

Strathcona Gardens Referendum: Voter FAQ

This referendum, held concurrently with the local government election on **Saturday, 17 October 2026**, represents a "hinge moment" for Electoral Area D. It is our community's best opportunity in decades to establish fiscal fairness and secure the future of our regional recreation hub.

1. What exactly are we voting on?

Voters are being asked to approve a new funding model for the **Strathcona Gardens Recreation Complex**. The core of the proposal is to expand the service area to include **Quadra Island (part of Electoral Area C)** as a financial participant. This change ensures that those who regularly benefit from the facility contribute to its capital and operating costs.

2. Why is this considered a "hinge moment" for Area D?

For several decades, Area D has carried a disproportionate financial burden. Since the Regional District was created, a narrow tax base—consisting only of the City of Campbell River and Area D—has funded **100% of the costs** for a facility that functions as a regional hub. As we move forward with the **REC-REATE expansion**, we must decide whether to fix this misalignment now or continue subsidizing other communities for the next how many decades. **Equally important is governance structure**. As the gardens is a two participant service Area D only brings one vote to the table vs the four from Campbell River. This has long been a source of contention for Area D residents. Finally after decades this referendum will address both issues.

3. What does "Fiscal Equity" mean for my property taxes?

This referendum is about **direct taxpayer relief** for Area D families. By broadening the tax base to include other regular users, we redistribute the debt-servicing burden of the REC-REATE project more equitably. Under the Board-approved "Option C" model, Area D's tax requisition rate would be **lowered to 90%**, providing a fair deal for our residents while Quadra Island contributes at an 80% rate.

4. Is there proof that other communities use the facility without paying?

Yes. The **March 2026 Sub-Regional Recreation Study** provided irrefutable data. The study found that residents of Quadra Island account for **66% of all unique non-contributing regional accounts** at Strathcona Gardens. Quadra youth and seniors cross daily for sports, swimming, and medical rehab, yet their properties currently contribute **zero dollars** toward the facility's debt or maintenance.

5. Is our current funding model really a "Regional Outlier"?

Absolutely. The Strathcona Regional District is a complete anomaly on Vancouver Island. Peer regional districts—including **Nanaimo, Comox Valley, and Cowichan Valley**—all utilize broader, pooled tax bases to fund their major aquatic and ice hubs. Expanding our service base simply brings us into alignment with these **standardized provincial practices**.

6. Why not have a separate vote just for Quadra Island?

The Board rejected a localized "veto" strategy because it would allow a small population to block a critical project that serves over 40,000 regional residents. Instead, we are holding a **pooled referendum** across Campbell River, Area D, and Quadra Island. This ensures the decision is made by the **democratic majority of all users and taxpayers** who rely on the facility.

7. What happens if the referendum fails?

If the referendum fails, the status quo remains. Area D and Campbell River residents will continue to shoulder **100% of the \$122 million expansion debt**, while the "regional outlier" model continues to force Area D families to subsidize thousands of annual visits from non-contributing jurisdictions.

On 17 October, cast your ballot to move Area D FORWARD toward regional equity and fiscal stability.

Let's Build Tomorrow Together.