



September 21, 2021

SRD Regional Board

RE: Sayward Valley Regional Fire Services Review

Dear Regional Board,

The Village of Sayward was pleased to note Option B in the August 6, 2021 SRD Staff Report entitled *Sayward Valley Fire Services Review* that commits to: ***Continue negotiating with the Village of Sayward for resolution of issues under the current service model.*** We were pleased to see this option; however, disappointed that report contained no analysis of strengthening the current arrangement at all, despite the report noting that it was the best option.

The regional feasibility fire study also contains numerous statements that appear to be unmoored from the facts. Some of these relate to ownership of assets, mistakes pointed out several times by the Village, but more importantly, comments made at the August 11 EASC meeting of the SRD board attribute further inaccuracies to the Fire Chief, fire crews and the service.

The study states its purpose as being to review whether the SRD has appropriate oversight and decision making for the service, given its financial contribution. In fact, it was the Village of Sayward that encouraged the study to determine if there was a fair sharing of costs, given the shift over time in calls to the valley. So it would appear that both the Area A Director and the Mayor and Council of the Village of Sayward wish to further explore the current terms and arrangement.

The Village of Sayward passed the following motion at its regular August 17, 2021 council meeting:

THAT STAFF be directed to draft a letter outlining Council's concerns with the study and its recommendations; and,

THAT the Village of Sayward work to promote and strengthen the current model by advertising a public meeting for village and valley residents to discuss the options in the report and to commence the financial planning for 2022 and a new shared services agreement to replace the one about to expire.

The study offers several alternatives, all of which cost more, remove local decision making from the Village Council and the Area A Director, placing full decision making in the hands of the regional board in Campbell River.

The Village of Sayward recognizes that while we are one community, we operate in two jurisdictions. By working together residents are best served in a way that is efficient and fiscally responsible, and results in the best fire service for the Sayward Valley. The village of Sayward plans to host a publicly advertised regular council meeting where this matter will be discussed.

Unlike financial planning meetings in past where an informal invite was extended to the Area A Director, and where he almost always declined, the Village will ensure that a written invitation is extended to enable the Area A Director to fully participate in these discussions regarding the 2022-2027 Financial Plan for the Fire Service. At that meeting, our interests regarding a new Service Agreement will be reflected as first step in replacing the expiring framework now in place.

We hope that the Area A Director will participate in these talks, rendering the less desirable and more costly options in the report unnecessary for further assessment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Baker', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Mayor Mark Baker
Council of the Village of Sayward