

CSRD Area F Local Community Commission (LCC) Report Summary and Critique

By Jay Simpson – August 2025

Introduction

The August 2025 Committee of the Whole report on Local Community Commissions (LCCs) offers a helpful overview of the legislative framework and implications of establishing an LCC in Electoral Area F. I appreciate the work of CSRD staff in preparing the report and recognize the effort to provide a balanced view of the available governance models.

That said, the report's conclusions lean toward maintaining the status quo, emphasizing the potential drawbacks of an LCC rather than exploring how the model could be thoughtfully and effectively implemented to address long-standing concerns in Area F.

This critique responds to the specific concerns raised in the report and offers counterpoints intended to support a deeper, solutions-focused examination of the LCC option. My goal is not to dismiss the challenges involved, but to ensure the community's desire for more meaningful local decision-making is given fair and constructive consideration.

Background:

In response to Electoral Area F's request to explore a Local Community Commission (LCC) model, CSRD staff prepared a report for the August 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting. The request stemmed from the 2024 Issues Identification Study, which identified a desire for more local autonomy, transparency, and responsiveness in service delivery.

Report Purpose:

To evaluate the feasibility and implications of establishing a Local Community Commission in Electoral Area F, particularly for services such as Economic Development and Parks & Recreation.

Acknowledgements:

- Confirms that the **Local Government Act enables LCCs** as a legitimate option.
- Notes that **Area F has expressed interest in more localized governance**.
- Recognizes the **Issues Identification Study** and the community's concerns about accountability, service responsiveness, and voice.

Concerns Highlighted:

- Points to **additional administrative burden** on staff.
- Suggests an LCC may lead to **confusion about governance roles**.
- Highlights that **CSRD Board authority remains primary**, which could frustrate community expectations of LCC independence.
- Mentions **costs of holding a referendum** as a potential drawback.

Conclusion:

- Recommends **not proceeding with a Local Community Commission at this time**.
- Suggests **enhancing existing community engagement tools** (e.g., advisory committees, working groups).
- Emphasizes **maintaining service continuity and staff efficiency**.

What This Really Means

While the report hasn't ruled it out entirely, it's taken a **soft "no" position**. The tone is: "We hear the concern, but we think we can address it with less structural change."

Critique of CSRD Report: Local Community Commission for Area F (August 2025)

1. Concern: "An LCC adds administrative burden to staff"

- This is true of any structural change, but **the burden is clearly defined and scalable**. The staff time projections in our proposal should be modest (approx. 6–8 hours/month for administration, plus quarterly meeting/reporting).
- Most functions (finance, HR, legal, etc.) remain in CSRD hands. The LCC would operate similarly to how the CSRD already supports Local Advisory Committees, Library Boards, Economic Development Committees, or Rec Commissions.
- Rejecting a model on administrative grounds while offering to layer new committees across the region is inconsistent.

2. Concern: "An LCC may create confusion over decision-making authority"

- This is a matter of **communication and orientation**, not a flaw in the model. The Local Government Act is clear: LCCs are delegated authority over specific services only.
- All our documentation makes the distinction clear — the LCC does not replace the CSRD Board, it works within it.
- **Confusion is more likely under informal advisory models** where expectations are undefined and decisions may be ignored.

3. Concern: "An LCC creates expectations of independence the CSRD may not fulfill"

- If this concern is valid, it applies **even more** to the Local Advisory Council model — which has no authority and risks creating **false perceptions** of influence.
- An LCC provides **transparency and defined scope**, with public meetings, elected representatives, and statutory authority. If anything, it manages expectations more honestly.
- The solution is **public education**, not defaulting to the least accountable option.

4. Concern: “Referendum costs and complexity”

- Area F has proposed **aligning the referendum with the 2026 provincial election**, which significantly reduces cost and maximizes voter turnout.
- Community-led governance is **worth the investment** — especially when long-term dissatisfaction is growing and trust in the current system is strained.
- The costs of **not acting** — through disengagement, service resentment, or demands for incorporation — may be higher in the long run.

CSRD Conclusion: “Use existing advisory and engagement tools instead”

- Advisory groups are valuable, but **they do not address the root concern**: the lack of formal, community-controlled decision-making on local services.
- The Issues Identification Study didn’t ask for more meetings — it asked for **real voice and responsibility**.
- **Service continuity would not be affected** as CSRD staff would continue delivering the service until the LCC is operational, ensuring no disruption.
- Delays and inefficiencies in current CSRD processes are **a key reason** the community is seeking local control — to improve responsiveness, not hinder it.
- Proposing an advisory solution is **not a neutral stance**. It is, in effect, a rejection of the only tool (LCC) that offers democratic local control under the CSRD structure.

Final Assessment

The report is well-intentioned and technically accurate for the most part, but the conclusions lean toward **organizational convenience** rather than community empowerment. The risks cited are **manageable**, and the recommendation overlooks the central request made by residents: **a voice that matters**.

Proposal to Establish a Local Community Commission – Electoral Area F

Submitted by: Director Jay Simpson, Electoral Area F

Purpose

This proposal seeks Board support to proceed with the establishment of a Local Community Commission (LCC) in Electoral Area F, to govern services related to:

- Parks and Recreation
- Economic Development and Tourism
- Grant-in-Aid

The LCC would function under Section 243 of the Local Government Act and be structured to provide local, elected oversight of these services while remaining within the CSRD framework.

Justification

The 2024 Electoral Area F Issues Identification Study highlighted widespread concerns regarding responsiveness, transparency, and service prioritization. The LCC model provides a legally established mechanism for local input and control, offering elected representation, open meetings, and defined authority over key community services.

Proposed Scope of Authority

Delegated authority would mirror those outlined in Capital Regional District Bylaw No. 4508 and include:

- Annual planning and priority setting for parks, trails, facilities, and tourism initiatives
- Review and recommendation of service budgets
- Allocation of grant-in-aid and project-based funding within the designated services
- Engagement with community partners and other levels of government
- Public meeting and reporting responsibilities as per LGA requirements

Timeline to Referendum

To align with the 2026 Provincial General Election, the following schedule is proposed:

- Fall–Winter 2025: Community engagement, stakeholder consultations, and public outreach
- Spring 2026: Bylaw preparation and Board approval
- Late Spring: Provincial review and Inspector of Municipalities approval
- Fall 2026: Referendum held in conjunction with the Provincial election (October 2026)
- Winter 2026–Spring 2027: Commission established and operational transition begins

Recommendation

That the CSRD Board direct staff to prepare a bylaw and implementation framework for an Electoral Area F Local Community Commission covering Parks and Recreation, Economic Development/Tourism and Grant-in-Aid services, targeting a referendum date aligned with the October 2026 provincial election.