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April 30, 2026

File: 0400-20

The Honourable Lana Popham
Minister of Agriculture and Food
Via email: AF.Minister@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable Tamara Davidson
Minister of Environment and Parks
Via email: ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable Anne Kang
Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport
Via email: TACS.Minister@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable Randene Neill
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Via email: WLRS.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Popham, Minister Davidson, Minister Kang, and Minister Neill:

**RE: REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL, TECHNICAL AND REGULATORY SUPPORT TO ADDRESS
NON-MIGRATORY CANADA GEESE IN THE CAPITAL REGION**

On behalf of the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board, I am writing to request support for the management of non-migratory resident Canada geese in the capital region. Specific requests for support are outlined in Appendix A and includes your support to designate the resident, non-migratory Canada goose population as overabundant.

Historically, Canada geese did not nest on southern Vancouver Island. They were introduced at Elk Lake by the federal Canadian Wildlife Service, and the former British Columbia Fish and Wildlife branch in the 1960's and 1970's to increase wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities. These young geese, who were unable to learn migrating behaviour from their parents, interbred and created a hybrid population of non-migratory, resident geese. As the region became more urbanized, natural predators and hunting opportunities were reduced and this resident Canada goose population expanded largely unchecked.

Currently there are around 6,000 resident Canada geese in the capital region; this number expands to more than 10,000 during the migratory season. The CRD's request for support reflects ongoing and growing concerns regarding the significant agricultural, ecological, and public health impacts associated with this overabundant, introduced population of resident Canada geese in the region.

In 2023, the CRD Board established the Regional Canada Goose Management Service to work with key regional partners and governments to reduce the impacts of the rapidly growing resident Canada Goose (CAGO) population and coordinate implementation of the 2012 Regional Canada Goose Management Strategy (RCGMS). Activities in the first three years of service appear to have successfully stabilized the population, however, more resources are required to maintain substantial population reduction required to meaningfully ease the environmental, recreational, and economic impact across the region.

The federal and provincial governments were responsible for the introduction of Canada geese to this region and have an ongoing responsibility to manage wildlife. The CRD requests the Minister designate appropriate staff to work with the CRD and provincial representatives to provide regulatory, technical, and financial support to address the overabundant population of non-migratory Canada geese in the region.

Sincerely,



Cliff McNeil-Smith
Chair, Capital Regional District Board

Attachment: Appendix A - Requests for Support

cc: Honourable Ravi Parmar, MLA, Langford-Highlands
Honourable Diana Gibson, MLA, Oak Bay-Gordon Head
Honourable Lana Popham, MLA, Saanich South
Honourable Grace Lore, MLA, Victoria Beacon Hill
Honourable Nina Krieger, MLA, Victoria-Swan Lake
Darlene Rotchford, MLA, Esquimalt-Colwood
Dana Lajeunesse, MLA, Juan de Fuca-Malahat
Rob Botterell, MLA, Saanich North and the Islands
CRD Board
Ted Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer, CRD
Luisa Jones, General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Environmental Services, CRD

Wildlife management is an area of concurrent jurisdiction between federal, provincial, and local governments. The CRD requests that Province consider the following requests for regulatory, technical, and financial support:

REGULATORY SUPPORT

1. **Advocate for the designation of Canada geese as overabundant and submit provincial proposal to the federal government to amend the Canadian Migratory Bird Regulations.**
 - The Province of BC did not submit regulatory proposals related to the management of overabundant resident Canada geese as part of the *Proposals to amend the Canadian Migratory Birds Regulations - 2026: consultation document, hunting seasons 2026–2027 and 2027–2028*.
 - The CRD is requesting that the Province work collaboratively with the CRD and other Vancouver Island districts to develop a regulatory proposal for consideration in the next federal consultation on the MBR.
 - The CRD asks that the Province work collaboratively with the CRD and Canadian Wildlife Service to actively advance submissions to designate the non-native, resident Canada geese in the capital region as an overabundant species.
 - This would support effective population management and allow expanded special measures under federal regulations, such as:
 - Use of electronic calls and blinds
 - Expanded hunting seasons during times with high agricultural impact. (Mar-July and August-October)
 - Expanded daily possession and bag limits
 - Firearms exceptions – enable the use of .22 calibre rifle in some instances.
 - Many land use issues, damage mitigation and enforcement actions fall under provincial and local governments.
2. **Update Schedule 1 of the Spheres of Concurrent Jurisdiction – Environment and Wildlife Regulation to include resident, non-migratory Canada geese.**
 - The CRD requests staff from the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) and BC Ministry of Environment and Parks (ENV) work with the CRD to designate resident Canada geese in Schedule 1 of the Spheres of Concurrent Jurisdiction – Environment and Wildlife Regulation.
 - This would align local governments, provincial and federal regulations and support compliance and enforcement decisions that will aid in the implementation of the Regional Canada Goose Management Strategy.
3. **Consider a provincial killing permit under Section 64(1) of the Migratory Bird Regulations (MBR) and advocate for exemptions under Section 69(b) to discharge firearms within 50 m of any water body** to support goose population management activities in the region's drinking water supply area and in impacted agricultural areas with ponds to prevent geese from causing a danger to human health or public safety or damage to agricultural areas and crops where geese congregate near bodies of water.

Rationale

- The CRD manages the Greater Victoria Drinking Water Supply Area (GVDWSA), which includes the Sooke, Goldstream and Leech (future supply) watersheds, and is responsible for providing safe drinking water to 430,000 residents. The Greater Victoria Drinking Water System (GVDWS) is an unfiltered drinking water supply that uses a multi-barrier approach to prevent contaminants from entering the water distribution system.

