

Electoral Area D Re-election FAQ: Why John Rice?

This FAQ is designed to provide voters in Electoral Area D (Oyster Bay-Buttle Lake) with clear, record-backed information on **John Rice's** performance during the 2023–2026 term and his vision for the future.

1. What is John Rice's proven track record on property taxes?

John Rice has focused on **principled fiscal stewardship**, delivering essential infrastructure by leveraging millions in non-tax revenue rather than increasing the burden on local homeowners .

- **The \$2.8 Million Win:** He successfully secured the largest-ever provincial grant for Area D to fund universal water metering, ensuring the project added **zero cost** to local property taxes.
- **Recreation Tax Relief:** He led the Board to reduce the 2025 recreation tax for Strathcona Gardens to just **\$80 per 100K of property assessment**, proving that massive facility expansions can be managed affordably through disciplined management.
- **Infrastructure at Zero Local Cost:** By securing external grants, he delivered the region's first **six transit shelters** and a **\$150,000 transit surplus** for future improvements at Shelter Bay and Engles Road.

2. What has John Rice actually built for our community?

In his first term, John Rice transitioned Area D from years of "administrative limbo" to **live project delivery**.

- **Universal Water Meters:** Completed the \$2.8 million modernization project on time and within budget to improve leak detection and ensure billing fairness.
- **Wildfire Resiliency:** Established a permanent, locally controlled **wood debris removal service** (Bylaw No. 581) to replace unstable provincial grants, allowing residents to FireSmart their homes for just \$13 a year.
- **Flood Mitigation:** Awarded the **Area D Stormwater Feasibility Study** to McElhanney Engineering, resolving long-standing "regulatory gaps" that left residents vulnerable to flooding.

3. Why is the Strathcona Gardens referendum a "hinge moment"?

John Rice is the primary leader fighting for **Regional Equity** to correct a decades old misalignment.

- **Correcting the Outlier:** Currently, only Area D and Campbell River carry 100% of the costs for a regional hub. Peer districts like Nanaimo and Comox Valley use broader, pooled tax bases.
- **Data-Backed Fairness:** The 2026 Recreation Study proved that **Quadra Island residents account for 66%** of all unique non-paying regional accounts at the facilit.
- **The Solution:** On October 17, voters will decide on a "pooled referendum" to expand the tax base. This will **lower the average cost per household** for Area D families by redistributing the debt-servicing burden for the \$122M expansion.

4. How has he made local government more transparent?

Rice fulfilled his 2022 promises by modernizing governance to ensure every resident has a voice.

- **The First Modern OCP:** Finalized the **2023 Official Community Plan (OCP)**, replacing a 27-year-old framework with modern policies on housing and climate resilience.
- **Independent Oversight:** Established a merit-based **Advisory Planning Commission (APC)**. To ensure independence, the Director is legally restricted from attending meetings, allowing residents to control the conversation on local development.
- **Accountable Communication:** Initiated monthly online progress reports, bi-annual town halls, and moved all official business to a professional **srd.ca** email account.

5. What is the choice between "Forward or Backward"?

John Rice contrasts his **corporate stability** with the "targeted administrative friction" of the opposing "rural block".

- **Against "Billing Politics":** Rice was the consistent "No" vote against expanding meeting stipends for directors (Bylaw 549), arguing that funds should go to pipes and pavement, not political income.
- **Protecting Vital Assets:** While opponents offered "silent opposition" to an emergency grant for the **Oyster River Salmon Hatchery**, John Rice stayed at the table to secure the funds.
- **Ending "Hostage-Taking":** Rice successfully navigated around attempts by other rural directors to block routine business—like Area D water meter refunds—to use as political leverage in unrelated regional disputes.

6. What are his priorities for the 2026–2030 term?

- **Fire & Safety Security:** Finalize the audit of the 45-year-old Campbell River fire and renew the contract with modern language and terms. Continue planning for the future that would see Area D have its own firehall and service which would better serve the community and address the fact that there homes in Area D that cannot get fire insurance due to distance of current firehalls.
- **Water & Sewage Solutions:** Restarting provincial talks to finally deliver on long-promised sewage connections and completing storm-water designs to end chronic flooding.
- **Broadband & Power:** Securing the "last mile" of fibre internet and continuing the fight to hold BC Hydro accountable for remote electrification costs at Upper Campbell Lake 52-54.

On October 17, vote to keep Area D moving FORWARD.

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