



VILLAGE OF BELCARRA

"Between Forest and Sea"

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October 9, 2025

Metro Vancouver
Office of the Chair
Metrotower III, 4515 Central Boulevard
Burnaby, BC V5H 0C6

VIA EMAIL

Dear Chair Hurley:

Re: Sasamat Volunteer Fire Department (SVFD) - Service Review Conclusion

A shared service is successful as long as the benefits of participation continue to outweigh the costs. Among the costs, the potential for tension with shared control is high. Tensions often arise when cost-sharing is considered unfair due to tax base or demographic shifts, when service levels exceed what one deems necessary, or when partners feel stuck in unsatisfactory arrangements without viable alternatives.

The potential for conflict should be anticipated and mitigated through the shared service agreement. Consideration of the key issues can avoid predictable conflicts through terms that anticipate demographic and economic trends, service requirements and cost allocation changes through automatic or periodic adjustments. Unfortunately, such terms are not built into the existing service agreement and Anmore is not supportive of their inclusion, despite reasonable and fair grounds.

The existing arrangement has Belcarra paying more than it uses both operationally and capitally for labour, equipment, facilities and services. This divide has widened over the years with Anmore's population growth of 218% to Belcarra's 17% in the period since the 1989 cost share agreement was struck. While conditions have changed, the terms of the agreement have not. The 50/50 capital cost split was a resolution to dispute at the time and never representative of typical cost share models based on property value or population size. Arguably, it may have borne some relevance at the time, when the fire halls and populations were of similar size. However, there is no defensible basis for it now.

Belcarra has made repeated appeals for an updated service agreement and cost share allocation to address current and future conflicts. In response, both Anmore and Metro Vancouver have expressed that they will not negotiate any terms of the current service arrangement and pose only two options to Belcarra: accept the existing terms or dissolve the shared fire service. The proposal of mediation to work out differences was met with the same ultimatum. Given these positions, Belcarra proposes to end the service review process as continuation offers no means of a reasonable and fair conclusion with the present representatives.

Belcarra will continue to advocate for the use of reason and fairness in business dealings and partnerships. A condition of a service review is for all parties to negotiate in good faith, making reasonable efforts to reach an agreement respecting the issues being addressed. Instead, an ultimatum has been used as a first and only resort prior to and throughout the service review process. While ultimatums can be used to force decisions, they also erode trust, stifle creativity, and damage relationships. Further, they shut down negotiation, innovation and the exploration of creative solutions, while disregarding concerns and issues. As a longstanding service, we recognize that there may be opportunities with changing representation to negotiate in the future, and we remain hopeful that reasonable minds will prevail.

Given the stark choice to pay more than our fair share or dissolve the service, Belcarra opts to keep the shared fire service intact. Financial contributions aside, both Villages derive benefits from the current arrangement including cost savings, enhanced efficiency, and improved safety. By consolidating resources and expertise, the communities also achieve better fire protection than they can operating independently. Of further value are the intangible benefits including the rich history and essential role of the service and dedicated volunteer firefighters. Also highly valued is the administrative support and service provided by Metro Vancouver, especially during a time when the organization is under pressure to reduce costs and streamline operations.

We are prepared to move forward with design and construction of the firehalls. However, we stress the need for prudent spending with a focus on essential safety and functional upgrades. Of further consideration are the ongoing operational and maintenance costs which escalate with scope and will be borne by the Villages many years into the future. As small communities, we both face challenges to deliver services with limited funding while addressing rising costs, increased responsibilities and aging infrastructure. However, Belcarra is further challenged with limited options for growth, having a geographical area of 5.5 square kilometres of which only 30% is developable. This is not the case for Anmore who has the advantage of growth to fund facility expansion projects.

Despite differing positions on cost share allocations and resolution approaches, we will continue to highlight the positive aspects of shared service benefits, appreciation for volunteer firefighters, and commitment to delivering fire protection in both communities.



Mayor Jamie Ross
Village of Belcarra

cc:

Mayor John McEwen, Village of Anmore
Karen Elrick, CAO, Village of Anmore
Brant Arnold-Smith, Metro Vancouver
Dorothy Shermer, Metro Vancouver
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Melony Burton, CAO, Village of Belcarra