



## MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL BOARD CHAIR

Chair Clayton Brander was appointed by the Directors of the qathet Regional District to serve in the role of Chair. Chair Brander is the Director for Electoral Area C.



2024 will bring with it the culmination of the largest project that the qathet Regional District (qRD) has ever undertaken – the opening of the Resource Recovery Centre (RRC). From the 1970's the community used an incinerator located across the street from Willingdon Beach to dispose of waste until it was shut down by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoE) in 1994. From that time on all waste was shipped out of the community, an expensive and climate-harming exercise that continues today.

### But not for much longer...

In 2013 the province tasked the qRD with developing a closure plan for the former incinerator site. Even though the site was owned and operated by the City of Powell River and a substantial financial liability on their books, the qRD was responsible for solid waste management planning

and was given the task of coming up with a plan to remediate it. A consultant was hired and four options were presented, the obvious choice being the development of the Resource Recovery Centre. This choice included reusing as many materials on site as possible through various recycling recovery technologies, it met the MoE landfill closure criteria, it created an asset for the community, and it was the most favourable financially and provided the more environmentally responsible outcome. Like I said, the choice was obvious. In 2015 the qRD Board, with letters of support from the Tla'amin Nation and the City of Powell River, applied for grant funding to help pay for the remediation of the site. They were successful and were ultimately awarded \$6,000,000 from the Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF).

While this was going on, the qRD was investigating how to improve the region's Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP). Up until 2004, the old incinerator site was used as a waste transfer station, an integral part of any SWMP, but just like the old incinerator it was shut down by the MoE because of not meeting guidelines. Augusta Recyclers was contracted to provide waste transfer responsibilities for the qRD at that time but it was decided in 2017 that this task should transition back to a publicly-owned waste management system.

Given that the old incinerator site was already undergoing a facelift and waste transfer and recycling go hand-in-hand, it made sense to build a waste transfer station at the RRC site. The cost of a waste transfer station for municipal waste was

not covered in the initial \$6 million grant so the Board approved an application to the Strategic Priorities Fund, as well as borrowing to cover the costs should the grant application not be successful. To date, after three attempts, grant funding is yet to be attained.

The COVID years slowed everything down, but things are moving quickly now and we can look forward to the unveiling later this year. This has been a well-run project with the community and the environment as the top priorities. The RRC will allow us to remove a significant portion of the volume from our waste stream and provide an asset to our community. The area that once was grossly contaminated will now be home to a modern recycling depot, a reuse-store, walking and biking paths, additional parking for events at Willingdon Beach, a public gathering space, and educational opportunities for the community. Wildlife is even returning to the area.

The reduction in the volume of waste that is shipped out of the community will mean a proportional reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. This project is something the community can feel good about, not only does it restore a property for community benefit and use, it will also reduce waste and costs.

qathet: *Working Together*

A name gifted by the  
Tla'amin Nation Elders.

pronounced: **'KAW-thet'**

Did you know you can  
watch qRD Meetings  
live from our Meeting  
Portal?

To learn more, visit:  
[qathetrd.civicweb.net](http://qathetrd.civicweb.net)



# What is downloading and how does it impact us?

by Al Radke, Chief Administrative Officer

What are downloads? Commonly used synonyms used by higher levels of government include shifting, transferring, delegating, empowering and divestiture. Downloads can come in the form of mandates, increased regulatory or legislative duties, or the complete abdication of provincial responsibility of a service, which results in the Province unloading it onto local governments, like the qathet Regional District.

We began reviewing the impacts of provincial downloading in 2017. At the time, it bothered us how things had not optically changed but yet we were continually playing catch up. Work days and weeks were not long enough. What was altered, what was different? The answer was our workload had silently increased through downloading. We did not have a benchmark so staff listed what additional accountabilities they had acquired over the years. We identified 40 such tasks that we had been saddled with.

Since then, our organization regularly evaluates what new downloads have become a new responsibility and must be incorporated into our work plans. We also review how these new responsibilities will impact existing service delivery expectations. In 2023, 19 extra downloads were identified that had surfaced since 2017. In 2024, there are more coming down the pike. The most publicized has been the new provincial housing legislation in Bills 35, 44, and 46. But others have come through the Public Sector Accounting Board and through Emergency Management.

