



Gibsons/West Howe Sound Fire Protection Service Pumper Apparatus Replacement Project Loan Authorization Bylaw No. 765, 2024 **Alternative Approval Process**

Frequently Asked Questions

The Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) is seeking approval of the electors to borrow up to \$1,499,500 over a 10-year term to fund the Gibsons/West Howe Sound Fire Protection Service Pumper Apparatus Replacement Project.

For ease of use and understanding, this FAQ document is split into three short sections.

1. **About the Alternative Approval Process (AAP)** - you can find information on where to submit a form, whether you are eligible to take part, and why the SCRD is using the AAP
2. **About the Loan and the Project** – learn more about why the SCRD is seeking approval to borrow money and the projected costs of this loan in the coming years.
3. **Further information** – links and contact information should you have any questions about the AAP

1. About the Alternative Approval Process (AAP)

Q. What is an Alternative Approval Process?

A. An Alternative Approval Process (AAP) is a method of obtaining elector approval on local government bylaws. If 10% or more of electors oppose the long-term borrowing, the loan authorization bylaw cannot be adopted without proceeding to an assent vote (referendum).

Q. Why are you using an AAP instead of a referendum?

A. An AAP costs significantly less than a referendum and allows electors to submit responses over a period of at least 30 days. The deadline to submit responses for this AAP is July 15, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. The cost for this AAP is budgeted at approximately \$12,000, while the cost of a referendum is budgeted at approximately \$60,000.

Q. How does an AAP work?

A. The AAP is a process where a person only submits a response form if they are opposed to the proposed action, which in this case is to approve a 10-year loan to fund a Pumper Apparatus (commonly known as a fire truck) for the Gibsons and District Volunteer Fire Department. Response Forms are available to the public online and at the Regional District Office at 1975 Field Road, Sechelt. If you support the SCRD using long-term borrowing to fund the Pumper Apparatus Replacement Project, you do not have to take any further action. Approval of the electors is achieved if less than 10% of electors register objection to the borrowing.

Q. Can anyone participate in the process?

A. No. To participate in the AAP, a person must meet the qualifications to be registered as an elector (under the *Local Government Act*) and must reside or own property within the Gibsons/West Howe Sound Fire Protection Service Area (Town of Gibsons and a defined area within Electoral Area E – Elphinstone and Electoral Area F – West Howe Sound, excluding those parts within the Trust Area under the jurisdiction of the Islands Trust).

Qualifications for Electors include:

- eighteen years of age or older;
- Canadian Citizen;
- resident of British Columbia for at least the last six months;
- not disqualified by law from voting in local elections.

Only one **non-resident property elector** may sign an elector response form per property, regardless of how many people own the property. Further, non-resident electors must be registered owners of real property in the jurisdiction of the Sunshine Coast Regional District for which the AAP is taking place for at least 30 days immediately before signing this elector response form. Property owned in whole or in part by a corporation does not qualify under the non-resident property elector provisions.

Q. Why does the SCRD need public approval to borrow the funds?

A. Provincial legislation requires that a local government must receive approval of the electors to use long-term (more than five years) borrowing. The SCRD is seeking public approval to borrow funds through an Alternative Approval Process (AAP).

Q. What if the AAP fails?

A. If the AAP fails, the Board will consider options including whether to proceed to an assent vote (also known as a referendum).

Q. Can a response form be withdrawn after it is submitted?

A. Yes, response forms can be withdrawn prior to the deadline of 4:30 p.m. on Monday, July 15, 2024. Withdrawal requests must be in writing and contain sufficient information to identify the elector concerned. They must be signed by the person making the request for withdrawal and physically delivered to the Regional District office. Electronic copies for withdrawal requests cannot be accepted.

Q. Will response forms submitted electronically be accepted?

A. Yes. Elector Response Forms will be accepted by electronic means via email. Electronic submissions must include a legible electronic representation of the eligible elector's handwritten signature. Digitally encrypted signatures (partial or fully) or machine generated electronic representations will not be accepted.

Electronic submissions that have been signed by the elector will be accepted as valid if the following reliability requirements are satisfied:

- ✓ the electronic Elector Response Form includes the signature of the eligible elector

- ✓ the electronic signature is legible for the purpose of identifying the eligible elector as well as ensuring the integrity and authenticity of the Form
- ✓ the association of the electronic signature with the Elector Response Form is reliable
- ✓ the electronic signature is attributable (or traceable) to an eligible elector who has the intent and authority to sign the Elector Response Form

Where the Corporate Officer believes that a misrepresentation has occurred, the electronic submission will not be processed, and the Form will be deemed invalid.

2. About the Loan

Q. Why does the SCRD want to borrow money?

A. The existing Gibsons and District Fire Service fire engine is a 2001 Freightliner. This fire engine is now 23 years old and is insufficient to meet the fire service's current needs, partly due to its pump capacity and limited horsepower. Further, the Gibsons community has grown significantly since this truck was originally acquired, resulting in significant increase to the fire department's call volume. Many of the calls the department attends now involve larger and more complex buildings.

Q. How will this project benefit the public?

A. A replacement fire engine is expected to offer operational and safety improvements while carrying more equipment and firefighters to emergency scenes quickly. It is also expected to maintain Fire Underwriter's Survey (FUS) grading for fire insurance purposes.

Q. How much money does the regional district intend to borrow for this purpose, and what are the terms for borrowing?

A. The SCRD is proposing to borrow up to \$1,499,500 to be repaid over a 10-year term to replace the Gibsons/West Howe Fire Protection Service Pumper Apparatus. The funds would be borrowed through the Municipal Finance Authority of BC which handles capital financing needs for local governments.

Q. Who will pay back the loan and how will this affect my taxes?

A. The portion of property tax allocated to debt repayment would amount to approximately \$3.35 per \$100,000 of assessed value on an annual basis until the debt is retired for those properties within the Gibsons/West Howe Sound Fire Protection Service Area (Town of Gibsons and a defined area within Electoral Area E – Elphinstone and Electoral Area F – West Howe Sound, excluding those parts within the Trust Area under the jurisdiction of the Islands Trust). However, it should be noted that the costs of the debt have already been accounted for within the existing service funding therefore there will be no direct impact on taxation for properties within the service area. Borrowing requires approval of the electors since the loan term is for a period longer than 5 years.

3. Further Information

Q. Who can I contact for more information?

A. More information may be obtained by contacting Sherry Reid, Corporate Officer, at the SCRD office at 1975 Field Road, Sechelt, or by telephone at 604-885-6825.

The Notice of AAP, Information Package and the Elector Response Form can be found at: www.scrd.ca/aap.