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# Regional District

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# TOOL KIT

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- ❖ Fact Sheets
    - ❖ Effective Practices
      - ❖ Discussion Guides
        - ❖ Presentation
          - ❖ Information Booklet
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# Acknowledgements

The UBCM Regional District Task Force was established in 2004 to provide principal direction in the production of the *Regional District Tool Kit*.

The members of UBCM Regional District Task Force appointed by the UBCM Executive are:

Director Susan Gimse, Chair  
Councillor Brenda Binnie, Vice Chair  
Chair Robert Hobson  
Councillor Corinne Lonsdale  
Chair Ted Armstrong  
Mayor Herb Pond  
Chair Marvin Hunt

They would like to express their sincere appreciation to the following:

- The Ministry of Community Services for their financial and technical support throughout this project;
- Local government elected and appointed officials who provided input during *Tool Kit* development;
- Local Government Management Association members who provided input during *Tool Kit* development and particularly those reviewers who provided comments on the draft *Tool Kit* papers;
- UBCM staff for project leadership; and
- Allan Neilson-Welch, of Neilson-Welch Consulting Inc. who is the principal writer and researcher.

Thank you!



# Introduction to the *Regional District Tool Kit*

## *Welcome!*

Welcome to the First Edition of the *Regional District Tool Kit*, a resource developed by the Union of BC Municipalities in cooperation with the Ministry of Community Services and the Local Government Management Association of BC, to promote a better understanding of regional districts in British Columbia.

Regional districts are unique to British Columbia and are an integral part of the province's local government system. Many different groups rely upon, interact with or work within regional districts. Despite their importance however, regional districts are not always well understood. The *Regional District Tool Kit* is intended to promote the "health" of regional districts by improving understanding of what they are and how they operate.

## *Target Audiences*

The *Tool Kit* is a resource that all local governments, (both municipalities and regional districts) and others can use to engage and help inform different audiences. Taken together, the materials in the *Kit* are intended to target a wide variety of audiences, including every group that has a stake in the regional district system. Citizens and property owners who rely upon regional districts for services represent one target audience; municipal council members and senior staff who work closely with their regional district counterparts consti-

tute others. In all, the list of audiences targeted by *Tool Kit* materials is considerable and includes:

- *Regional district directors and staff*
- *Municipal council members and staff*
- *Provincial government elected and administrative officials*
- *Residents and property owners*
- *First Nations*
- *Media representatives*
- *Development sector*

## *Users & Training*

Elected and appointed officials from regional districts themselves are expected to be the primary promoters of the *Tool Kit*. It is hoped that they will identify and make use of opportunities to distribute, present and discuss the *Kit's* materials. Municipal elected and appointed officials are also key users and promoters. Other players in the local government system that will also be making use of the *Kit* and providing training on its use include:

- The Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) will provide a first training session on using the *Kit* at the 2005 UBCM Convention. Other opportunities will follow. They will also make use of the *Kit's* materials at UBCM-sponsored educational seminars



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(such as the Newly-Elected Officials Seminar), at UBCM related events (such as the Annual Convention and Area Association conferences), and during UBCM promoted programs (such as Local Government Awareness Week).

- The Ministry of Community Services (CSERV) will use the materials to advise local governments, other provincial ministries, and agencies that interact with local governments and the public.
- The Local Government Management Association of BC (LGMA) will promote the *Kit's* materials at LGMA functions, and include various materials in the curricula for levels I, II and III of the Municipal Administration Training Institute (MATI).

The key point for local government officials and others who promote the *Kit* is to identify and take advantage of every opportunity to use the resources that make up the *Kit*. The *Kit* is designed for active use to engage audiences — it will have little value as a passive, shelf-bound reference document.

Note for the Islands Trust area, the Islands Trust has all the power and authority of a regional district for land use planning purposes.

### Contents & Format

The *Tool Kit* consists of the five separate components listed in the box.

Each component is presented in its own section of the *Kit*. Pages at the beginning of each section introduce the component, explain its purpose and identify its target audiences.



