



FAIRFIELD GONZALES  
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION  
the place to connect

City of Victoria Mayor and Council  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

April 24, 2024

Dear Mayor and Council,

**Re: Community and seniors centre operating agreements**

We are writing regarding operating agreements for Victoria's community and seniors centres. The City of Victoria has a unique, decentralized model of service delivery for its residents. Ten community and senior's centres provide a wide range of supports in Victoria's neighbourhoods; recreation, childcare, social connections, community gardens, youth programs, and so much more. The City, the ten centres, and Victoria residents have valued and benefited from this model for many decades.

Most community and seniors centres in Victoria, including the FGCA, operate primarily out of a City-owned building and do not have a current operating agreement in place. In 2017, City facilities staff initiated a process to standardize the agreements across community and senior's centres. We made significant progress with the staff team, but that progress has been stalled for quite some time.

There are numerous reasons to move this work forward. There are liability and continuity issues for both the centres and for the City. Any complex issue that arises with the centres could lead to a costly dispute and disruption of essential services for our neighbourhoods. Additionally, we are unable to access infrastructure funding that would facilitate improvements to these City-owned buildings, as most funders require a formal agreement lasting at least five years. FGCA has lost out and will continue to lose out on funding for new childcare spaces because we can't provide this important documentation. During a childcare shortage this is simply unacceptable.

The community and senior's centres jointly submitted a few outstanding concerns with the draft agreement in 2018. We are seeking to resolve those items and move forward to complete our operating agreements. We have been waiting for several years for these agreements to come to Council so that staff could receive direction on the resolution of outstanding issues. We understand that a motion has recently been passed



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that enables staff to execute operating agreements without Council's involvement, and we hope that this will facilitate the completion of this lengthy process.

However, we want to ensure that Council is aware of the nature of our outstanding concerns. We believe these are more than reasonable and that our proposed solutions make sense for all parties.

**1. No cause termination:**

**Issue:** The proposed agreement includes a 90-day no-cause termination clause. All centres have significant financial and service delivery obligations related to our facilities. We would like to see a longer notice period for no cause termination so that we can adequately meet these obligations and minimize the disruption of services such as childcare for our community. **Proposed resolution:** Update the notice period to 12 to 18 months.

**2. City emergency use of facilities:** All of our centres may be used by the City in the event of an emergency.

**Issue 1:** There is no reference in the agreement to potential disruption of essential services during such use. **Proposed resolution:** We request that language is added that the City will make efforts to not disrupt essential services such as childcare in the event of City emergency use of facilities. We recognize sometimes this will need to happen, but would like to see other spaces prioritized.

**Issue 2:** In the proposed agreement the City will seek reimbursement for costs incurred from EMBC prior to reimbursing community centres. This means the City has no incentive to have costs reimbursed and centres have recourse for seeking reimbursement themselves. **Proposed resolution:** That the agreement states that City will first reimburse centres for their costs (such as staff time), and then seek reimbursement from EMBC.

**In both cases this is what happens in practice and we would like to see actual practice reflected in the agreement.**

**3. Custodial service:**

**Issue:** The proposed agreement does not reference the existing grants for custodial service that most centres receive. We are concerned about jeopardizing this important support. **Proposed resolution:** That the operating agreements reference existing custodial grants.

**4. Insurance:**

**Issue:** We are not able to comply with the proposed deductible amount for some types of insurance because these deductibles are not available at any price due to increasing risk in the insurance industry. **Proposed resolution:** that the operating agreements account for the current reality of the insurance market and provide for more flexibility in deductible amounts.



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## 5. **Destruction of facility**

**Issue:** In the proposed agreement only 180 days are allowed for reconstruction/repair of a destroyed facility prior to a termination option being available to the City. **Proposed resolution:** We request either 12 months for reconstruction/repair or 180 days to begin a process or put out an RFP to reflect the reality of construction and insurance timelines.

We appreciate all the time, effort, and goodwill that staff have put into the process to come to an agreement. We are asking council to accept our proposed resolutions to outstanding issues and to set a timeline for executing these agreements. This will support a high level of service and stability for the thousands of Victoria residents who use our centres and will send a strong message to residents that the City values their well-being.

The FGCA and all the centres greatly value our partnership with the City and the incredible support we receive to make a difference in our neighbourhoods. Prioritizing operating agreements will ensure this valuable partnership continues for a long time to come.

Sincerely,

Quinn Fletcher, Acting President, on behalf of the Board of Directors  
Fairfield Gonzales Community Association

cc. Burnside Gorge Community Association  
Quadra Village Community Association  
Victoria West Community Association  
Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group  
James Bay Community School Centre  
James Bay New Horizons  
Cook Street Activity Centre  
Oaklands Community Association



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