



REGIONAL
DISTRICT
OF NANAIMO

Proposed Fire Truck Storage Facility Survey - Results and Next Steps

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Board receives the “What We Heard Engagement Summary report: Nanaimo River Fire Protection Area – Proposed Fire Truck Storage Facility Survey 2025” for information.
2. That the Board directs staff to suspend further collection of the Nanaimo River Fire Protection Service Reserve Fund indefinitely.
3. That the Board direct staff to prepare reports that, based on the survey results, recommend means to dissolve the Nanaimo River Fire Protection Service Reserve Fund and explore options to address the service considerations for fire services in the area.

BACKGROUND

Fire protection services in the area began in 1985 and have evolved through community feedback, bylaw development, and infrastructure planning. A feasibility study in 2022 recommended a satellite hall, but further engagement in 2024 led to support for a more cost-effective solution—a fire truck storage facility with future expansion potential. In June 2025, the RDN Board approved this survey to gauge formal support before proceeding with a fire truck storage facility.

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) launched a Get Involved RDN project site (www.getinvolved.rdn.ca/nanaimo-river-fire-protection), hosted a community information session and conducted a targeted mail-only survey to registered property owners within the Nanaimo River Fire Protection Area. The objective was to determine the level of community support for the construction of a purpose-built fire truck storage facility on previously acquired RDN land at Nanaimo River Road and South Forks Road.

This facility is intended to:

- Maintain current fire service levels.
- Improve safety and compliance through BC Building Code standards.
- Reduce liability by housing the fire truck on RDN-owned property.
- Serve as a base for Extension Truck No. 4, currently stored temporarily on private property.

The objective of the engagement was to:

- Explore community concerns.
- Validate community support for the proposed facility.
- Understand preferences regarding short-term versus long-term borrowing options and taxation impacts, should the community indicate a desire to proceed with the construction of a fire truck storage facility.
- Inform RDN staff on next steps in capital planning and service delivery.

Taxation impact calculations (outlined in the survey) were presented to the community based on a construction cost estimate of \$800,000, funded through:

- \$300,000 from the Community Works Fund
- \$250,000 from capital reserves (rounded down for simplicity)
- \$250,000 from Municipal Financial Authority of BC borrowing (short - or long-term)

Estimated total annual taxpayer costs and estimated annual taxpayer costs per thousand-dollar property value over 5-year, 10-year, 15-year and 20-year borrowing durations were outlined in the survey.

Next steps, based on community response, were also outlined to property owners in the survey as follows:

- Should the majority of respondents that are property owners support the construction of a purpose-built fire truck storage facility, utilizing previously acquired land within the Nanaimo River service area, the reserve funds accumulated, and the proposed Community Works Fund contribution, the RDN will secure cost estimates and investigate financing options to fund the storage facility that will serve as a base for the current fire truck.
- Should the majority of respondents that are property owners not support construction of a purpose-built fire truck storage facility, the RDN will begin exploring disbanding the reserve fund and returning funds collected to construct a satellite fire hall. The RDN, in partnership with the Extension Fire Services Society, will also evaluate whether the current temporary arrangement of storing Extension Truck no. 4 at a private property in the area can continue. This temporary storage arrangement is not a long-term solution due to space constraints and code/safety compliance.

Survey Results

A detailed outline of engagement activities, community feedback and survey results (including scanned copies of surveys received) is available in the What We Heard Engagement Summary, attached. Highlights include:

- Surveys issued to 124 property owners for 78 properties
- Responses received: 66 (response rate: 53%)
- Results (received by the extended survey cut-off deadline, October 8 at 4 p.m.)
 - **No:** 36
 - **Yes:** 29
 - 5 indicated Yes and a preference for 5-year borrowing
 - 13 indicated Yes and a preference for 10-year borrowing
 - 1 indicated Yes and a preference for 15-year borrowing
 - 10 indicated Yes and a preference for 20-year borrowing
 - **Abstain:** 1

During engagement, some respondents indicated a preference for formal elector involvement in decision-making about the proposed fire truck storage facility, rather than relying solely on an informal survey to guide next steps.

Impact of Canada Post Strike

The Canada Post strike, which began September 25, 2025, caused significant disruptions to mail services, directly impacting the survey return process. In response, the RDN:

- Extended the survey closing date to October 8, 2025, to allow more time for returns.
- Provided alternative return methods, including drop-off at RDN offices, electronic submission options and an in-person RDN pick-up and drop-off held in the community on the afternoon of October 8.
- Communicated these pivots via the project site, direct emails, and local notices, to inform property owners of additional options for survey return.

Continued Engagement After Sept. 11 Community Information Session

Following the September 11 community information event, the RDN:

- Responded to new questions submitted by property owners, coordinating with multiple internal departments to secure accurate answers.
- Shared these answers with enquiring property owners and published them in the *Additional FAQ received since Sep. 11* section on the project site.
- Maintained open channels for ongoing feedback, demonstrating a commitment to transparency and responsiveness throughout the engagement process.

Next Steps

Staff is recommending future contributions to the Nanaimo River Fire Protection Service Reserve Fund for the purpose of constructing a fire hall be suspended indefinitely and that the results of the survey be the basis for staff to prepare future reports on the option to dissolve the reserve fund other considerations for the fire services in the area.

Staff will consult with the Extension Volunteer Fire Department and the Extension Fire Services Society to assess short-, medium-, and long-term implications of fire service delivery in the Nanaimo River Fire Protection Area. Immediate priorities include evaluating the viability of continuing the temporary fire truck storage arrangement on private property, which does not meet Fire Underwriters Survey (FUS) standards and poses risk due to space constraints and code/safety compliance. Medium-term considerations will address operational impacts if the current arrangement changes, while long-term planning will explore sustainable service models across both the Nanaimo River and Extension Fire Protection Areas. These consultations will inform future reporting to the Board and guide strategic decisions on infrastructure, service levels, and financial planning.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The final contribution to the Nanaimo River Fire Protection Service Reserve Fund was made in 2022, totaling \$222,743 in resident contributions. With \$19,380 spent on the 2022 feasibility study and \$51,737 in accrued interest, the fund holds a balance of \$255,100 as of July 30, 2025. While taxes continue to be collected to service a legacy debt of \$20,761 (fully repaid in 2026), no further reserve contributions are planned. Should the Board direct staff to suspend the fund indefinitely, administrative costs will remain minimal and within existing operational budgets. However, if the Board opts to pursue refunding the reserve contributions to residents, a legislative and financial process will be required, and staff will return with a detailed implementation and cost framework.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

Fire protection is a service that is supported by staff work and expected by the communities currently receiving it, understanding that it will continue as an important part of RDN service as broadly described in the “Our Role” section of the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

REVIEWED BY:

- S. Windsor, Manager, Fire Services
- L. Grant, General Manager, Development and Emergency Services
- D. Holmes, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT:

1. What We Heard Engagement Summary report: Nanaimo River Fire Protection Area – Proposed Fire Truck Storage Facility Survey 2025