

CVRD staff to write report on child-care options for directors ^[1]

Some directors feel lack of child care limits young people from running for office

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EXCERPTS

The Cowichan Valley Regional District is going to consider providing directors in its nine electoral areas with a child-care benefit or stipend to support their attendance at district meetings.

The CVRD's committee of the whole decided in a close vote at its meeting on April 13 to direct staff to prepare a report on the issue after a lengthy discussion.

Alison Nicholson, CVRD director for Cowichan Station/Sahtlam/Glenora, made the motion to have a report written mainly in an effort to encourage young people with small children to run in the municipal elections in October.

She said she wants to see barriers removed that are a disincentive for younger people to run for office.

"Child care expenses are significant," Nicholson said.

"We have meetings that vary [in the times they are held] and it's difficult for parents to arrange child care."

Shawnigan Lake director Sierra Acton said she paid a significant amount of money for child care when she first entered local politics.

She said that expecting parents who are local politicians to cover those costs sends a huge message to the community that the CVRD is not supporting families and having different representation around the table.

Tim McGonigle, director for Lake Cowichan, said he understands the lack of diversity in elected boards of directors, and the noble intent of the motion to have staff prepare a report on the issue.

"But at the end of the day, these benefits will be downloaded to taxpayers which, arguably, are already overburdened with taxation," he said.

"I believe that the subject of directors' remuneration is where this issue should be broached. We need a fuller and wholesome discussion around remuneration."

North Cowichan Mayor Al Siebring also said he couldn't support the motion.

"What other employer in the Cowichan Valley provides child-care benefits or stipends to support someone's attendance at work?" he asked.

"Why are we entitled to something special? That's how this is being perceived in some sectors of the community. But we do need to address the issue of compensation, particularly for the electoral area directors, to see more young people participate at the table."

City of Duncan Mayor Michelle Staples said she finds it a huge loss at local government tables not to have the participation of young people due to the lack of child-care benefits.

"One thing I appreciate about my council is the diversity of age and gender, with council members in their twenties to the seventies," she said.

"We have great discussions from a variety of perspectives, and I think we should try to alleviate some of these barriers."

North Cowichan director Debra Toporowski said she would like to have a staff report on the issue in order to be provided with some options to consider.

"I think it's a move in the right direction to consider the options," she said.

Region: British Columbia ^[3]

Tags: child care benefits ^[4]

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