

# Notice of Motion

Monday, March 24, 2025

**From: Councillor Phelps Bondaroff**

“That Saanich Council ask the Honourable Lisa Beare, Minister of Education and Child Care, to direct School District 61 to create an inclusive and collaborative task force to consider a Trustee Electoral Area election model for the Minister’s ultimate consideration of approval for implementation in time for the 2026 Local Government/Board of Education elections.”

## Background

Saanich Council recently received correspondence from Esquimalt Township Council, dated March 19, 2025, encouraging our council to “join with us in making your own request to the Minister of Education and Child Care to consider implementing a Trustee Electoral Area model based on consultation with all our communities for the school district in which we all share.” The following backgrounder is drawn from that correspondence with some minor edits (emphasis from original).

More commonly referred to as a ward system for school boards, trustee electoral areas already exist throughout B.C. and helps ensure that no matter where one lives or whichever family of schools one belongs to, that a person will have a much better chance of representation elected from their community by people from the community.

## Problem

The previous SD 61 School Board had governance problems and was perceived as being disconnected from the public they were elected to serve. As a result, the entire SD 61 School Board was terminated on January 30, 2025, with the Minister appointing an official trustee, Sherri Bell, to serve in their place until the next regularly scheduled elections of October, 2026.

While it is not ideal to now be without our elected School Board partners, this has presented a new and timely opportunity for all communities served by SD 61 to advocate directly to the Minister of Education on the need for electoral reform for how SD 61 School Board Trustees are elected.

Our local governments can seize this opportunity to reinforce our commitments to being leaders in good governance, strong relationships and partnerships. This includes working with the Minister of Education and School District 61 in a respectful effort to make all our communities better connected to the important School Board governance done on our behalf.

There are six municipalities and two Indigenous nations all sharing one amalgamated District 61 School Board with a system of nine school trustees elected at-large but with no direct

representation elected from within each community resulting in Esquimalt, Oak Bay, View Royal, Highlands and Songhees Nation not being directly represented at the previous (now terminated) SD 61 School Board table. **The District of Saanich, which has the majority of the SD61 student population and is home to 4 of the 7 SD 61 high schools, only held 2 of the 9 seats on the previous School Board.**

This predicament results in a School Board democracy deficit in need of a solution.

## **Solution**

The good news is that solution already exists and, in fact, exists in just about every other school district in B.C. that serves more than one municipality, including our three neighbouring school districts within the Capital Regional District (SD 62, SD 63, SD 64).

It is a solution that certainly has become established best practice in ensuring fair and equitable geographic balance in how School Boards are elected and School Board representation is determined almost everywhere in BC except for Greater Victoria District 61.

This widely used solution across B.C. is what is referred to as the **Trustee Electoral Area** election model whereby local communities each separately elect their own School Trustee representative(s) to help optimize fair and equitable, geographically-balanced school board representation and to better ensure all voices are being heard among the various municipalities at the School Board table.

## **What the Township of Esquimalt is proposing**

Part 4 – Division 1 – Section 30 of the *BC School Act* grants authority to the Minister of Education to approve and implement a more fair and equitable Trustee Electoral Area election model for electing school board trustees.

The following steps would be a good governance approach to ensuring fulsome community consultation and collaboration in exploring and designing a SD 61 Trustee Electoral Area election model to be submitted to the Minister of Education for her consideration of approval and implementation in time for the 2026 local elections:

1. Request that the Honourable Lisa Beare, Minister of Education and Child Care, direct SD 61 to create a task force to consider a Trustee Electoral Area election model and request that the task force include representation from each municipality and the two First Nations within SD 61, as well as any other stakeholders as deemed appropriate by the Minister and/or SD 61.
2. The task force explore, identify, and create a proposed list of designated SD 61 Trustee Electoral Area geographic zones and boundaries.
3. The task force invite input and consultation from all stakeholders within SD 61 regarding the proposed Trustee Electoral Areas.
4. The task force submit a final report and formal request to the Minister of Education to consider approval and implementation of a new SD 61 Trustee Electoral Area election model to be implemented in time for the 2026 Local Government/Board of Education elections.

Area model based on consultation with all our communities for the school district in which we all share.

## Background

The coast is a global treasure and is vital to the identity, culture, and economy of BC. It is facing increasing pressures, including the effects of climate change, declining fish populations and development. The provincial government exercises considerable jurisdiction in the marine and coastal realm, yet historically, was one of the only North American coastal jurisdictions to not have a cohesive policy in place to manage coastal and marine issues and guide decision-making in these spheres. The current array of provincial policy and laws that address marine and coastal issues was simply not designed to deal with today's pressures.

The Province recently took a huge step last to address this shortcoming. In July 2024, the province released its first-ever [Coastal Marine Strategy](#),<sup>1</sup> aimed at holistically managing the coast for generations to come. This was achieved in collaboration with many First Nations, and after extensive consultation with coastal communities, other governments, stakeholders and concerned citizens. This included commercial fishers, recreational fishers, tourism operators, the conservation sector, and the shipping industry, among others. The Strategy's vision is "**a diverse, productive and resilient coastal marine environment that is valued in its own right and that supports the prosperity, health and well-being of coastal communities now and into the future.**"<sup>2</sup>

The Strategy includes both existing and new policies, programs and projects; these aim to protect and restore coastal ecosystems; assess and manage cumulative impacts; promote sustainable blue economies; and support the implementation of marine plans to ensure the most sustainable use of coastal regions. A selection of the Strategy's activities that are most relevant to coastal communities are listed below.

