



REGIONAL  
DISTRICT  
OF NANAIMO

**INFORMATION REPORT ON ESTABLISHING A SOCIAL PLANNING SERVICE**

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**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Board receive for information the report titled "Information Report on Establishing a Social Planning Service" dated June 27, 2023.

**BACKGROUND**

At the regularly scheduled Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Board Meeting on January 24, 2023, the Board passed the following resolution:

No. 23-059     *that an information report on creating a social planning service be provided as recommended in the November 23, 2021 staff report titled "Report on the Regional District of Nanaimo Social Needs Assessment and Strategy".*

***Social Needs Assessment and Strategy***

The Social Needs Assessment and Strategy<sup>1</sup> (the Strategy) was prepared in collaboration with local governments, community partners and First Nation representatives to develop a regionally focused approach to addressing social needs in the region. The Strategy was completed in 2021 and accepted by the Board for information on November 23, 2021, with no further action being recommended (see Attachment 1 – History of Social Planning in the Regional District of Nanaimo).

The Strategy was created to implement Goal 8.0 Social Wellbeing of the 2019-2022 Board Strategic Plan as directed by Action 8.2:

*"Prepare a social Needs Assessment and Study, which identifies the broad range of social service providers at the local level, and develop a strategy to identify the RDN's role where appropriate".*

The Strategy identified six key priority areas and provided eight strategic recommendations to maximize regional coordination and address multiple social system challenges to support social needs in the region (see Attachment 2 – Priority Areas and Strategic Recommendations).

The six key priority areas in which the RDN was identified to make a difference in the community include:

- Programs for families, youth and children

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<sup>1</sup> [Regional District of Nanaimo Social Needs Assessment and Strategy \(2021\)](#)

- Social supports and services
- Access to housing and homelessness
- Access to healthy and affordable food
- Safe, affordable transportation
- Discrimination and stigma

The eight strategic recommendations support a regional approach to improving social health and wellbeing; identify the RDN's role; and outline tangible actions the RDN can take to address the gaps identified by the community within the six key priority areas. The strategic recommendations offer a framework for action and recommend the RDN take a leadership and coordinating role to provide an informed and organized approach to addressing social issues in the region.

To facilitate the leadership and coordinating role for the RDN and implement the strategic recommendations, the establishment of a social planning service and funding of a full time social planner to undertake a work program is required.

### ***Establishing a Social Planning Service***

If the Board recognizes social planning as a strategic priority and wishes to proceed with establishing a social planning service, the processes to create a service bylaw are outlined below:

#### Consent on Behalf of Participating Areas

Subject to Section 347 of the *Local Government Act (LGA)*, if the social planning service is established without borrowing and for an entire participating area, or multiple areas, consent of participating areas is needed. This consent is obtained from participating electoral areas by the electoral area director consenting in writing to the adoption of the bylaw and a motion at a Council meeting for participating municipalities. This is the quickest and most efficient way to receive consent to establish a service bylaw.

If approval of the bylaw is not sought by consent on behalf of the participating areas, one of the following forms of elector approval, with its associated process as described below, will be required.

#### Alternate Approval Process

1. Service establishing bylaw drafted and Board gives first three readings
2. Provincial review and statutory approval by the Inspector of Municipalities (up to 10 weeks)
3. Approval of the electors via AAP (8 – 11 weeks)
4. Adoption of the bylaw by the Board

The Alternate Approval Process (AAP) is similar to a counter petition where electors sign the Elector Response Form if they are opposed to the service. If 10 per cent or more of the eligible electors are opposed and submit valid elector responses, then the AAP fails. If the service establishment bylaw fails an AAP, and the Board still wishes to proceed with the bylaw, it must proceed to Assent Voting no later than 80 days after the AAP closes (see below). If participating area approval is to be obtained by AAP, the Board may, by resolution adopted by at least 2/3 of the votes cast, provide that the participating area approval is to be obtained for the entire proposed service area.