- *Fact Sheets* that explain in some detail the most fundamental aspects of regional districts.
- *Effective Practices* through which individual regional districts can share ideas and approaches with one another on a range of key topics. The first set of papers focuses on *Communications*. These papers profile useful ways regional districts can reach out to engage audiences to improve their understanding of the regional district system.
- *Discussion Guides* that identify important questions for regional districts and their member jurisdictions to explore.
- *A PowerPoint Presentation* (with speaking notes), titled *Regional Districts: Introduction and Overview*, that outlines the basics of regional districts.
- *A basic information booklet* entitled *An Introduction to Regional Districts*, written for the general public.

The *Tool Kit* is available in both electronic and paper versions. The electronic version is posted on UBCM's website at [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca). Links to this site are provided on several other sites that are popular with local government practitioners, including the Ministry of Community Services' site, and the site for the Local Government Management Association of BC. The paper version has been produced in loose-leaf binder



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format to facilitate updating and has been provided to every local government in BC.

### *Tool Kit Development*

In October 2004, the Regional District Task Force was established by UBCM to oversee the development, implementation and evaluation of a *Tool Kit* on Regional Districts. The *Tool Kit* was recommended by a 2004 Regional District Working Group as part of an *Action Plan* endorsed by the UBCM Executive and supported by UBCM members.

*“The key point for local government officials and others who promote the Kit is to identify and take advantage of every opportunity to use the resources that make up the Kit. The Kit is designed for active use to engage audiences — it will have little value as a passive, shelf-bound reference document.”*

The Task Force, with the assistance of a local government consultant and UBCM project leader, began its work in late 2004. Production of the actual materials occurred over a six-month period from March through August 2005.

The process through which the *Tool Kit* was developed recognized the importance of input from UBCM members. Indeed, over the past year since the *Tool Kit* was first announced, members have had multiple opportunities to comment on and contribute to the *Kit*. For example:

- At the 2004 UBCM Convention, representatives of Regional District Working Group presented the *Action Plan* to members and solicited feedback on the proposed *Tool Kit* and its contents;
- In October 2004, the UBCM president wrote to all members asking for their support for *Tool Kit* development and contribution to its contents;
- In January 2005, the Task Force distributed a detailed memo on the proposed content and format of the *Tool Kit* to every regional district Chief Administrative Officer in the province for feedback;
- In March 2005, early drafts of materials prepared for the *Tool Kit* were reviewed at the 2005 Regional District CEO/CAO Forum;
- During April and May 2005, the Task Force Chair presented draft *Tool Kit* materials to members at all five UBCM Area Association Spring Conferences.

Initial drafts of each paper were prepared by the project consultant and reviewed by the Regional District Task Force. Comments were also provided by a technical review panel comprised of CSERV and UBCM staff, and LGMA members.

### *Next Steps*

The publication of the First Edition does not signal an end to member input or *Tool Kit* development. All members – indeed, all persons who read, use or learn from the *Tool Kit* – are invited to provide comments and suggestions on

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the material presented using the contact information identified below. The electronic and loose-leaf binder formats chosen for the *Kit* allow changes to be made where necessary and appropriate. Ideas for new content that may be featured in future editions of the *Tool Kit* are also welcome.

Finally, once some experience has been gained with using the *Tool Kit*, UBCM

will be conducting a formal survey. The survey will be designed to test the *Kit*'s overall effectiveness, to identify its most (and least) useful components, and to determine changes that are required to the content, format and/or methods of use. Members will have an opportunity to provide their views and comments on the *Kit* through the survey.