### The Need for Legislation:

This monumental accomplishment must now be followed up with a legislative framework to support the Strategy's goals. This is the critical next step to ensure the Strategy fulfills its 20-year vision and is resistant to political changes and has strong monitoring and enforcement provisions.

The B.C. Coastal Marine Strategy committed, in the first activity under action 19 "Modernize policies and procedures", to: "*Assess the information needed and develop a proposal for coastal marine legislation, in partnership with First Nations. As appropriate, proceed through the legislative stages*" (see p 54 of the Strategy). However, passing legislation takes time, and with the recent provincial election resulting in a bare minority government, there is no time to waste.

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<sup>1</sup> B.C. Coastal Marine Strategy, online: [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/air-land-water/water/coastal-marine-strategy/coastal\\_marine\\_strategy.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/air-land-water/water/coastal-marine-strategy/coastal_marine_strategy.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the Strategy, see West Coast Environmental Law's blog post: "A Blueprint for the Coast: BC's first ever Coastal Marine Strategy is here!" (11 July 2024), online: <https://www.wcel.org/blog/blueprint-coast-bcs-first-ever-coastal-marine-strategy-here>

Pressure from local governments, through UBCM, will help push the Province to move forward on this commitment.

### **The B.C. Coastal Marine Strategy's relevance to coastal communities**

The B.C. Coastal Marine Strategy has nine goals that are operationalized with 116 activities. Coastal communities are familiar with the challenges facing the B.C. Coast, and many of the Strategy's activities will benefit coastal communities. Fifteen of these activities are:

#### Monitor Coastal Health

- Establish water quality objectives and monitoring programs in coastal areas of concern and use monitoring results to:
  - link in with coastal watershed planning and protection and other strategic planning processes (such as estuary management plans and storm water management plans);
  - maintain and expand partnerships with other governments;
  - expand efforts for preventing, detecting, monitoring and managing invasive aquatic plant species;

#### Protect and restore nearshore ecosystems

- Protect nearshore habitats from the impacts of small vessel anchoring and mooring buoys, in collaboration with First Nations, federal and local governments;
- Explore establishing innovative protected area models for the coastal marine environment in collaboration with interested First Nations and the federal government, including the use of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas;
- Assist in the collation of information on the location and status of intertidal spawning habitat for forage fish (sand lance and surf smelt), support additional forage fish habitat spawning surveys and help to encourage citizen involvement in habitat conservation;

#### Prevent marine pollution

- Prohibit the use of polystyrene in future marine infrastructure construction and collaborate with the federal government to promote replacing existing polystyrene marine floats with environmentally friendly alternatives;

#### Clean up marine pollution

- Support additional coastal cleanups of plastics and debris, including actions to address abandoned and derelict trespass structures and derelict vessels in the intertidal zone;

#### Improve understanding of climate change

- Expand our collective understanding of climate risks to coastal communities, ecosystems and economies through monitoring, research, data acquisition, modelling and vulnerability studies. Work with government partners to enhance and support the climate resilience of coastal communities;
- Help provide the information needed to develop or update regional climate action plans;

#### Incorporate nature-based solutions

- Investigate and consider incentives to homeowners and developers to maintain or restore natural shorelines (such as through grants and rebates, tax relief and permitting efficiencies);

- Improve access to [Green Shores](#) training, education and technical support to help homeowners, developers and local governments implement nature-based solutions to a high standard;
- Expand the implementation of B.C.'s expedited permit process for nature-based shoreline projects;

#### Help restore First Nations traditional (sea)food systems

- Support the development and implementation of community-level, climate-informed food sovereignty visions/plans focused on reclaiming ancestral seafoods and building food resiliency;

#### Advance collaborative stewardship

- Establish new, integrated participatory structures and processes that improve collaboration and co-ordination across governments;

#### Modernize policies and procedures

- Update, as required, provincial policies, best management practices and authorization requirements for tenures tied to activities in the coastal marine environment;

#### Update and refresh spatial data

- Identify a pilot area to develop and implement an integrated plan across the land-sea interface that brings together watershed and coastal marine planning.

Enshrining the B.C. Coastal Marine Strategy into law will improve coastal decision-making and co-management; ensure healthy and resilient marine ecosystems; and support sustainable and vibrant coastal communities and economies.

#### **Previous UBCM resolution related to the Coastal Marine Strategy:**

#### **2020 – Sponsored by Port Moody, Automatically referred to Executive NR45 Support for a British Columbia Coastal Protection Strategy**

WHEREAS unlike all the Atlantic provinces, BC has no comprehensive coastal and marine strategy, a BC Coastal Protection Strategy will clearly articulate provincial jurisdiction and enable the Province to better engage with other governments and communities;

AND WHEREAS no marine counterpart to the BC Land Act exists, and piecemeal legislation and policy govern numerous coastal marine activities;

AND WHEREAS a BC Coastal Protection Strategy will provide a vision and objectives to guide actions in the increasingly crowded coastal zone and highlight the importance the government places on these vital areas such as sensitive marine ecosystems, and vulnerable species, as well as their importance to protecting our coastal communities and economies:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT UBCM request the BC government to develop and enact a Coastal Protection Strategy and law to leverage and coordinate the work of provincial ministries, First Nations, local communities, and stakeholder groups to preserve coastal and ocean health, halt coastal habitat loss, accelerate the completion of a UBCM 2020 Resolutions

Book 135 network of marine protected areas to benefit fisheries, biodiversity and the economy, set marine environmental quality objectives from upland activities, and help communities adopt ecosystem-based approaches to manage risks from flooding due to extreme weather events, sea level rise, climate change, and ocean acidification.