There are public notice requirements, including publication in the appropriate newspaper(s), and resource impacts to the RDN's Legislative Services and Finance Departments to support the process.

### Assent Voting (Referendum)

The process for this type of elector approval is as follows:

1. Service establishing bylaw drafted and Board gives first three readings
2. Board approves the 'question' for Assent Voting by bylaw; the same question must be used for all jurisdictions
3. Provincial review and statutory approval by the Inspector of Municipalities (up to 10 weeks)
4. Approval of the electors via Assent Voting, requiring a majority of ballots cast to be in favour (held no more than 80 days after Inspector approval or AAP failing). Note: If participating area approval is to be obtained by Assent Voting, the Board may, by resolution adopted by at least 2/3 of the votes cast, provide that the participating area approval is to be obtained for the entire proposed service area.
5. Adoption of the bylaw by the Board

There are significant staff resource implications to support Assent Voting, similar to holding an election. There are also significant expenses associated with conducting Assent Voting, including statutory notices, labour for General Voting Day and Advance Voting opportunities, travel and accommodation expenses for officials (if applicable), ballots and mail ballot packages.

Establishing a social planning service will impact the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) and Legislative Services work programs. If made a 2024 work program priority, the process of establishing a social planning service could commence in Q1 or Q2. Legislative Services has confirmed they are able to support an AAP commencing in either Q1 or Q2 of 2024 which aligns with the proposed timeline for establishing a social planning service. The process is anticipated to take approximately six months. If a referendum is required to establish the service, Legislative Services will need to be further consulted to confirm timelines and resources necessary to administer the process and whether it can be accommodated in their work program.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Board approval to create a social planning service and hire a social planner will require significant financial resources. If the Board chooses to proceed with establishing a social planning service, the anticipated timeline to commence work is Q1 or Q2 of 2024, therefore any amendments would be to the 2024-2028 Financial Plan, as amendments requiring additional taxation to the 2023-2027 Financial Plan cannot occur after the March 31 deadline.

The total anticipated cost to establish a social planning service is estimated to be between \$175,000 to \$200,000, dependent on the process used to create the service as outlined above (see Attachment 3 – Costs Associated with Establishing a Social Planning Service).

To proceed, the Board must amend the 2024-2028 Financial Plan to include the addition of social planning as an approved strategic and work program priority for both the RGS Section and Legislative Services to draft a service establishment bylaw. Once the service establishment bylaw is drafted, the bylaw will be brought before the Board,

and dependent on the process used to establish the service, the 2024-2028 Financial Plan will require an additional amendment to include an estimated \$175,000 to \$200,000.<sup>2</sup>

The AAP will require approximately \$5,000-\$10,000 dependent upon how much advertising is undertaken, and additional staff time to administer.

If assent voting (referendum) is required to establish the service, substantial staff time and financial resources will be required, and Legislative Services and Finance will need to be further consulted to identify the necessary financial costs and additions to the 2024-2028 Financial Plan and any additional impacts to their work programs.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**

Establishing a social planning service builds on the completed Board Strategic Action 8.2 and aligns with the key strategic area of the 2019-2022 Board Strategic Plan by advancing the goal for:

Social Wellbeing - Make the Region a safe and vibrant place for all, with a focus on children and families in programs and planning.

## **REVIEWED BY**

- K. Fowler, Manager, Long Range Planning, Energy and Sustainability
- L. Grant, General Manager, Development and Emergency Services
- S. Snelgrove, Assistant Manager, Legislative Services
- J. Hill, Manager, Legislative Services
- T. Moore, Chief Financial Officer
- D. Holmes, Chief Administrative Officer

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. History of Social Planning in the Regional District of Nanaimo
2. Priority Areas and Strategic Recommendations
3. Costs Associated with Establishing a Social Planning Service

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<sup>2</sup> A more detailed analysis to identify necessary additions to the 2024-2028 Financial Plan associated with hiring a social planner and establishing the social planning service will be undertaken if the Board directs staff to proceed with drafting a service establishment bylaw.