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## Contact Information

Inquiries and comments on the Tool Kit may be directed to:

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# Regional Districts in British Columbia

*In alphabetical order – September 2005*

Alberni-Clayoquot

Bulkley-Nechako

Capital

Cariboo

Central Coast

Central Kootenay

Central Okanagan

Columbia Shuswap

Comox-Strathcona

Cowichan Valley

East Kootenay

Fraser-Fort George

Fraser Valley

Greater Vancouver

Kitimat-Stikine

Kootenay Boundary

Mount Waddington

Nanaimo

North Okanagan

Northern Rockies

Okanagan-Similkameen

Peace River

Powell River

Skeena-Queen Charlotte

Squamish-Lillooet

Sunshine Coast

Thompson-Nicola







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COLUMBIA  
MUNICIPALITIES





This section of the *Tool Kit* contains a set of Fact Sheets. The Fact Sheets profile key features of the regional district system, and in so doing, help explain why regional districts exist, how they are structured and what they do. The Fact Sheets also help to clarify common misconceptions related to the regional district system. As their name suggests, the Fact Sheets present the “facts” or “what is”. They do not give advice or advocate positions on issues.

The Fact Sheets are designed to appeal to audiences that work within and interact with regional districts regularly, and that already have a basic knowledge of local government in BC. Specific target audiences include:

- Local government elected and appointed officials (municipal and regional district)

- Provincial ministries, developers, First Nations and other groups that have dealings with regional districts
- Media representatives who report on regional districts and regional affairs

Some citizens and property holders who receive services and/or rely on regional districts as their local governments may be interested in the Fact Sheets. It is anticipated, however, that most citizens and property holders will find the introductory booklet included in this *Tool Kit* (*Regional Districts: An Introduction*) more useful.

## Contents

The First Edition of the *Tool Kit* contains ten separate Fact Sheets. Taken together, they profile the most important features of the regional district system. The following table identifies the individual papers.





	<i>Title</i>	<i>Description</i>
FS 1	Purposes of Regional Districts	Explains what regional districts exist to do.
FS 2	Structure of Regional Districts	Illustrates and explains how regional districts are structured to operate.
FS 3	Regional District Services	Focuses on the service provision role of regional districts. Service establishment, service funding and service governance are reviewed.
FS 4	Regional District Service Reviews & Service Withdrawal	Explores the purpose of the review and withdrawal mechanisms. The different types of reviews are identified. Detailed information sources for regional districts and member jurisdictions interested in reviews and/or withdrawal are identified.
FS 5	Regional District Voting Rules	Explains the voting rules that guide regional district decision-making.
FS 6	Regional District Finance	Introduces the basics of regional district finance, including the regional district approach to service funding, financial planning, taxation, the processing of debt and the use of development finance tools. It includes a two-page “quick reference” guide to voting rules.
FS 7	Electoral Area Governance	Outlines the framework for governing electoral areas.
FS 8	Regional Districts & the Provincial Government	Outlines the structural relationship between regional districts and the provincial government.
FS 9	Regional Districts & First Nations	Introduces the topic of regional district-First Nations relations, and outlines some of the initiatives through which the parties have developed, and are continuing to develop, working relationships.
FS 10	Regional Districts & Planning	Outlines the role of regional districts in planning and land-use management.



# Purposes of Regional Districts

*Fact Sheet 1 explains what regional districts are and what they do.*

In British Columbia's system of local government, regional districts serve three important purposes:

- they are the local governments for their (unincorporated) electoral areas
- they provide the political and administrative frameworks necessary for combinations of member municipalities and electoral areas to collaborate in the provision of sub-regional services
- they are regional service bodies responsible for providing important regional services to, and undertaking key activities on behalf of, their entire regions (i.e., all member jurisdictions)

Each of these purposes is important in every regional district. As might be expected, however, the relative importance of each purpose varies from place to place depending on the wishes of the region's member jurisdictions. In certain regional districts, for example, the local government role for electoral areas is the predominant focus. In other regions, the provision of sub-regional services through the regional district will be most important. In still others, the provision of regional services will stand out as the primary purpose of the regional district.

The relative importance of the various purposes is not always static. Changing demographic, economic, political,

social and structural conditions within a region can lead to changes in the importance of the regional district, and its primary purpose. Over time, for example, a regional district's emphasis may switch from providing basic local services to electoral areas, to providing joint services to sub-regional groupings, or regional services to all member jurisdictions. To be sure, all three purposes will remain valid over time; the relative importance of each, however, may change.