Unfortunately the trend of downloading does not seem to be reducing. The major problem with all of these downloads is that they seldom, if ever, come with long-term financial support from the Province. In order to perform them adequately, we must raise local taxation. This is sad when the Province has a greater propensity to collect revenues through numerous streams, and a larger target audience.

Local governments basically only have one revenue source; property taxes. Property taxes is a regressive tax that does not have much elasticity or sustainability. One thing is certain, whether you are Burnaby or Slocan, local governments have no choice when it comes to downloading, and therefore must accomplish these added responsibilities. In a small organization like ours, the funding and the human resources are not always there. So, the Province relinquishes itself of a responsibility, burdens the local government with it, and with the freed up money and human resources, they reallocate it to some other provincial initiative while the local taxpayers get strapped with the new costs.

I extend my gratitude and appreciation to our staff who buckle down and get things done as the province continues to impose more and more on our backs. Our team is dedicated to finding creative ways to increase service efficiencies and reduce costs while maintaining sustainable service delivery.

## PLANNING SERVICES UPDATE

by Laura Roddan, Manager of Planning Services

### Provincial Homes for People Legislation

Since November 2023, the Province has made significant legislative changes to the *Local Government Act* intended to encourage the development of more homes for people in BC. The new legislation and associated regulations has resulted in a significant download where local governments are required to plan for 20-year housing needs in their official community plans and zoning bylaws, and set timelines for meeting certain mandatory requirements.

In response, staff have completed a review of qRD Official Community Plans and zoning bylaws and confirmed compliance with the new provincial requirements for supporting a secondary suite and/or an accessory dwelling unit in residential zones, subject to some exemptions ie. lot size and proof of water and sewer servicing.

The qRD will need to meet other requirements such as completing an updated housing needs report that assesses housing need over the next 20 years and amending the development procedures bylaw and public hearing policy to comply with new requirements related to public hearings.

### Green Shores Training Continues

The qRD will be hosting a Green Shores Level 1 training south of town on August 15, 2024 from 9am-4pm. More details coming soon.

### Savary Island Official Community Plan (OCP) Review and Update

The Savary Island OCP review and update will provide a refreshed vision to reflect the current priorities and concerns of Savary Island property owners and will explore regulatory options that could support OCP implementation. Background research includes a Slope Hazard Study completed in 2023, and a Groundwater Study to be completed in 2024.

## EMERGENCY SERVICES UPDATE

by Ryan Thoms, Manager of Emergency Services

### Volunteers Trained to Complete FireSmart Assessments

The first ever Wildfire Mitigation Specialist course was held here with 12 community volunteers trained to complete FireSmart Home Assessments during a 4 day FireSmart Home Partners Program course. This new training will provide even better FireSmart guidance for residents across our region.

The qRD, through the Regional FireSmart Program, has been offering free FireSmart Property home assessments since 2017. Free professional home assessment with property-specific FireSmart recommendations are available to all residents. After completing FireSmart assessment recommendations, homeowners may be eligible for a rebate of up to \$1000 and may also receive a mitigation certificate from the FireSmartBC Home Partners program. To learn more, please visit: [qathet.ca/regional-firesmart-program](https://qathet.ca/regional-firesmart-program)

### Extreme Temperature Risk Assessment

Earlier this year, the qRD Regional Emergency Preparedness Service applied for provincial funding to assess our region's extreme heat risk and was awarded \$90,000 grant for this project. This is a collaborative project with Tla'amin Nation, the City of Powell River and all three Health Authorities (VCH, FNHA, and Island Health) to assess the risks of extreme summer heat events and propose mitigation and response options.

### Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan (CWRP)

The CWRP will update our 2015 community wildfire plan and will guide our regional wildfire preparedness planning for the next 10 year. This project is a collaboration with the Tla'amin Nation, and the City of Powell River. This Plan will, for the first time, assess wildfire risk on Savary, Texada, and Lasqueti islands.



