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REPORT TO ELECTORAL AREAS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2026

SUBJECT: **Bylaw No. 4677, “Capital Regional District Fire Services Operational, Fire Prevention and Administrative Bylaw No. 1, 2026”**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To introduce a new Fire Services Operational, Fire Prevention and Administrative Bylaw (Appendix A) for adoption. The Capital Regional District (CRD) requires a comprehensive bylaw to govern fire service operations, administrative processes and fire-prevention responsibilities across Commission, Society and contracted Service Departments.

BACKGROUND

The CRD oversees multiple fire departments operating under different governance models (Commission, Society and Service Agreements). Since 2015, operational and training standards, WorkSafeBC regulations and public accountability expectations have evolved considerably. The *Fire Safety Act (FSA)* which was brought into force on August 1, 2024, introduced new requirements for fire inspections, investigations and training standards.

Bylaw No. 4677 confirms the CRD as the authority having jurisdiction for CRD fire inspections and investigations throughout the electoral areas. It consolidates and modernizes CRD fire service governance, clarifies authorities and establishes consistent expectations across all CRD fire departments.

The new bylaw establishes operational powers for Fire Chiefs and members, sets out how fire inspections and investigations are designated and conducted, provides mechanisms for cost recovery for certain services, and applies in whole to all CRD operated fire departments and, in part, to the three Improvement District fire service areas.

Governance and Accountability

Bylaw No. 4677 establishes clear roles for the Manager, Fire Services, Fire Chiefs and Commissions, and introduces consistent qualification and appointment processes for Fire Chiefs and non-volunteer positions.

Manager, Fire Services

This position is a central leadership role responsible for:

- oversight of training programs to ensure alignment with recognized training standards
- maintaining regional operational guidelines
- overseeing WorkSafeBC compliance
- conducting or coordinating fire inspections and investigations
- advising CRD leadership and the public on fire-related matters

The Manager, Fire Services may exercise Fire Chief powers when required and is designated as a Fire Inspector and Fire Investigator (subject to qualifications).

Fire Chiefs

Fire Chiefs manage day-to-day operations, budgets, training and enforcement of guidelines. Fire Chiefs are appointed by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) who may appoint or remove officers and members consistent with CRD Human Resources policies.

Service Levels and Authorized Services

The CRD Board sets service levels and authorized services for Commission and Society Departments (see Schedule C). Departments may only provide services for which they are trained and equipped, and authorized to provide. Actual response levels must match the qualifications of responding members.

Operational Powers

Fire Chiefs and authorized members are granted defined powers to enter property, control incident scenes, order hazard mitigation and enforce fire-related bylaws. It provides authority to limit or terminate response when conditions exceed departmental capabilities.

Fire Chiefs and authorized members may:

- enter property to inspect for hazards
- order removal of dangerous debris
- control access, evacuate areas, and take necessary actions during incidents
- conduct pre-incident planning
- enforce fire-related bylaws and regulations
- they may also decline or terminate response activities if conditions exceed departmental capabilities.

Fire Inspections and Investigations

The draft bylaw establishes designation processes for Fire Inspectors and Fire Investigators. It aligns CRD practices with the *FSA* and enables cost recovery for inspections and investigations (see Schedule B).

Fire Prevention and Public Safety Measures

Bylaw No. 4677 outlines requirements for Fire Safety Plans, vacant building security and mobile food vendor fire-safety compliance. It provides authority for corrective action and cost recovery when owners fail to comply.

The bylaw includes requirements for:

- Fire Safety Inspections and Investigations (with cost recovery)
- Fire Safety Plans for buildings
- mobile food vendor fire-safety standards
- securing vacant or fire-damaged premises

The CRD may issue orders, take corrective action and recover costs when owners fail to comply.