*“Changing demographic, economic, political, social and structural conditions within a region can lead to changes in the importance of the regional district, and its primary purpose.”*

The regional district model allows flexibility in the design of service arrangements. Within key legislative constraints, a regional district can be whatever its member jurisdictions want it to be. Over time, regional districts can be moulded and re-moulded by member jurisdictions to meet different needs, and to serve different purposes.

The important role of member jurisdictions in collectively determining the focus and activities of regional districts is critical to understand. In British



## Purposes



Columbia's system of local government, regional districts are not regional governments, or separate, second tier authorities. Regional districts are, instead, federations of the municipalities and electoral areas that exist within their boundaries. With few exceptions

(solid waste planning being the most notable), regional districts act only in response to the expressed needs, interests and instructions of their members. They derive both their legitimacy and authority to act from their member jurisdictions.

## Purposes

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### More info

Readers interested in exploring further the purposes of regional districts may wish to review Robert Bish's *Regional District Review* – 1999 (available online at [www.uvic.ca.padm](http://www.uvic.ca.padm)). The chapter titled "The Role, Expectations and Philosophy of Regional Districts" is particularly helpful. Readers may also wish to review Chapter 2 of the full Report & Action Plan produced by UBCM's Regional District Issues & Non-Legislative Solutions Working Group. This publication is available online at [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca).

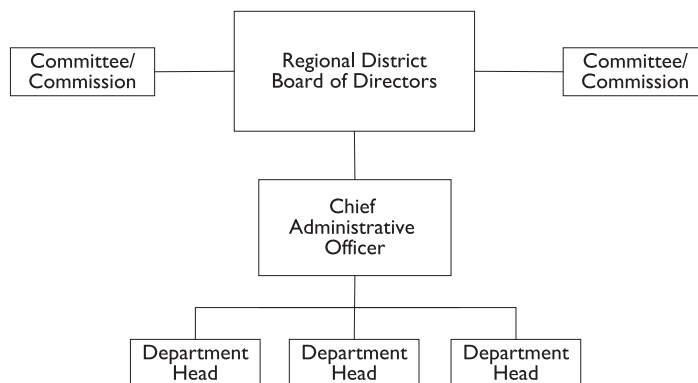


# Structure of Regional Districts

## Structure

*Fact Sheet 2 explains how regional districts are structured.*

British Columbia's regional districts differ significantly in several respects, including size, scope of services and area of coverage. One characteristic shared by all regional districts, however, is structure. All twenty-seven regional districts in BC are organized using the same basic corporate structure. The accompanying chart illustrates the basic structure. The points that follow the chart identify and explain the structure's key components.



**Board of Directors** — The Board of Directors is the governing body of the regional district, ultimately responsible for the services provided and actions taken by the corporation. Directors from the regional district's member municipalities are known as Municipal Directors and are appointed by their respective municipal councils. A Council can replace its member(s) on a regional district Board at any time. Directors from the regional district's electoral areas are known as Electoral Area

Directors. They are elected directly to the Board by the electors in the areas they represent and serve a three-year term.

Many larger municipalities are represented on their regional district boards by more than one Municipal Director. The exact number is determined by the population of the municipality and the regional district's "voting unit" (specified in the Letters Patent incorporating

the regional district) . Electoral areas are generally represented by one Electoral Area Director. The sole exception is the Westside Electoral Area in the Central Okanagan

which, because of its considerable population and urban nature, has three Directors.

Every Electoral Area Director must appoint an Alternate Director to carry out the Director's responsibilities in his or her absence. Municipal Councils must also appoint an Alternate Director to take the place of the Municipal Director when required. Municipalities with more than one Municipal Director may appoint one Alternate per Director, or



one or more general Alternate(s) who are available to act in place of any one of the Directors.

Each Board of Directors is headed by a Chair, who is the Chief Executive Officer of the regional district corporation. Each year, the Board elects one Director to serve as Chair and another to serve as Vice Chair.

The Board of Directors is a collective decision-making body that acts through resolutions and bylaws. Fact Sheet 5 on Voting Rules explains how votes on different types of matters are taken.

