



## REQUEST FOR DECISION

**To:** Curtis Slingerland, Chief Administrative Officer

**CC:** Board of Directors, Central Coast Regional District

**From:** Melany Helmer, Senior Local Government Consultant

**Meeting Date:** May 22 , 2025

**Subject:** Fire Services – Implications of Petitions to Join the Service

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**Voting Entitlement:** All Directors – Unweighted (LGA s. 208)

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with further information about the opportunity and implications for properties in Bella Coola Valley and outside the service area/fire protection area to receive fire protection services through a petition and a bylaw amendment.

### **Background Summary:**

At the February 27, 2025 Regular Board meeting, the Board of the Central Coast Regional District (“**Board**”) passed the following resolution:

AND THAT the Board of Directors direct staff to provide further reporting concerning the implications of the following “commence communication with the public about the opportunity for properties in the Bella Coola Valley and outside the service area/fire protection area to receive fire protection services through a petition and a bylaw amendment.” at a later date;

The public has an ongoing ability to petition to join the Fire Services provided by the Central Coast Regional District (“**CCRD**”) or any other service. The Board has the discretion to either consent to the petitioner(s) joining the service or not, via consideration of a bylaw.

### **Implications:**

Informing the public of their ability to join the fire service helps ensure the public knows about the opportunity to request fire protection service. Joining the fire service will include them in the service to protect their properties, and they may also benefit from a reduction in the cost of property insurance.

Staff would support the petitioner(s) through the process to ensure that the legislative requirements are met. A bylaw to amend the boundaries of a Service via a petition of the property owner(s) does not require approval by the Inspector of Municipalities and is therefore faster. (See further details on the legislative process below.)

Part of the Staff process would include consideration of the request by Fire personnel and incorporate their feedback and recommendations on whether adding the property to the Fire service is appropriate, given the geographic location and any other relevant considerations.

Should the boundaries of the service area be revised to include additional properties within a fire service, this would spread the cost of services over a greater number of properties, reducing the cost to each property. A bylaw amendment would be required to include the additional properties. A map of existing valley service areas is included as an attachment.

#### **Legislative Process Related to a Petition:**

The public can petition the CCRD to add their property to a service, provided that the legislative requirements are met. Each petition must do the following:

- a) describe in general terms the service that is provided;
- b) define the boundaries of the proposed amended service area;
- c) indicate in general terms the proposed method for recovering annual costs; and
- d) contain other information that the Board may require.

The Board is not required to consent to the boundary amendment, even if a valid petition is received. If the Board supports the petition, at least 2/3 of the participants must consent to the amendment (by way of the Directors signing their consent).

There are also legislative requirements for a petition to be certified sufficient and valid by the Corporate Officer, including the following: the petition must be signed by the majority of owners on title to the property (i.e. for 2 owners, both must sign; for 3 owners, at least 2 must sign, and so on).

The service establishment process for a petition is as follows:

1. The petitioner(s) submit a valid petition (Staff are available to assist; includes involvement of Fire personnel);
2. Valid petition received and certified by the Corporate Officer that the petition meets the legislative requirements;
3. Amendment Bylaw is presented to Board for first three readings;
4. The Board may authorize participating area approval (so that the Directors in the Service can sign consent);
5. The Board considers adoption of the Amendment Bylaw;
6. The service area is amended and the property is included in the boundaries of the Fire Service.

#### **Options:**

Option 1: Advise the public of the right they have to petition the Board to join the Fire Service.

Option 2: Not advise the public of their right to petition.

#### **Implications:**

Option 1: Electors always have the legislative authority to petition the Board to join a service. Staff will issue communication to advise the public of the process involved, should they have an interest in petitioning to be added to the service. If someone is interested in petitioning, staff will work with the petitioner(s) to make sure that they are operationally able to join the

service and make sure the petition submitted to the CCRD follows the rules set by the Province. As part of this process, staff including fire personnel will evaluate and make recommendations to the Board on the petition. The Board has the discretion to consider and decide either way when a bylaw to amend the boundaries of the fire service area is presented for their consideration. If more properties join the fire service, more properties receive the benefit of fire protection and may receive reduced costs of property insurance. In addition, the cost of fire services is spread over more properties, reducing the cost to each property in the fire protection area.

Option 2: Property owners may not be aware that they can request to join the fire service through a petition and have their properties protected and will not receive fire protection services in the event of a fire.

**Policy, Bylaw or Legislation Considerations:**

*Local Government Act*

**Strategic Plan Alignment:**

- ☒ Advances Strategic Plan in Category: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1. Responsive Services - To provide services that are responsive to the unique and evolving needs of our citizens and our communities.
- ☐ Regular Business - does not advance Strategic Plan.
- ☐ Consider adding to the Strategic Plan and allocating resources (staff time, funding) to the project.

**Recommendation:**

**THAT the Board of Directors of the Central Coast Regional District direct that the public be advised about the opportunity for properties in the Bella Coola Valley and outside the boundaries of the Fire Protection Service to request fire protection services through submitting a petition and requesting that the boundaries of the Service be amended.**

**Attached:**

- 1. Copy of blank sample petition form
- 2. Bella Coola Valley – Service Overview

Submitted by: Melany A. Helmer

Melany Helmer, Senior Local Government Consultant

Reviewed by:   
Curtis Slingerland, Chief Administrative Officer