Mutual Aid and Out-of-Area Response

Bylaw No. 4677 clarifies when departments may respond outside of their Fire Service Area (e.g., Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) tasking, BC Wildfire Service [BCWS], mutual aid agreements, CAO authorization) and allows Fire Chiefs to decline calls under defined circumstances.

Departments may respond outside of their Fire Service Area when:

- authorized by the Province (EMCR) or the BCWS
- a wildfire threatens their area
- mutual/automatic aid agreements apply
- directed by the CAO or Manager, Fire Services, or designate
- supporting another CRD department, upon request
- departments may refuse calls under defined conditions.

Enforcement and Penalties

Bylaw No. 4677 establishes offences for obstruction, unauthorized access to incident scenes, hydrant blockage and impersonation of firefighters, including a minimum fine of \$5,000 for violations prosecuted by way of long form offence, plus cost recovery, where applicable.

The bylaw specifically prohibits:

- obstructing firefighters
- damaging apparatus
- blocking access routes or hydrants
- unauthorized entry into incident zones
- falsely representing oneself as a firefighter

Violations may result in fines of at least \$5,000 and cost recovery for CRD actions.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Electoral Areas Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That Bylaw No. 4677, “Capital Regional District Fire Services Operational, Fire Prevention and Administrative Bylaw No. 1, 2026” be introduced and given first, second and third reading; and
2. That Bylaw No. 4677 be adopted.

Alternative 2

That this report be referred to staff for additional information based on Electoral Areas Committee direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

With the adoption of Bylaw No. 4677, it will be possible to recover costs associated with the delivery of inspection and investigation services with the intent of offsetting any annual requisition for a new *FSA* service.

- Cost-recovery mechanisms for inspections, investigations and certain incident responses may reduce financial burden on taxpayers.
- Some departments may require transitional support to meet updated training or administrative requirements.

Service Delivery Implications

The bylaw provides clarity and consistency across all CRD-supported fire departments and strengthens compliance with provincial legislation and WorkSafeBC requirements. The bylaw enhances accountability for training, record-keeping and operational readiness, and establishes clearer decision-making authority for appointments, training standards and operational guidelines.

The delivery of fire cause determination investigation services outside of established local fire services areas, and delivery of building fire safety inspection services throughout the electoral areas, are both new requirements. A new service has been established to enable delivery of these services on an as-and-when-needed basis throughout the electoral areas.

Upon request from a regional district, the Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) fire service advisors may conduct fire inspections and fire investigations for the regional district due to limited expertise, insufficient capacity and funding constraints.

The *FSA* does permit inspectors to take steps to inspect on receipt of a complaint or where “deemed advisable”. This is not a positive obligation to inspect. Should any fire service areas believe it advisable to conduct inspections, service levels will need to be set through discussion which may have cost implications.

Intergovernmental Implications

For purposes of the *FSA*, the delivery of inspection and investigation activities fall within the authority of the CRD throughout the three electoral areas, including the fire improvement districts of Salt Spring Island, Mayne Island and Piers Island. The bylaw reinforces CRD oversight while maintaining collaborative relationships with Commissions and Society and Improvement District operated fire departments.

CONCLUSION

The CRD Fire Services Operational Bylaw establishes a unified framework governing how fire departments within CRD electoral areas operate, are overseen and deliver fire protection, fire prevention and emergency response services. The bylaw clarifies roles, authorities, service levels and administrative processes to ensure safe, consistent and accountable fire services delivery across Commission, Society and contracted Service Departments.

RECOMMENDATION

The Electoral Areas Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That Bylaw No. 4677, “Capital Regional District Fire Services Operational, Fire Prevention and Administrative Bylaw No. 1, 2026” be introduced and given first, second and third reading; and
2. That Bylaw No. 4677 be adopted.

Submitted by:	Shawn Carby, C.D., BHSc., MAL, Senior Manager, Protective Services
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ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: Bylaw No. 4677, “Capital Regional District Fire Services Operational, Fire Prevention and Administrative Bylaw No. 1, 2026”