

Tom Yates

Subject: Letter in regards to Director Abrams comments regarding The South Quadra Fire Protection District
Attachments: SRD.pdf

From: Sharon <quadrafd@gicable.com>

Sent: September 13, 2021 2:20 PM

To: David Leitch <DLeitch@srd.ca>

Subject: Letter in regards to Director Abrams comments regarding The South Quadra Fire Protection District

NOTICE: This email is from an external source.

Dear sir,

I request that this letter be received as correspondence at the Oct 6 meeting of the Regional Board.

PS. I have also sent this letter to Tom Yates, Shaun Koopman and my board of trustees but your address was wrong the first time round.

Sincerely

Sharon Clandening
Fire Chief
Quadra Island Fire Dept
250-285-3262 (Office)
250-202-3373 (Cell)
quadrafd@gicable.com

"working smoke alarms save lives"

Chief Administrative Officer, David Leitch
Corporate Services Manager, Tom Yates

I write you this letter as I feel that there needs to be some clarification and rebuttal to words spoken by regional director, Mr. Jim Abram, during the September 8, 2021 SRD board meeting in regards to the Regional Fire Protection Service Feasibility Study . Let me be clear, though Mr. Abram is the director for this area, he does not speak for the South Quadra Fire Protection District (Quadra Island Fire Department).

I have spoken with SRD staff, Protective Services Coordinator Shaun Koopman, in regards to the SRD Regional Fire Protection Service feasibility study. Quadra Island fire department is in full support of the study but also acknowledges that as an Improvement District and not an SRD fire Department we would not be included in the study. We believe the study and result of same would be a positive thing for the SRD funded fire departments and their communities, to look at ways to support the delivery of effective response and suppression activities with training standardization, bulk equipment procurement, fire apparatus specifications, and other initiatives. This study is not about starting a Regional Fire Department but how to support those Fire Departments within the SRD who are struggling to stay up to date with the many standards and equipment needs that are required in today's Fire service.

As you are aware the Quadra Island Fire Department is responsible for providing fire suppression and rescue services to the south end of Quadra Island. As Mr. Abram made known, there have been many discussions in the past with the Regional District, more than just a "couple of times", as he has stated. Most recently, about providing fire protection to the residents of the north end of Quadra. This area has no Fire Department and therefore no structure protection. They are protected from wild fires by Coastal Fire but the residents wanted more than BCWFS could provide. We wanted to help but after much discussion with the north residents and many meetings with SRD staff, the cost and the protection ability did not meet the needs of the residents therefore it was no longer pursued. Although we can't provide structure protection, we do provide rescue services to those who are outside our district with a contract to the Regional District for one dollar a year. We have a great working relationship with the Strathcona Regional District. We have worked with the bylaw officers, the planners and most importantly Shaun Koopman who is the Protective Services Coordinator. As the Fire Chief I meet quarterly with all the Fire department Chiefs within the Strathcona Regional District including Shaun Koopman who represents the Regional District.

Mr Abram also stated that Quadra Island Fire Department "don't get along with BC Wildfire Service and they counter everything they do". I would like to speak to that point. We have a good working relationship with Coastal Fire, have fought fires for BCWFS and with BCWFS, inside and outside of our Protection district over the last 60 years as well as in years past have received in house training from their staff on Wildland fire response and shared equipment knowledge and use. I do believe that Mr. Abrams' comment of "counter everything they do" perhaps relates to decisions made to leave fire bans in place after the BC Wildfire Service (Coastal Fire) has lifted same in the area (which effects the North End of Quadra not the south). To clarify, most Fire Departments have the authority to lift or initiate fire bans within their jurisdiction as does the South Quadra fire protection district. This season in particular we were not alone in our decision to keep our campfire ban in place when Coastal Fire lifted theirs, surrounding Fire Departments also kept their bans in place until a reasonable amount of rain had fallen and the forecast was showing more of the same. We do not make these decisions lightly but in some

cases we have to err on the side of caution and the safety of our Island if only within our district, leaving fire bans in place until we feel the risk has decreased for our residents.

The last point I would like to address is the comment made by Mr. Abram about purchase of equipment and building of a new hall “with money that they have stashed away”. The word stash would seem incredibly inappropriate, seemingly making one believe that the Fire department hides money without accountability. We are an improvement district who sets a budget, we apply to the Province for funding. Our budget is discussed and documented. The budget is followed and all monies received from the province are accounted for. This budget is audited at the end of every fiscal year and is presented at the AGM to the tax payers of the district. We do not ‘stash’ cash, we save for purchases, we document and we account for all funds received. Because of our hard working trustees and the 38 department members we have a skillfully trained, well educated, well equipped, cost efficient, progressive Fire Service that plans for the future growth and safety of our community.

In closing the words spoken by Director Abram do not sit well with the Fire Department members, board of trustees and I believe would not be supported by the community that we serve. We are disappointed that this is how an elected official speaks of a Fire department made up of volunteers from his own community who dedicate their lives to keeping the community safe.

Again, let it be known Director Abram does not speak for the Quadra Island Fire Department.

I would ask that this letter be received as correspondence at the Oct 6 meeting of the Regional Board.

Sincerely,

Chief Sharon Clandening
Quadra Island Fire Department
(South Quadra Fire Protection District)