

These motions (SRD 952/23 through 954/23) regarding **Economic Development Services** represent a key moment of sub-regional cooperation on tourism and regional branding in 2023. By providing financial support to the City of Campbell River's marketing initiatives and requesting a historical analysis of tourism funding, the Board sought to stabilize regional economic growth before the onset of the political friction that has defined the 2026 election cycle.

The Destination BC Co-op Marketing Budget

Motion **SRD 953/23**, moved by Mayor Kermit Dahl and seconded by Director John Rice, provided **\$5,000** to the City of Campbell River in support of a **Co-op Marketing Application** Query. This grant directly supports the **Destination BC (DBC) Co-op Marketing budget** for the Campbell River and Strathcona Region, which for the 2024/25 period is valued at **\$129,000** 1.

- **Financial Structure:** The campaign is funded by **\$62,500** in matching funds from Destination BC and **\$66,500** in applicant contributions 1.
- **Regional Partners:** The applicant's share is pooled from five regional partners:
- **Campbell River (Lead):** \$63,500 2.
- **Village of Gold River:** \$1,000 2.
- **Village of Tahsis:** \$1,000 2.
- **Village of Sayward:** \$500 2.
- **Village of Zeballos:** \$500 2.
- **Marketing Tactics:** The pooled funds are used for a variety of promotional strategies, including **digital advertising (\$39,000)**, **asset development (\$35,000)**, and **print/digital collateral (\$34,000)** 1.

Economic Development and the Area D OCP

The presentation by Lea Knutsen and the subsequent motions align with the modernized policy goals established in the new **Electoral Area D Official Community Plan (Bylaw No. 276)**.

- **Policy Integration:** Unlike previous plans, the 2023 OCP features entirely new sections specifically addressing **economic development** and socio-economic resilience 3.
- **Rural Diversification:** This regional marketing support complements provincial programs like the **Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program (REDIP)**, which provides grants to build community resilience and develop economic infrastructure in rural areas 4.

The Move Toward Data-Backed Governance

Motion **SRD 954/23**, which requested a report on **historical participation and financial support for tourism**, reflects the Board's 2023 focus on transparency and "informational equity" Query, 28. This initiative was intended to ensure that future funding decisions were based on objective past performance rather than political preference.

Strategic Significance for the 2026 Election

In the context of the **October 17, 2026 election**, these motions provide a documented baseline for the **"Forward or Backward"** campaign narrative:

- **Cooperative Leadership:** The 2023 record shows **Director Mark Vonesch** seconding the receipt of the presentation (**SRD 952/23**) and **Director Rice** partnering with **Mayor Dahl** to fund the marketing grant (**SRD 953/23**) Query.
- **Contrast to Later Friction:** This "Phase 1" cooperation stands in sharp contrast to the later "**targeted administrative friction**" and the **hot mic incident**, where the same directors were caught strategizing to break quorum 5, 6.
- **Campaign Accountability:** Director Rice uses this record to support his "**Building Tomorrow Together**" platform, highlighting his ability to work with municipal partners to secure regional economic benefits. Meanwhile, challengers may use the request for a "historical report" to ask why the Board has not yet fully optimized tourism spending for the Discovery Islands and other rural areas.

In summary, the economic development motions of 2023 illustrate a functional period of regional cooperation that secured over **\$120,000 in collaborative marketing power** for the Strathcona region, a stability that has since been challenged by the quorum-busting tactics and "hostage-taking" policies of the current board term.