

Proposed New CRD Community Safety Service



Frequently Asked Questions

Capital Regional District | October 28, 2019

Why the need for this new service?

A recent increase in vandalism and civil disorder in Ganges Village prompted a series of meetings organized by the Chamber of Commerce, United Church and islands residents, resulting in the formation of an ad hoc committee to share information. These meetings identified constraints on resources for existing agencies (including repeated, unsuccessful attempts by the RCMP to acquire additional officers) and the lack of consistent and focused local funding support for community engagement with the RCMP and social service agencies to help address this issue. These meetings confirmed that community safety is not just about security, but must include outreach and support, particularly for the most vulnerable on Salt Spring.

What are the types of activities that can be supported by this new service?

The establishment bylaw enables modest funding for a range of possible crime prevention and social support activities. CRD will consult with stakeholders and the public in 2020 to allocate funding. Any security initiatives are intended to be administered by the RCMP. Funding for outreach and support services could flow through local non-profits.

What is the cost of the new service?

The maximum requisition allowed by the bylaw is 1.6 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. The average residence on the Salt Spring would pay at maximum 88 cents per month. However, the CRD Director has stated that the initial requisition will be much lower, less than half of the maximum, or about 30-40 cents per average residence per month, so that experience with the new service can be gained and priorities refined over time.

What are the mechanisms to oversee the service and ensure accountability?

As with any CRD service, the CRD Board ultimately approves budgets recommended by the CRD Director, who seeks advice from the community and stakeholders. A CRD Commission is not proposed at this time, but the ad hoc committee comprised of the RCMP and other non-profits and concerned citizens, will advise the Director on funding priorities. CRD staff will be responsible for financial accounting and reporting. The service is intended to provide modest funding to support and organize community safety measures, not directly implement them.

Does the CRD have the authority to implement the service?

Yes, the Province has reviewed the proposed bylaw and authorized the CRD to proceed with the voter approval process. Other local governments in BC, such as Cowichan Valley Regional District, are also making existing security and support services, primarily funded by senior governments, more effective with local community involvement. Such partnerships are common throughout BC, including public transit and affordable housing on Salt Spring.

For more information, please visit <https://www.crd.bc.ca/ssisafetyaap>

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Why not just hire more police?

Local RCMP can only hire more officers if approved at the provincial level. The RCMP have repeatedly requested additional officers but Salt Spring's serious crime rate compared to other communities in BC is relatively low. While this new CRD service could fund additional RCMP officer time, other citizen-led crime prevention and outreach measures supporting our most vulnerable community members will be more cost effective. The cost of even one more RCMP officer is almost twice the maximum requisition allowed for by the proposed new service.

Why should all taxpayers pay for crime prevention measures in Ganges?

This new service applies to all of Salt Spring, but will initially focus on Ganges. The community meetings and expressions of concerns arising out of the recent vandalism and civil disorder in Ganges came from residents, workers in public and private facilities, visitors and community service organizations. All island residents benefit from private and public amenities in Ganges. Just as businesses and residents in Ganges contribute to services that benefit Salt Spring as a whole, we are all responsible for our main village. It should also be noted that Ganges businesses will pay a higher tax rate per dollar of assessed value to pay for the new service.

What is the approval process?

Establishment of any new CRD service requires voter approval of an "establishment bylaw" defining the mandate and maximum tax requisition for the service. This bylaw was given third reading at the September 11 CRD Board meeting and referred to the Province for review. With Provincial approval secured, public notification will be initiated, involving at least two ads in our local newspaper of record (the Driftwood), after which an Alternative Approval Process ("counter petition") will be initiated, lasting 30 days, likely from early November to early December.

Why not a referendum rather than "counter petition"?

A referendum costs up to \$30,000-\$40,000 compared to \$15,000 for a counter petition. The cost of the counter petition is taken from the requisition for the new service. If the service isn't approved, the cost is covered by the CRD Director's existing administration budget. Generally, a counter petition is initiated if there is broad community support and the proposed requisition is relatively low. Salt Spring's successful transit service was approved by counter petition.

What is the public consultation process?

The proposed establishment bylaw (available on the [CRD website](#) and at the local CRD office) was based on a number of community and stakeholder meetings. A CRD-sponsored meeting was held on October 15 and a Community Alliance meeting was held on October 28. If you have any questions or comments about the proposed new Community Safety Service or any CRD issues you can contact the CRD Director at 250.538.4307 or directorssi@crd.bc.ca.

For more information, please visit <https://www.crd.bc.ca/ssisafetyaap>