



July 23, 2026

Reference: 193078

Mark Baker, Board Chair
Strathcona Regional District (SRD)
Email: mbaker@srd.ca

Dear Chair Baker and Board of Directors:

I am writing to you today in regard to Bylaw No. 643, Strathcona Gardens Recreation Centre Service Establishment Bylaw 1990, Amendment No. 3 (Bylaw No. 643).

As you may be aware, the Ministry has received considerable public outreach regarding Bylaw No. 643. The concerns raised have focused on several issues, such as the inclusion of Quadra Island in the service area, considering residents need to take a ferry to access the recreation centre, the level of direct community engagement undertaken, questions regarding the extent of the analysis and data put forth in the study, as well as the decision to seek elector assent for the amendment across the whole service area rather than by each participant separately.

Given the higher than usual level of public interest and concern, I would appreciate hearing from the Board about how these issues have been considered and responded to.

I am also interested in understanding whether there may be alternative approaches that could be explored and would encourage greater regional collaboration and community confidence moving forward. For example:

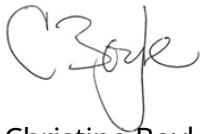
- Has the Board considered, or is the Board open to considering, alternative funding models? This could include classes of user fees, usage-based contribution models supported by survey data, or phased taxation increases informed by demonstrated facility utilization, as well as consideration of approaches used in other regional districts with island or rural communities that access services in a nearby urban center.

- Has the Board considered interim options, such as higher user fees for user communities and visitors that are not participants in the service, that would allow for some cost recovery while additional analyses on usage patterns and main island and off-island perspectives are collected and examined? This may provide a more gradual approach to service expansion that is supported by public engagement.

I recognize and respect the important role local governments play in delivering services and making decisions that reflect local priorities. At the same time, the legislation provides mechanisms for greater ministerial involvement where circumstances warrant. In this instance, the *Local Government Act* includes provisions under section 349(5) that allow the Minister the option to consider requiring a separate assent vote. My interest is ensuring that the chosen path reflects public confidence, transparency, and long-term sustainability of the service.

I welcome a written response, or I am happy to have a conversation to further discuss Bylaw No. 643 in the coming weeks. If you would like to schedule a meeting, please contact my office by phone at 236-478-3970 or by email at HMA.Minister@gov.bc.ca.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Boyle', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Christine Boyle
Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs

cc: Dave Leitch, Chief Administrative Officer, Strathcona Regional District



**OFFICE OF THE
CHAIR**

990 Cedar St. Campbell River, BC V9W 7Z8
250-830-6700 • 1-877-830-2990

corporate@srd.ca • www.srd.ca

July 31, 2026

EMAIL ONLY: HMA.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs
PO Box 9056
Stn Prov Govt.
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Attention: Honorable Christine Boyle

Dear Minister Boyle:

RE: BYLAW NO. 643, STRATHCONA GARDENS RECREATION SERVICE

Dear Minister,

Thank you for your letter regarding Bylaw No. 643, Strathcona Gardens Recreation Centre Service Bylaw. As the SRD Board Chair and Vice Chair, we welcome the opportunity to provide background on the Boards decision making process and response to your questions.

The consideration of Bylaw No. 643 did not arise solely from a Strathcona Gardens-specific review, but from a broader examination of regional services, infrastructure needs, and long-term sustainability across the Strathcona Regional District beginning in 2021. The SRD is a diverse regional district with much of the population residing immediately adjacent, (Quadra Island), or directly connected to the City of Campbell River, (Electoral Area D). Residents throughout these communities rely on Campbell River as their hub for healthcare, professional services, employment, education, recreation and other essential services. Ensuring necessary regional infrastructure and amenities are operated through a model that reflects the community's needs and available access is a primary objective for regional districts.

As you have expressed interest in hearing from the Regional District Boards perspective, we have attempted to address the points in your letter with the following.

Ferry Access

The ferry service bridges our region; it does not divide it. The Campbell River–Quadra Island ferry route is one of the most frequently operated short-distance ferry connections in BC. This is demonstrated by a 15-minute crossing time, with more than 20,000 annual sailings, carrying nearly one million passengers. This level of service between Campbell River–Quadra Island reflects the relationship between the two communities where the crossing is used by hundreds of residents travelling on a daily basis, including teenage students for their education and recreation. The ferry connection is evidence of the fundamental connection Quadra Island residents have with Campbell River and is no greater a barrier than residents using other modes of transportation such as public transit from other neighboring communities.

