

# Report

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Date	July 17, 2019	File:
To	Council	
From	Mark Frame, General Manager of Financial & Protective Services Natasha Horsman, Manager of Communications & Public Engagement Karen Robertson, Corporate Officer	Endorsed: 
Subject	Elector Assent Process for New North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP Detachment	

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## Purpose

To confirm Council's preferred approach for seeking elector assent for financing a new North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP detachment.

## Background

In March 2019, Council agreed in principle to proceed with plans for a new North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP detachment on its property on Ford Road and Drinkwater Road. The new building would be a Hub detachment bringing together the North Cowichan/Duncan detachment, Forensic Identification Services, South Island Traffic Services, and Shawnigan Lake detachment.

It is envisioned that the new North Cowichan/Duncan Detachment would be built by North Cowichan, and the RCMP would be billed back its portion of the MFA debt through an annual lease. The new detachment is still subject to federal approval and authorities and signing a new Occupancy Agreement with the Municipality.

In order to understand the financial implications of a Hub detachment, an architect was retained to provide space analysis and a cost estimate for the Hub detachment concept. Working with the RCMP, the space analysis provided an agreed gross floor area of 4,640 m<sup>2</sup>. This was costed at \$40 million by a quantity surveyor. Staff is now working with a consultant to hire an integrated design team to develop designs and construction budgets.

Once the preliminary design and estimated construction costs are confirmed, North Cowichan would need to seek elector assent to borrow the money to construct the building. This report provides options and a suggested timeline for elector assent.

## Discussion

There are two options for seeking elector assent:

	<b>Option 1 Alternative Approval Process (AAP)</b>	<b>Option 2 Referendum</b>
Description	An AAP requires that 10 percent or more of the eligible electors must sign and submit response forms <u>in opposition</u> to a proposed initiative to require the local government to obtain assent of the electors in order to proceed.	A referendum involves asking electors to cast a vote. Assent of the electors is achieved if a majority of votes counted are in favour of the bylaw or question.
Approx. Cost	\$2,000.00	\$60,000.000
Approx. Timeline	<p><b>Sept. 4, 2019</b> Borrowing Bylaw introduced</p> <p><b>Nov. 18, 2019</b> AAP Deadline for Response</p> <p><b>Dec. 4, 2019</b> Bylaw adopted (pending AAP)</p> <p><b>Mar. 2020</b> Long-term Financing Approved (pending AAP)</p>	<p><b>Sept. 4, 2019</b> Borrowing Bylaw introduced</p> <p><b>Nov. 16, 2019</b> Referendum held</p> <p><b>Dec. 4, 2019</b> Bylaw adopted (pending referendum)</p> <p><b>Mar. 2020</b> Long-term Financing Approved (pending referendum)</p>
If elector assent not granted	If 10 percent of electors sign forms in opposition to the AAP, the issue is considered significant and the local government has two choices: it may proceed to referendum within 80 days, or they may put the matter on hold and consider alternatives to the proposed action.	If elector assent is not granted the design process would need to be halted. As providing a suitable building is a requirement of our RCMP contract, the only two options available would be either: 1) The RCMP would potentially build the building and charge the cost back to North Cowichan. This would be at a higher cost to the taxpayer than if North Cowichan were to borrow the funds and build the building; or 2) to conduct another referendum based on a smaller non-Hub detachment, which would also likely be at a higher cost to North Cowichan taxpayers.

### Public Information

Many key decisions have already been made on this project, and the key remaining decision is which approval approach Council wishes to proceed with in order to seek elector assent. Residents will have a direct say in this through a referendum or AAP, and information should be distributed to residents in advance of elector assent.

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

The following communications plan is proposed for both an AAP process and referendum:

1. Webpage that contains key information about the process, why a new facility is needed, financial implications, and policing statistics.
2. Mail-out pamphlet to every North Cowichan household in advance of elector assent notice:
  - a. Focus on the why a new facility is needed, financial implications, and policing statistics
  - b. Developed jointly with the RCMP
3. Short animated video:
  - a. Will capture key points from pamphlet
4. Limited number of media and resident tours of the existing detachment
  - a. Registration up to 30 individuals
  - b. Organized jointly with the RCMP
5. News releases at every milestone/decision stage through the project

The estimated cost for the communication activities listed above is \$5,000. It is recommended that these costs be managed through the RCMP Building project budget.

## Options

**Option 1:** Direct staff to proceed with an AAP to seek elector assent, supported by the communications activities outlined above (**recommended**).

**Option 2:** Direct staff to proceed with a referendum to seek elector assent, supported by the communications activities outlined above.

## Implications

**Social/community:** there are significant social/community implications, as the next step will be to initiate elector assent for the new North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP detachment. The public's response will affect both tax rates and policing service over the coming years.

**Personnel:** the existing detachment is well past the end of its life and has ongoing issues with rodents, leaking, flooding, and lack of adequate space. Steps to pursue a new detachment have positive implications for North Cowichan's staff at the detachment and for policing service overall.

**Legal:** Providing suitable accommodation for the RCMP Detachment is an obligation under North Cowichan's RCMP contract.

**Financial:** The estimated annual debt repayment is \$2.8 million. The RCMP will pay 56.6% (\$1.6million) leaving \$1.2 million to be paid by North Cowichan tax payers. This will require about a 4% tax increase phased in over 2019 to 2021. In 2019, taxes were increase by .51% assuming initial design work being done with the majority of construction in 2020 and 2021. The tax increases over the three years will total \$65 for an average home.

### Recommendation

**That Council direct staff to proceed with an Alternative Approval Process (AAP) to seek elector assent for a new North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP detachment;**

**And That Council direct staff to proceed with the proposed communications plan to inform residents about a new North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP detachment.**