# The qathet Regional District is becoming more accessible

by Michelle Jones, Manager of Administrative Services

Effective September 1, 2022, over 750 public sector organizations were required through the implementation of the *Accessible British Columbia Act*. The Act required public organizations, including the qathet Regional District to establish an accessibility committee, an accessibility plan, and a mechanism to receive public feedback regarding organizational accessibility improvements.

The qathet Regional District, in partnership with the City of Powell River, and Powell River Public Library worked together to develop a three-year Accessibility Plan that will help each organization identify, remove and prevent barriers for people in or interacting with our organizations. The qathet Regional District also established the Joint Accessibility & Inclusion Advisory Committee (JAIAC) to identify barriers, and make recommendations on how to remove and prevent barriers.

Since the inception of the JAIAC, it has been observed that our current boardroom is inaccessible for people with mobility impairments. It lacks a fully accessible washroom, and enough space to move around with a wheelchair or other mobility

aid. This makes it difficult for people of all ages, and abilities to participate in public meetings.

The current boardroom is also too small to accommodate larger audiences, limiting the amount of public participation in house and requires us to rent out space in a larger venue.

It was also identified that members of the public also face barriers accessing our services when staff work out of three different offices.

To reduce these barriers to access these services, the qathet Regional District purchased Unit #201 in the Marine Avenue building. These offices were previously occupied by Inclusion Powell River.

The additional office space means all our staff and services can be accessed in one central location and adds an additional meeting room, and a larger boardroom. After the qRD completes minor updates and an office consolidation, the new boardroom will open to the public.

Staff are currently researching alternate usage options for Units 103 and 105 and will bring these considerations to the

several times over the past few years to plant trees at the cemeteries. The BC Hydro ReGreening Grant has funded the purchase of trees for the cemetery beautification project. This has resulted in the planting of approximately 100 flowering trees at both cemeteries. Another 25 trees will be planted at Woodland Cemetery this spring.

## Parks and Recreation

The Regional Parks service includes ten Regional Parks, two of which operate as campgrounds, twenty-two Beach Access trails, seven community parks. All continue to be popular attractions to both locals and visitors. Shelter Point Campground is open all year, and Haywire Bay Campground opened on May 2, for the season. Both campgrounds have seen increased usage over the past few years.

## Utilities

The Myrtle Pond Water System will have an upgrade this spring/summer. The re-connection of the Centennial Drive side to the Butler Road side will improve

Regional Board for review later this year. The qathet Regional District will continue to identify barriers to service accessibility and will evaluate ways to mitigate these barriers.



## We Want to Hear From You!

To learn more about our commitment to improving accessibility in our organization, please visit:

[qathet.ca/accessibility](https://qathet.ca/accessibility)

Learn how to report a service barrier by visiting:

[qathet.ca/accessibility-feedback](https://qathet.ca/accessibility-feedback)

## OPERATIONAL SERVICES UPDATE

Patrick Devereaux, Manager of Operational Services

### Cemeteries

The Cemetery Service includes two cemeteries, the Powell River Regional Cemetery in Cranberry, and Woodland Cemetery on Texada Island. The Regional District has partnered with BC Hydro



water quality for the residents. The four hundred (400) meters of new pipe will run from the north end of Centennial Drive to just North of the mailboxes on Butler Road, running over Myrtle Creek on the side of the pedestrian bridge. This replaces a damaged line that was under the creek. This work is mainly funded through Community Works funding from the federal government.

### Marine Services

The Lasqueti barge ramp will get a service this summer, and the retaining wall will be reinstalled. The Savary Island Wharf had an assessment completed on the long term capacity and function, and the Van Anda dock ramp was repaired after some storm damage in April.

### Transportation

BC Transit and the Province have postponed the expected expansion to the Texada Island bus run due to unprecedented requests from around the province. We are hoping for route approval in 2025.

## Resource Recovery Centre Set to Open in 2024

Arnold Schwabe, Manager of Asset Management and Strategic Initiatives

The development of the Resource Recovery Centre on Marine Avenue is nearing completion, and will be open in the summer of 2024.