- The feces of Canada geese are known to harbour pathogenic microbes^{1,2} including protozoa and bacteria. These pathogens are public health concerns as they can contaminate drinking water supplies and cause disease outbreaks in humans through the consumption of water.
- It is imperative that the CRD immediately control the Canada goose populations in the Drinking Water Supply Area as they could compromise the system's source water protection barrier. Immediate removal of Canada geese prior to nest establishment is required, otherwise, there is too great a reliance upon ultraviolet light as the final barrier to kill pathogens carried by geese.
- Due to the threat that Canada geese pose to the drinking water supply in Greater Victoria, the Capital Regional District needs to be able to take the necessary steps to remove geese from the GVWSA reservoirs.
- Currently, the CRD attempts to remove geese under the authorization of a Danger and Damage Permit. However, under 69(1)(b) of the Migratory Birds Regulation, permit holders referred to in section 64 or 65 must not discharge firearms within 50 m of any body of water. Most geese found in the GVWSA are on or adjacent to the reservoir water source. As a result, the CRD is limited to using scare tactics.
- Many farms have irrigation ponds and other large water sources, which are an attractant to Canada geese and this restriction can prevent agricultural producers from protecting their crops.
- Under Sections 64 and 65 of the MBR, the Chief Provincial Wildlife Officer and Minister, respectively, may issue a permit to kill migratory birds of a specific species during a specified time and in a specified area, if the Chief Provincial Wildlife Officer and the Minister are satisfied that scaring migratory birds is not a sufficient deterrent to prevent the birds from causing a danger to human health or public safety or damage to crops or other property in a province.
- The CRD requests support from the Province to enable killing of geese in the GVWSA within 50 m of a water source to protect the drinking water supply for Greater Victoria.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Given that federal and provincial agencies introduced Canada geese to this region, and that both retain a responsibility for wildlife management and/or migratory birds, there is a shared responsibility to support ongoing management to ensure the financial burden does not fall solely to the taxpayers of this region and to ease the economic losses suffered by the local agricultural producers.

The CRD requests the Province consider:

- Increased funding for mitigation measures to prevent goose damage including cover/lure cropping, fencing & exclusion, lasers, deterrent devices, hunting support (ammo), and other emerging techniques.
- Expand Agricultural Wildlife Program eligibility to include high value food crops:
 - The Agriculture Wildlife Program (AWP) provides support for eligible crop and livestock losses. By enrolling in AWP, producers can get compensation for wildlife damage to some types of livestock, harvested crops and unharvested crops. It provides compensation for agricultural loss to grain, forage, excreta and predation available up to a maximum of 80%. All commercially grown grains, fine seeds, oilseeds, and pulse crops that are covered under crop insurance are eligible for compensation.
 - Many farms in the capital region grow high value food crops such as lettuce, cabbage and strawberries which are not eligible for funding under the current wildlife damage compensation program.

¹ Nagamori Y, Litherland MA, Koons NR, Linnthicum AR, Ramachandran A. Survey of zoonotic parasites and bacteria in faeces of Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*) in North-Central Oklahoma. *Vet Med Sci.* 2022 July; 8(4):1825-1834. Doi:10.1002/vms3.791.Epub 2022 Mar 22. PMID:35316562; PMCID: PMC9297773.

² ElMBERG J, Berg C, Lerner H, Waldenstrom J, Hessel R. Potential disease transmission from wild geese and swans to livestock, poultry and humans: a review of the scientific literature from a One Health perspective. *Infect Ecol Epidemiol.* 2017 Apr 10;7(1):1300450.doi:10.1080/20008686.2017.1300450. PMID: 28567210; PMCID: PMC5443079.

- Agricultural losses experienced by producers in the capital region are estimated in the hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. In 2025, a farmer in central Saanich lost more than \$50,000 worth of cabbage in a single day due to grazing by resident Canada geese. On Salt Spring Island, a producer experienced losses exceeding \$100,000 to strawberry crops over one season and has since ceased strawberry production altogether as a result. Multiple farmers in the area have stopped farming as a direct result of Canada goose damage and have since lost farm status.
- The impacts from the introduced, overabundant, resident population of Canada geese are impacting food security in the capital region and on Vancouver Island.

TECHNICAL/RESEARCH SUPPORT

The CRD would like to explore the following opportunities for research collaboration and sharing of technical information with the Province:

1. **Support goose population and movement research** on Vancouver Island
 - Funding support for goose banding programs and radio collars.
Several regional districts and stewardship groups on Vancouver Island and across the Salish Sea are suffering the impacts of the overabundant, non-migratory goose populations. There is interest in a Salish Sea Canada goose banding and collaring program to obtain data on seasonal and inter-regional movements of Canada geese. These data could be used for ongoing planning of goose population management efforts.
 - Technical and financial support from the Province should be considered.
2. **Support for First Nation traditional waterfowl harvesting methods**
 - The CRD is working to engage local First Nations communities in the goose management program including egg addling programs, population monitoring programs and harvest.
 - Currently, the CRD contracts a third-party to conduct annual harvests of Canada geese with interested First Nations communities. Up to five First Nations communities have participated in previous harvests. During the harvest, First Nations adults and youth are learning how to harvest and dress a bird, regaining some skills that have been lost over time. Additionally, the meat from the harvested birds is processed and shared among the participating communities.
 - Some First Nations communities have expressed that their right to hunt and fish as formerly, included the harvesting of waterfowl during the moult, and that they have a desire to return to traditional methods of harvesting waterfowl.
 - The CRD would like to have discussions with Provincial and federal agencies and local First Nations communities to explore potential funding to support these communities in returning to traditional waterfowl harvesting methods.