The Strathcona Regional District respectfully acknowledges that our corporate office and Strathcona Gardens Recreation Complex are located on the traditional unceded territory of the Ligwíldaʷ people. We also recognize that we operate within the traditional, treaty, and unceded territories of the Ehattesaht / Chinehkint, Homalco, Ka:yu:'k't'h' / Che: k'tles7et'h', Klahoose, K'ómoks, Kwiakah, Mowachaht / Muchalaht, Nuchatlaht, Tla'amin, Tlowitsis, We Wai Kai and Wei Wai Kum First Nations.

Direct Community Engagement

The Regional Recreation direction began in 2021 when the SRD Board approved a Regional Recreation Feasibility Study to explore potential opportunities for regional collaboration and recreation service delivery in the SRD. The consulting firm (RCS) engaged to undertake the initial analysis has extensive experience with regional recreation service models, including the RDN–Gabriola Island recreation service review, and also conducts user count surveys that inform ongoing understanding of facility usage.

The sequence of consulting studies, staff reports and Board direction has been transparent and visible to the public as demonstrated by community feedback, public attendance at Board meetings, correspondence, delegations, petitions, meetings with staff, director media engagement, publicly available reports, Area's C and D director surveys as well as numerous social media posts. The correspondence received has been detailed, informed, and substantive, and residents have demonstrated a strong understanding of the implications of the bylaw so as to make an informed decision through a collective assent voting process.

Usage Based Analysis

Utilization data collected from the SRD's facility registration program for last five years identified 944 unique user accounts with Quadra Island postal codes—approximately one-third of the island's population—with additional significant use not captured through registrations, including school programs, Island Health partnerships, organized sport, summer camps, and drop-in admissions. Independent data sources, including facility records, mobility analysis, and the RCS funding models review, consistently demonstrate meaningful use, and support expanded participation. Given a population of approximately 2,800 residents, it can be reasoned that 33% of residents have used the facility to some degree.

User Fees

Undoubtedly, local government owned and operated amenities in British Columbia such as recreation facilities are funded primarily by tax requisition, with user fees only covering a small percentage of the operating costs. Public recreation facilities are materially supported through taxation because they provide broader community benefits beyond the individual user. Taxation broadens the funding base by including residential, commercial, industrial, utility, and managed forest properties, which helps reduce the cost burden placed directly on affected residents.

Programs such as swimming lessons, youth activities, and community recreation programming are intentionally subsidized because they provide larger public benefits, including health and wellness. Regional amenities and services such as libraries, transit, public health, education and 9-1-1 emergency services are examples of how the local, provincial and federal government's support services because they are available for the benefit of the broader community and not taxed by the frequency of usage. The SRD Board does not wish to create a separate class of Quadra Island users who pay higher fees to access a regional amenity. Charging groups of people, including First Nations, significantly higher user fees would create an inequitable outcome for many and would discourage participation for those that may not be able to afford higher user fees.

Director Assent and Contribution Models

Consistent with the consultant's analysis, only Quadra Island, and not the entirety of Electoral Area C, is being proposed as an additional participant in the Strathcona Gardens recreation service. As this was a regional study looking at all potential service models, a further recommendation was that Electoral Area A be considered as a service participant in the Sayward Valley Kelsey Center recreation facility.

Provided to the SRD Board for discussion, Directors debated funding models that included levels of declining requisition for both Quadra Island as well as Area D. Recognizing different levels of accessibility between the three participating areas, the SRD Board ultimately supported a bylaw with a tiered level of requisition for Quadra at 80%, reducing Area D to 90%, and Campbell River at 100%.

The proposal is not simply to add another participant to an existing service. The proposal would establish a revised service area, alter the current governance structure, and create a tiered funding obligation among all participating communities so, the SRD Board supported a resolution to proceed with assent voting across the areas collectively.

