



## CORPORATE REPORT

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee

Date: 2018-03-13

From: Paul Gipps, CAO and

Barclay Pitkethly, Director of Regional Programs

File No: 3920-20-1454

**Subject: Transfer of Metro Vancouver Regional Parks within the City of Abbotsford**

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### INTENT

This report is intended to advise the Regional and Corporate Services Committee of information pertaining to Metro Vancouver's transfer of Regional Parks located within the City of Abbotsford. Staff is not looking for a recommendation and has forwarded this information should members want more clarification to discuss the item further.

### STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Support Environmental Stewardship

Provide Responsive & Effective Public Services

### PRIORITIES

Priority #5 Outdoor Recreation

### BACKGROUND

The FVRD, City of Abbotsford and Metro Vancouver have been working collectively to coordinate the transfer of a portion of Metro Vancouver Parks to the Fraser Valley Regional District as a Sub Regional Service. This affects four regional parks: Sumas Mountain Inter-Regional Park west flank, Matsqui Trail Regional Park, Glen Valley Regional Park, and the portion of Aldergrove Regional Park located within the boundary of the City of Abbotsford (please see attached map).

What was thought as a relatively easy process with the Province to transfer these entities and receive statutory approval has turned into a significantly daunting task. While we cannot count on the Province to support an OIC that would streamline the process for all three local governments, all three have found a way to achieve a positive outcome while meeting the deadlines to initiate operations in 2018.

Essentially, through a complicated process of property transfers and operating agreements Sumas Mountain, Matsqui Trail, Glen Valley and the eastern portion of Aldergrove Park (eastern portion Aldergrove Park for a period of up to a couple of years while an OIC can be put in place) will form part of the Sub Regional Park Service with the FVRD. The taxation responsibility will be the FVRD's authority and we will have an agreement with Metro to repay their costs for the first few months of 2018 until the FVRD and Abbotsford assume operational control sometime in April. The FVRD has been advised the statutory approval of a bylaw will be forwarded shortly.

## **DISCUSSION**

There are many factors leading up to the effective date, tentatively scheduled late April 2018, namely, transfer of land to the City of Abbotsford, developing of a long term lease agreement between the FVRD and Abbotsford, developing service contracts, and developing an operational transfer plan. Additional considerations include developing a proposed budget including start-up costs, first year operational costs, and long term planning costs. The following offers the Committee an update on work completed to date and potential impacts of the transfer from a budgeting and personnel perspective.

### **Land Transfer**

There are three different land tenures comprising the regional parks within the City of Abbotsford. Many lands are crown leases, others are wholly owned by Metro Vancouver or the City of Abbotsford, and some are jointly owned by both the City of Abbotsford and Metro Vancouver.

Of the lands leased by the crown, the FVRD is the primary lease holder and sub-leased to Metro Vancouver who operates and maintains the park. Where this is the case, the cancelation of the sub-lease is a rather easy exercise.

Where lands are fee simple in nature, whether owned by Metro Vancouver or jointly owned with the City of Abbotsford, those lands will be wholly transferred to the City of Abbotsford.

### **Lease Agreement**

After the lands issues have been settled, the FVRD and the City of Abbotsford will enter into an agreement where the FVRD is the leaseholder of the lands such that the FVRD becomes the taxation authority.

### **Service Contract**

Working closely with City of Abbotsford staff on how best to operate and maintain these assets in way to best serve the public, from both an operational and financial basis, it is determined the FVRD will assume operations and maintenance of Sumas Mountain – west flank to consolidate that into one 'regional' park, while the City of Abbotsford will assume operations of Matsqui Trail and Glen Valley regional parks. Metro Vancouver will continue to operate and maintain Aldergrove Regional Park.

## **Operational Transfer**

Operationally, challenges for both the FVRD and the City of Abbotsford include staffing, equipment, signage updates, bylaw updates, on-site inspections, neighbour liaison, data transfer, among others.

All three parks departments have been working closely, on the ground, to ensure the transfer of the parks operations and maintenance is as seamless as possible to the general public.

## **Budget**

From a budget perspective, Abbotsford residents should see no change to their current tax requisition in the first year. After a needs assessment is complete in year 2018, any capital improvements or management planning work will be brought forward to the Board (Abbotsford and Area G only) to determine budgetary changes or extraordinary costs.

The FVRD and the City of Abbotsford have been working diligently to determine the most cost effective delivery model to provide value to the taxpayer and to work on each other's areas of strength.

## **COSTS**

From the FVRD's perspective, there are start-up costs to alleviate any burden on existing parks staff which is already lean and efficient for the inventory currently maintained in the regional and electoral area parks function. In this light, new staff will be hired, support equipment such as office furniture, computers and a vehicle will need to be sourced as well as new signage developed and purchased to reflect the transfer and contact information for the public. Additional start-up costs include background support to ensure land survey data is transferred and input into the FVRD's GIS system and mapping and assessing species at risk and sensitive habitat.

Overall start-up costs is expected to be approximately \$200,000.

## **CONCLUSION**

Overall, between the City of Abbotsford, the FVRD and Metro Vancouver, work has been ongoing and productive. Furthermore, the partnership developed between the City of Abbotsford and the FVRD parks departments is resulting in a cooperative approach to tackling this transfer. Weekly meetings are ongoing to ensure the transition is seamless and no issues fall between the cracks.

The intent is to take 2018 as a learning year to determine highest needs within the three park areas. Further discussion will occur at the Sub Regional Board level to determine priorities and consider any budget impacts.