A majority of Basin residents wanted further community sessions, a large number wanted to have an in-depth conference, and some residents wanted the Province to get input from a group of knowledgeable and committed Basin residents.

In November 2012, the Treaty Review team carried out Phase 2 public consultations in eight communities and with two local governments' groups. The workshops sought feedback from Columbia Basin residents regarding potential trade-offs between various interests and potential future Treaty scenarios.

In March 2013 the Province will be hosting two technical conferences, in Castlegar and Golden, where detailed information of the Treaty review analysis, including modeling and technical studies, will be presented to Basin residents who are interested in more in-depth information and discussion.

The Columbia River Treaty Review team will also establish a Sounding Board to gather input from Basin residents knowledgeable about dam/reservoir planning and operations and recognized experts in identified Treaty Review - related areas of interest.

Purpose of the Sounding Board Group

1. To act as "sounding board" on Columbia River Treaty reports and other information, providing feedback, opinions and suggestions for improvement.

2. To provide feedback to key Treaty Review questions, in particular regarding Basin interests (e.g. environment, socio-economic, domestic).
3. To help inform recommendations to government on the future of the Treaty.

Sounding Board Membership

Members of the Sounding Board will be Columbia Basin residents able to provide a broad perspective, contribute positively to collective discussions on Treaty-related matters and with knowledge and/or experience with dam/reservoir planning and operations. Members will be recognized in their communities as knowledgeable in one or more key areas of interest identified by Basin residents during the Columbia River Treaty Review process. Membership will consist of 30 - 35 individuals who include, but are not limited to, balanced representation from:

- A wide range of Columbia River Basin communities and regional districts
- Columbia River Basin First Nations
- Basin businesses and economic development agents
- Basin recreation, environmental, tourism, business, agricultural or community organizations
- Ministry of Energy, Mines and Natural Gas, Columbia River Treaty Review team
- BC Hydro

In order to develop a legacy of Columbia River Treaty knowledge in the Columbia Basin, youth representatives will be included as members of the Sounding Board group.

Other agencies and local governments may be requested to participate on an “as required” basis.

Membership Selection

Prospective Sounding Board membership suggestion will be obtained from Columbia Basin Trust, Columbia River Treaty Local Governments Committee, First Nations, the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Natural Gas, and other sources. Final selection will be made by the Columbia River Treaty Review team. The goal is to select approximately two to three individuals from each of eight to ten geographic locations who collectively span a range of recreation, ecosystem and community interests. A letter will be sent by Kathy Eichenberger, Executive Director, Columbia River Treaty Review, inviting participation in the Sounding Board.

Sounding Board Roles and Responsibilities

The term “sounding board”, defined as a “person or group whose reactions to an idea, opinion, or point of view serve as a measure of its effectiveness or acceptability”, emphasizes that the primary role of the group is provide other opinions and feedback to information regarding the Treaty Review.

Ministry of Energy, Mines and Natural Gas Columbia River Treaty Review team acts as secretariat for the Sounding Board. The Treaty Review team convenes, organizes and resources meetings of the Sounding Board and provides a link between the Sounding Board to other agencies and organizations and local governments.

The Treaty Review team provides knowledge of provincial government policies and processes and knowledge of the United States Treaty Review process.

BC Hydro provides dam/reservoir planning and operations expertise and Treaty Review technical analysis knowledge.

Basin resident members will utilize their knowledge and expertise of the Columbia Basin and Basin interests to assist the Treaty Review team in their review of options for the future of the Treaty.

Meeting Frequency and Compensation

The Sounding Group is expected to have an introductory conference call the week of April 8, 2013. One or two face-to-face meetings between May and June are anticipated. The meetings are expected to be up to one day in length and may require up to half a day in preparation. There may be additional meetings in 2013 and 2014.

Mileage, accommodation and per diems and honorarium will be covered by the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Natural Gas.