As we understand, a comparable sequence of Board decisions occurred at the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN). For many years, Electoral Area E (Nanoose Bay) was not included in the Ravensong Aquatic Centre service area because residents claimed they used other facilities in Nanaimo. In 2021, following concerns that Nanoose Bay residents were using and had access to the facility without contributing to its costs, the RDN Board initiated a process to amend the service area to include Electoral Area E. We believe their Board resolved to amend the service establishing bylaw by using the consent of at least two-thirds of the participants, a form of consent that includes directors and no public consultation, supported by the Ministry.

In the SRD's case, the Board has chosen to proceed with assent voting, providing all eligible electors within the proposed service area with the opportunity to vote on whether the service should be established and funded on the proposed basis. This approach reflects the Board's decision to seek direct democratic approval from affected electors before expanding the service area and implementing the associated funding model.

A separate assent vote by each participating area would effectively provide each jurisdiction with an independent veto over their participation in a regional service while maintaining their current accessibility and benefit. It could also create unintended incentives where an area may choose not to participate simply because another community is perceived as having free access.

Regional services inherently require collective decision-making because the benefits and costs extend beyond individual boundaries. If every participating area could independently opt out of services while continuing to benefit from regional infrastructure, shared public services and amenities would become virtually impossible to maintain.

The Board therefore concluded that a service-wide assent vote best reflects the regional nature of the proposed service, while still ensuring that all electors who would assume financial responsibility have the opportunity to participate in the decision.

Role of Local Government

The role of the SRD Board is to be the governing body responsible for making decisions on behalf of its residents within the region and overseeing services that are shared across multiple communities. Regional Boards balance the interests of taxpayers, service users, electoral areas and municipalities when making decisions that affect their constituents.

The Board's principal objective in advancing Bylaw No. 643 is to establish a governance and funding model for the Strathcona Gardens Recreation Centre that reflects the communities the facility serves today and in the future. Recreation facilities are not discretionary amenities; they are essential public infrastructure that contribute to community health, quality of life, and economic development. Communities seeking to attract and retain physicians, healthcare workers, educators, skilled tradespeople, and entrepreneurs must offer more than employment opportunities alone. Access to

quality recreation facilities, parks, cultural amenities, and community services has become an important consideration for individuals and families when deciding where to live, and neighboring communities to Campbell River are equal beneficiaries.

The Board appreciates your interest in this matter and remains committed to working collaboratively with the Province and participating communities to support the fairness, long-term sustainability and well-being of the region. If the Minister would like to meet and discuss further, we will be happy to participate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Baker', written in a cursive style.

Mark Baker, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Sinnott', written in a cursive style.

Susan Sinnott, Vice Chair



August 31, 2026

Reference: 193547

Mark Baker
Board Chair, Strathcona Regional District
990 Cedar Street
Campbell River BC V9W 7Z8
Email: mbaker@srd.ca

Dear Chair Baker and Board of Directors:

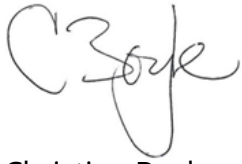
Thank you for meeting with me on August 20, 2026, regarding Strathcona Gardens Recreation Centre Service Establishment Bylaw, 1990, Amendment No. 3 (Bylaw No. 643) and your intention to obtain assent of the electors for the whole service area.

Although the *Local Government Act* allows approval to be determined using a single vote across the entire proposed service area, this approach seems to have created considerable concern from Quadra Island residents. Among the concerns expressed by Quadra residents are questions about the data and analysis as it relates to demonstrated use of the service, a lack of direct public engagement by the Strathcona Regional District (SRD), and that the larger communities' votes can outweigh Quadra Island voters. Residents have shared that they feel this could undermine confidence in the process.

It is my preference that separate participating area approval be obtained for this amendment. This would offer a clearer demonstration of community support and assist in maintaining public trust. That said, the SRD's approach to participating area approval remains a decision to be made by the SRD Board.

Thank you for your consideration of this recommendation. I appreciate the SRD Board's efforts to ensure that the interests of affected communities are appropriately balanced and reflected throughout the approval process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Boyle', with a large, stylized 'C' and a long, sweeping underline.

Christine Boyle
Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs

cc: Dave Leitch, Chief Administrative Officer, Strathcona Regional District