

To the Chair and Board of Directors of the Strathcona Regional District.

I am appalled and angered by the decision of the SRD Board at the Nov 22 meeting to not proceed immediately to a binding referendum, as promised, on Bylaws 326 Cortes Community Hall Service and 328 Cortes First Responder Service.

The excuse of needing "more public consultation" is a fallacy. The time for public consultation was last winter when this issue was raised again and the memberships of both community organizations voted to participate. . Why did you not actually hold a public consultation meeting then to gauge the numbers of people actually in support of this tax and gauge the community feeling about it and whether to treat it as a parcel tax or mil rate tax?

Instead you chose to hold an unadvertised, private meeting with a small group of people opposed to the tax and, to appease that group, chose to have a non-binding referendum to gauge whether there was enough public interest in having a binding referendum, (for people so concerned about spending public money, this solution was a bit bizarre). In that non-binding referendum you got a significant majority voting to continue to a binding referendum. This result doesn't necessarily indicate support for the Hall Tax itself, but says people are tired of talking about this, tired of the bitterness and dissension in the community that has been going on for more than 10 years. and want it settled one way or the other by voting on a binding referendum.

**Why is the SRD only listening only to a small group of highly vocal naysayers, whose agenda is as much about discrediting our elected representative as it is about taxes?** The rest of us have been fairly quiet because we had hopes that the democratic process would actually bring us to a resolution. I assure you that the voices of dissenters have been listened to on multiple occasions, in multiple forums. Their questions have been answered but they have not found those answers acceptable. We do not need another meeting in which everyone stands up and tells us why they are for or against such a tax. We already know all the reasons, nothing new has been said in a long time and no one is going to change their mind at this point.

We need to put it to a vote and the only thing left to decide at this point, in my mind, is whether to present it as a parcel or mil rate tax. Please just do what you have been directed to do and prepare a bylaw that can go to referendum as soon as possible. And make it simple, do not set up any future regional director for unending harassment by having them make decisions about setting the actual rate or the way it should be administered.

  
Bernice McGowan  
1387 Bodington Rd  
Whaletown, BC  
January 22, 2019

This letter to be entered in to the public record