



Sept 11th 2024,

Dear Strathcona Regional District Board of Directors,

We, the undersigned community organizations of Cortes Island, are writing to express our concerns about the proposed changes to the Grants in Aid (GIA) program as outlined in the policy document dated July 29, 2024 <https://agenda.strathconard.ca/SRDAttachments/SRDBoard/Open/BRD/21-Aug-24/20240729-GIA-Policy.pdf>

Our concerns center on two key points:

1. Opposition to centralized application processing by the SRD: We do not support shifting GIA applications to be processed directly through the Strathcona Regional District (SRD). Regional directors, in partnership with their communities—and ideally a community foundation—are best positioned to assess applications, ensuring that funding decisions are locally informed and accountable to the community. This approach has fostered a deep understanding of local needs and values, which would be lost under a centralized system.

2. Objection to restrictive funding limitations: The proposed policy imposes prescriptive limitations on the use of GIA funds, disallowing support for essential operational costs such as overhead, wages, contractors, administration, insurance, scholarships, and supplies. These restrictions place an undue burden on non-profits, hindering their ability to operate effectively and provide vital services to the community.

GIA funding comes directly from the tax dollars of Cortes Islanders. As such, these funds should be stewarded by the community. Since its inception, the Cortes Island Community Foundation (CICF) has played an invaluable role in ensuring this. CICF has demonstrated how community foundations can work alongside local government to manage funds transparently and efficiently, maintaining an appropriate distance from political interference. This model of collaboration between foundations and local governments has been successfully implemented in both small and larger communities across BC, such as the Shuswap, Port Coquitlam, and Squamish, to deliver effective and trust-based community granting.

There are more than 900 community foundations across Canada and the U.S., all promoting community well-being through philanthropy, collaboration, and strategic granting. CICF's partnership with the SRD and Director Vonesch in managing the GIA program on Cortes Island has been a proven success. Their community-focused approach ensures that local priorities are reflected in the grant-making process, while also streamlining administrative processes, preparing non-profits for grant readiness, and ensuring accountability for the use of funds.

We believe that CICF's success on Cortes Island offers a model of foundation support that could benefit other communities across the SRD. By continuing to empower regional directors to collaborate with their communities, the SRD can maintain a GIA program that remains community-driven, responsive, and efficient.

In light of this, we urge the SRD to reconsider the proposed changes and focus instead on removing barriers to community granting by strengthening partnerships with directors and community foundations where possible.

We look forward to further discussions on this matter.

Sincerely,

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Manda Auföchs Gillespie, Executive Director
Cortes Island Community Foundation

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Sadhu Johnston, Executive Director
Cortes Housing Society

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Tomasso Biasolo, Board Chair
Cortes Economic Development Association

Signed by:

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Margaret Verschuur

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Margaret Verschuur, Executive Director
Island Death Care Society

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Bryan McKinnon

Bryan McKinnon, Board Chair
Cortes Community Radio Society

~~_____~~
Bernice McGowan

Cortes Community Health Association

~~_____~~
Cater Strijbos - Better at Home

~~_____~~
Cora Moret

Executive Director, Southern Cortes
Community Association

~~_____~~
Melanie Boyle

Managing Director, Cortes Island Museum & Archives Society

~~_____~~
Tamara McPhail

Director, Linnaea Farm Society

~~_____~~
Rose Fitzyk
PAC treasurer.

~~_____~~
Tanya Henck, Director Cortes Island Women's Resource Centre