

May 16, 2019

Attention: Tom Yates - S.R.D. Corporate Services Manager

To: Chair and Directors of S.R.D. Electoral Areas Service Committee

To begin, I would like to confirm my support for the Community Petition To Help Prevent Wildfires On Quadra Island, presented to the S.R.D. on August 9, 2017. Burn Regulations that cover both Crown and private land equally, were the focus of that petition. As it stands today, the regulations are not only confusing, but dangerous for fire prevention and fire suppression strategy. For example, when the Quadra Island Fire Department imposes restrictions on the south island, such as chainsaw bans, power tools, heavy equipment and beach fires, the north island would have the same protection, if the Burn Bylaw from South Quadra was expanded to North Quadra. Regulations have to be inclusive to the whole island to be effective.

The bylaw should be specifically designed for the island by the local service provider, with data collected on the island. This would create autonomous powers for the local authority, putting Quadra Island first. Coastal Fire determines Fire Hazard Ratings for the island, using data collected from off island. Open burning deadlines, and campfire bans are also determined by Coastal Fire, the S.Q.F.D. can not make these decisions, and are required to follow the lead of Coastal Fire. This makes no sense. I also believe that the methodology for determining moisture content in the Duff Moisture Code could use some updating. An underground core sample would help provide more accurate information of how dry our island really is. This would help in predicting the potential of fires, both above and below ground. The Environment Canada Drought Scale, and weather data also need to be taken seriously for determining Fire Hazard Ratings, and acted on sooner than later. An extreme drought rating should translate to an extreme fire hazard rating. The drought scale has been at the highest registers for the last few years, and every fire season earlier, longer and worse than the previous one.

Besides having a unified Burn Bylaw, North Island residents desperately need back up support in efforts to keep fires from spreading to the surrounding forest. We all live in the forest, so any fire getting away is a serious threat to the whole island. Currently, Coastal Fire is responsible for fires on Crownland. All private land owners are expected to be responsible for managing fires that occur on their properties. Many properties lack sufficient water for fire fighting, and or equipment. View properties are up steep hills, or down long driveways, with no water for firefighting. Some have water access only. Add to this a rapidly aging population. This is a recipe for disaster.

South Quadra Fire Protection District was established in 1960, and is administered by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. Their jurisdiction ends at the sign above Hyacinthe Bay. That leaves roughly 3/4 of the island out of the Fire protection District to fall under the Ministry of Forests jurisdiction. The island has changed enormously in just shy of 60 years. There were very few residents on North Quadra in those days.

Fast forward to 2019, subdivisions, and more coming, with no provisions for fire fighting strategy, a provincial park, unsupervised vacation rentals, a thriving wilderness tourism industry, full scale logging, and increasing drought conditions. It is well documented that forests all over the world are stressed, and dying, Quadra Island is not immune. It is shocking to see all the dying plants, trees, salal, ferns, spirea, salmonberries etc, as a result of deepening drought, Along with wild and erratic weather, the jetstream gone wild, stronger more frequent windstorms, lightning becoming more common, and more human activity, all lead to greater potential for explosive wildfires. This is a small island, and could burn quickly. It has happened before. All fires on public or private land need to be treated with the same urgency. A small fire can become unmanageable quickly.

Up to this date there has been no comprehensive planning between the various government bodies in addressing viable wildfire suppression on North Quadra private lands. To do nothing is not a solution.

At the July 6, 2018 meeting at Bold Point, Sharon Clendenning, the South Quadra Fire Chief brought the South Quadra Burn Bylaw No. 117 in order to gauge support for it's expansion to the north island. It was mostly supported at this meeting. Subsequently, a proposal was presented for contracting with the S.R.D. to provide fire protection, ban implementation, and enforcement. Thanks to the South Quadra Fire Dept. for this. The cost calculations previously stated, are now being recalculated.

Could Provincial, or Regional grants be a way to move forward? I can not think of a more useful way of utilizing grants than by making the island safer for everyone. Corporate donations may be another approach for funding opportunities. Timberwest is the largest stakeholder for forest resources on the island, and they have benefited greatly from the island. Donations would be a way in which they could support, And assist the Quadra community. If a fire takes hold, we all lose.

It would be wonderful to have the Q.I.F.D back up fire calls from North Quadra Communities. Even with the delayed response time, with no other options, northern communities would at least have a life line. The Fire Dept. expertise, equipment, communication, and assessments would be a most valuable asset. Unfortunately this still leaves many properties difficult, or impossible to access, for either neighbors or the Q.I.F.D. to respond to. Obviously this is a

problem. It is inevitable that with no serious planning in place, sooner or later there will be a fire that the neighbors can not deal with. Coastal Fire will not respond to a fire until the Crownland line is imminently threatened. By this time, especially with a wind blowing in dry conditions, the fire could be unstoppable.

Coastal Fire is already contracted to fight wildfires on North Quadra Crown Land. It would be a logical step to partner with the Ministry of Forests and enhance the mandate of Coastal Fire. This would allow them to attack all spreading fires quickly and aggressively, before they have a chance to grow. All of the infrastructure already exists, from helicopters to firefighters.

Hopefully this initiative for fire prevention and fire protection to include all of Quadra Island, will invoke willingness for a new approach by all agencies involved, to come together, and create new legislation to make our island safer. I would suggest that all levels of government come together as soon as possible to work out a solution. A mitigation plan is necessary. Please bring this discussion back to the whole Quadra Community as soon as possible.

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Thank you,

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