In 2016, the project was awarded a \$6 million grant to remediate the old incinerator and dump site and another \$1 million grant was secured in 2023 to incorporate elements for waste diversion and promoting a circular economy.

In 2021, the project team completed phases 1 and 2 which included site cleanup, sorting, and processing of waste materials stockpiled at the site and the encapsulation of the incinerator ash landfill.

In September 2021, the qRD won the Excellence in Asset Management award from the Union of BC Municipalities, recognizing its innovative stormwater runoff design at the Resource Recovery Centre.

The stormwater runoff design uses the surrounding forest to collect and dissipate the runoff from the landfill closure mound, instead of building artificial collection bays. Choosing this natural asset solution instead of the proposed engineered solution saved taxpayers about \$700,000 and one half

hectare (over 1 acre) of second growth forest.

Years of waste were removed from other riparian areas on the site and the vegetation and water features were exposed and remediated. They now contribute to the natural beauty of the City of Powell River parks and trails system.

In 2022 through to 2024, the project team worked on the completion of phase 3 – final site design and facility and building construction.

Key elements at the new facility will include:

- A new recycling depot that provides recycling programs and offers opportunities for local waste diversion.
- A small construction diversion outlet, fix-it and upcycling workshop space, a free store, and staff offices.
- A compost and waste education centre.
- A waste transfer station offering opportunities for diversion from landfill through the source separation of waste.

A drop off area for organic yard waste.

To keep up-to-date on this project, visit

[qathet.ca/resource-recovery-centre](http://qathet.ca/resource-recovery-centre)

## QRD TO RECEIVE WORKSAFEBC COR CERTIFICATION

Melanie Taylor, Occupational Health and Safety Coordinator

In April 2024, the qRD successfully underwent its first WorkSafeBC Certificate of Recognition (COR) Certification Audit and received COR certification! COR Certification is a voluntary WorkSafeBC certification program intended to motivate employers to take a proactive role in occupational health and safety. The COR program recognizes and rewards employers who go beyond the current legal requirements and industry best practices, and implement an effective occupational health and safety management system.

In order to achieve COR certification, the organization must pass a third party certification audit to standards set out by WorkSafeBC. The qRD attempted this certification audit in April 2024. The auditor reviewed qRD safety documentation and records, visited a number of worksites and interviewed staff from departments across the organization. It truly was a team effort!

Achieving COR certification is a big step for this organization and represents a big shift that has occurred in our safety culture over the last few years.

Once COR is achieved, the certification needs to be maintained. This means a cycle of continuous improvement that involves a three year audit rotation. The qRD will need to do internal audits every two years, then every third year, an external auditor will return to complete another audit like this one.

Maintaining COR Certification ensures a safe and healthy workplace, provides the qRD with a competitive advantage for hiring and retaining top talent and can result in cost savings with discounts on WorkSafeBC premiums, as our WorkSafeBC experience rating improves.

## ASSET RETIREMENT OBLIGATIONS

by Celinde Lillies, Assistant Manager of Financial Services

In August 2018, the Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) introduced PS 3280 Asset Retirement Obligations (ARO) to set a standard for public sector entities on handling the retirement of tangible capital assets. Asset retirement obligations happen when there's a legal duty to retire assets. This includes taking them out of service through sales, abandonment, or disposal, with costs like decommissioning and dismantling. Laws, rules, and contracts may require actions for retiring assets.

The qRD is required to report these obligations in financial statements starting 2023 year-end. To figure out the value, staff analyzed construction and acquisition dates, hazardous materials, disposal costs, and asset lifespans.

As of January 1, 2023, the estimated retirement obligation for all qRD assets is around \$1.519 million, with \$212,281 for the Lasqueti Island Landfill and \$1,306,734 for other assets meeting PS 3280 criteria. These costs will be spread out over the assets' useful lives.

## Contact Us

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## Hours of Operation

8:30am – 4:30pm

Closed 12:00pm – 1:00pm

Monday to Friday