

April 11, 2024



Mayor and Council

Village of Belcarra

4084 Bedwell Bay Road

Belcarra, BC V3H 4P8

Via email: jross@belcarra.ca

Re: Sasamat Volunteer Fire Department and Replacement of Fire Halls

Mayor and Council:

I would first like to emphasize that Anmore remains committed to supporting our amazing volunteer firefighters and the incredible work they do to provide emergency response and support community safety. Part of our commitment includes moving forward with the construction of new fire halls to ensure they have a safe workspace that meets their operational needs and WorkSafe BC requirements.

It's also worth noting that our Council's commitment to replacing the fire halls is shared by the Sasamat Volunteer Fire Department (SVFD) Board of Trustees. The Trustees from both of our municipalities have voted unanimously on several occasions to move this project forward, and they have released \$500,000 to start the process.

We have reviewed for your letter dated February 1, 2024, which included data for our consideration, but we noted that the data is incomplete. Interestingly, you have selected a set of data that starts in 2004, when Anmore's population first started to exceed Belcarra's, rather than 1980, when the cost-sharing agreement was developed. As you know, Anmore's population was significantly less than Belcarra at that time.

Before we do any analysis of the content you sent us, it's important to ensure that we are dealing with complete and accurate information. Please send the data going back to the start of our agreement in 1980.

As we wait to receive the complete data from you, we recommend that you consider the broader ramifications of changing the governance structure of the SVFD. Doing so could mean that decisions about how to move forward would ultimately be made by Metro Vancouver and/or the provincial government. It puts at risk the structure that has been working effectively to serve our communities for the past 44 years. And perhaps more importantly from your perspective, your position may not be as strong as you have assessed. Not only was our agreement found to be a fair and equitable approach when Anmore was at a disadvantage in terms of population served, as you are aware, Belcarra has not been meeting its obligations under the current agreement.

In particular, Belcarra is not meeting requirements for volunteer firefighters from your community, such as age demographics and the availability of your volunteers. Anmore has been filling the gap for you.

As well, Anmore already pays proportionally more for the operational costs to reflect our larger community, and we are providing the training facilities and the bulk of equipment storage space.

The agreement to share capital costs equally for equipment and buildings reflects the fact that we share the benefits equally. Anmore has paid 50% of the cost, even when it has been to purchase equipment that we don't specifically require, as it still benefits both our communities. A recent example is the procurement process currently underway to purchase a water tanker, which is required for Belcarra as you do not have fire hydrants in some areas. Anmore does have all the required hydrants, so on our own, we would not require a tanker. Regardless, we are splitting the cost evenly with Belcarra.

We also need a certain mix of equipment to meet the fire insurance underwriter's requirements. It saves our taxpayers money to split the costs equally and share the equipment. If we didn't share equipment, each municipality would have to purchase its own to ensure we meet the underwriter's requirements, which would double our costs. I think we can agree that maintaining our insurance rating is essential to ensure our residents continue to benefit from the ability to be insured for fire damage.

Overall, by working together and sharing the costs, we are supporting our communities and providing them with essential emergency response services in a responsible and cost-effective manner. Our volunteer firefighters are the foundation of this service, and the Fire Hall replacements must move forward as a priority and without further delays. The health and welfare of our volunteer firefighters is paramount, and it is our responsibility to provide them with a safe workplace and the equipment they need to keep our communities safe.

As part of Anmore's commitment to ensuring that new Fire Halls are built in our communities, we have implemented measures to help support financing the buildings and we have set aside funding for a temporary service area at our Public Works Yard to maintain operations while construction is underway. We trust that Belcarra is taking its own steps to fund the new Fire Halls needed in our communities and make similar arrangements for a temporary service location.

Yours sincerely,



John McEwen, Mayor

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cc: Paula Richardson, CAO Village of Belcarra
SFVD Board of Trustees, Metro Vancouver