

Qualicum Beach Residents' Association (QBRA)

February 18, 2021

To: Councillor Teunis Westbroek, Town of Qualicum Beach

From: Qualicum Beach Residents' Association (QBRA)

Re: Community Opinion Question Regarding Increasing the Size of Council

As requested by you during our meeting by Zoom on February 9, 2021, we are forwarding our suggested wording and rationale for the community opinion question to increase the number of councillors.

Experience tells us that a full debate embracing a range of perspectives is critical to supporting a healthy democracy. The Local Government Act and the Community Charter sees councils as collectives in which excellent decisions flow from in-depth discussions and debate. Good discussion requires adequate representation. Given the importance of preparing for the future of our town, we need more voices at the "decision table".

The current council has the legislative power to increase the size of council by adopting a bylaw at least six months before the October 15, 2022 general local government election. However, as input from the community has been sought previously, we are suggesting a community opinion question be asked during the upcoming by-election in Qualicum Beach.

Based on our research of community opinion questions, we submit the following question to be placed on the ballot during the upcoming by-election in Qualicum Beach:

"Are you in favour of increasing the number of Councillors from four (4) to six (6), effective October 15, 2022?"

It will be important for the town to clarify for citizens that the legislation expressly states, by definition, a municipality the size of Qualicum Beach must have a council of a mayor and 6 councillors, unless otherwise established in letters patent or by bylaw. Qualicum Beach can retain its classification as a "town" while increasing the council size to six councillors, thereby ensuring our community of approximately 9,000 people are adequately served and represented. The discussion around the term "city" is a red herring.

Qualicum Beach's council size is the minimum permissible. Recent circumstances have shown vulnerability with our five member council currently reduced to three – the mayor and two councillors. While this situation still provides a legal quorum, it reduces public representation of elected officials by 40%, which many believe is not fair and balanced representation of the entire community.

	Name of Town	Population (2016)	# of Cllrs		Name of Local Govt	Population (2016)	# of Cllrs
1	Comox	14,028	6		Castlegar	8,039	6
2	Creston	5,351	6		Kitimat	8,131	6
3	Gibsons	4,605	4		Peachland	5,428	6
4	Golden	3,708	6		Quesnel	9,879	6
5	Ladysmith	8,537	6		Revelstoke	7,547	6
6	Lake Cowichan	3,226	4		Rossland	3,729	6
7	Oliver	4,928	6		Tofino	1,967	6
8	Osoyoos	5,050	6		Trail	7,709	6
9	Port McNeill	2,337	4				
10	Princeton	2,828	4				
11	Qualicum Beach	8,943	4				
12	Sidney	11,672	6				
13	Smithers	5,401	6				
14	View Royal	10,408	4				

As you will see there are currently 14 towns in B.C.; only one other with a population similar to the size of Qualicum Beach has four councillors. Many other towns and local governments half the size of Qualicum Beach have six councillors. This is because the legislation that guides local governments (the Local Government Act and Community Charter) states, by definition, a municipal government with a population of 5,000 must have a council consisting of a mayor and six councillors, unless otherwise established in letters patent or by bylaw.

The facts and legislation clearly support a change.

At the beginning of the term, Council felt overworked and an increase in compensation was thought to be the remedy. The work did not change and the stress the members of council were under was noticeable. Then, we lost one councillor to the Provincial Legislature and another to stress leave, further increasing the workload for the remaining council members. The current council compensation, divided by six rather than four as it is now, would not significantly increase costs but would significantly improve service to the community.

A seven-person council will be better positioned to deal with the increasingly complex issues facing this community. It will better serve and represent all of us as we move forward in these difficult times.

Sincerely,

The Board of the Qualicum Beach Residents' Association

Copied to: Qualicum Woods Residents' Association
 Friends of the Qualicum Beach Forest
 Editor, PQB News
 Editor, Oceanside News
 Editor, SecondOpinionBC
 Editor, Times Colonist