



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DISTRICTS OF ELKFORD AND SPARWOOD ANNOUNCE AMALGAMATION PROPOSAL AND SEEK PUBLIC INPUT ON NEW CITY'S NAME

Residents of Elkford and Sparwood are about to become more than neighbours: after decades of friendly rivalry, the neighbouring districts of Elkford and Sparwood have officially announced a proposal for their communities to amalgamate!

Mayors of the two municipalities put forth the proposal earlier this year, during a special intercommunity in-camera meeting, for the purpose of achieving the formal designation of "city" in British Columbia. With an abundance of proponents, the proposal is receiving overwhelming support from regional and local government officials for its projected benefits to regional and economic development, as well as tourism.

The amalgamation of two municipalities follows the established restructuring process and principles set out by the Province of British Columbia and requires more than 50 per cent of voters in each municipality to favour doing so. With early polls showing high numbers in support of the merger, government officials are confident that the move will occur within the coming months and are appealing for public input on choosing a new name for the new city.

"This has been a long time coming," says Elkford's Mayor, Steve Fairbairn. "Mayor Wilks and I believe that this creates unparalleled opportunities for economic development and brings us closer to achieving things neither of us previously qualified for based on population, like the RDEK's curbside recycling program. We want to see Elkford's emergency room reopened and the good folks of both towns having their milk cartons collected curbside—plus, you know, we would both love to give a certain neighbouring ski town a run for their money as a tourism destination. Not going to say who, but we'd like a slice of that pie too—and our own Wendy's drive-thru!"

"We are very excited for the amalgamation of our two communities," says Sparwood's Mayor, David Wilks. "As we unite, we are looking forward to all the great things we will accomplish together. The opportunities are endless... and who knows, we may shape our image to become the woodland wildlife destination of Canada!"

Separated by only wilderness and a 35-kilometre stretch of Highway 43, Elkford and Sparwood are neighbours and mining communities that share similar economic profiles, population demographics and even a section of the Trans Canada Trail. According to the 2021 Statistics Canada census, Elkford's population is 2,749 and Sparwood comes in at 4,148 residents, which pushes the two towns—once conjoined—over the 5,000 resident-requirement mark outlined by the *Local Government Act*.

"Residents of Sparwood and Elkford will be happy to see a reduction in costs resulting from combining services and staff," adds Sparwood's Chief Administrative Officer, Michele Schalekamp. "There is a lot of work ahead merging policies, procedures and assets. Maybe we can move the big green truck halfway in-between?"

"Both municipalities recognize the mutual benefit to restructuring," says Elkford's Chief Administrative Officer, Tyler Madsen. "Merging eliminates duplicate services, saving both communities millions, while still retaining the small-town charm that our residents live here for. We can't foresee an airport or Costco arriving here any time soon, but we're happy about acquiring a splash park and an off-leash dog park, and Sparwood is excited to have a ski hill again. Our urban deer licensing bylaw hasn't been discussed yet, but we'll cross that bridge when we get there."

One of the final steps in the incorporation process is selecting the official name for the new city, with choices being narrowed to *Elkwood* or *Sparford*. Government officials are calling for the public's input on this decision, as well for assistance with the new slogans for the brand, which include "*in coal dust, we trust*" and "*mo' money, mo' mountains*".

Residents in both communities are asked to cast their votes by visiting www.elkford.ca and www.sparwood.ca.

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IMAGE: Concept Highway 43 signage for Elkwood/Sparford