**Committees & Commissions** — Most regional districts have various Committees and/or Commissions to assist the Board of Directors in decision-making. Committees come in two types: standing and select. Standing committees are permanent bodies that are established by the Chair to provide regular, ongoing advice to the Board in different areas of business or activity (e.g., finance, community services, economic development, etc.). Select committees are temporary, time-limited bodies that are established by the Board as a whole to provide advice on a particular issue or initiative that arises (e.g., the development of a new OCP). Both types of Committees may include non-Directors in their membership; at least one member of every Committee, however, must be a Director of the regional district.

Commissions are created by the Board to oversee regional district services, undertake operation and enforcement in relation to the board's exercise of its regulatory authority, or manage property held by the regional district.

Through delegation bylaws, the Board can delegate authority to Commissions to make certain types of decisions on their behalf. The degree of delegation to Commissions can be considerable; the Board cannot, however, delegate all of its authority. Key powers, such as the authority to adopt bylaws, cannot be delegated to Commissions. Like Committees, Commissions may include non-Directors in their membership.

Committees and Commissions help the Board of Directors manage its workload. By referring issues to Committees, and by delegating decision-making authority to Committees or Commissions, a busy Board can ensure that important matters receive proper attention and consideration. Through the careful selection of Committee and Commission members, Boards can also ensure that those jurisdictions with the most interest in issues are given the opportunity to participate in the detailed discussions and deliberations around the issues.

**Chief Administrative Officer** — Regional districts in BC operate in accordance with the Board-CAO model of local government. The central feature of this model is the separation of governance and administration. The Board in the Board-CAO model is the governing body, responsible for setting a vision, developing strategies to achieve the vision, and formulating policies. The CAO is the professional manager responsible for the administration. The CAO implements the Board's policies and decisions, and handles all operations. The CAO also serves as the chief policy advisor to the Board.





## Structure



The CAO, as the head of administration, is accountable to the Board for the performance of the administration. The CAO exists as the sole official link between the Board and administration. Generally, all direction from the Board to staff passes through the CAO, as does all information and advice from staff to the Board.

**Department Heads** — Reporting to the CAO are the regional district's Department Heads, professional managers who are accountable to the CAO for the administration of particular functions (e.g., finance) or areas of service (e.g., community services). The number of Department Heads in a regional district typically depends on the size of the organization and the range of services being provided.

**Officers** — “Officers” are not identified specifically in the organizational chart presented earlier. It is important, however, to discuss them briefly. Under the *Local Government Act*, the Board of Directors must establish, by bylaw, two officer positions. One of these positions must be assigned responsibility over corporate administration (often the Director of Corporate Services), which

includes a number of powers, duties and functions that, taken together, enable the Board to operate as a legal corporate body. The second position (typically the Director of Finance or the Treasurer) must be assigned responsibility over financial administration. This officer is responsible for ensuring that the corporation receives, expends and accounts for all of its funds in a proper fashion. The same person may be given both sets of responsibilities.

Regional districts may choose to establish other officer positions, in addition to the mandatory corporate and financial administration ones. Many regional districts, for example, establish the Chief Administrative Officer as an official officer position under the Act, with explicit responsibility for management and administration, the implementation of Board policy and directions, and the provision of advice and information to the Board.

The responsibilities of officers are statutory responsibilities. For this reason, Officers may only be appointed by the Board of Directors. In addition, Officers may only be dismissed by a vote of two-thirds of the Board's directors.

### More info

A number of resources provides further information on the structure of regional districts, and related topics such as voting rules and delegation of authority:

- the Ministry of Community Services (CSERV) has available *A Primer on Regional Districts*: [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd)
- Fact Sheet 5 explains regional district voting rules
- CSERV has available a 2003 document titled *A Guide to Regional District Board Delegation to Committees & Commissions*: [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd)



# Regional District Services

## Services

*Fact Sheet 3 focuses on the service provision role of regional districts.*

**Service Provision** — It was explained in Fact Sheet 1 that regional districts serve three purposes:

- they are the local governments for their electoral areas, responsible for providing basic local government services
- they provide the frameworks necessary for combinations of member jurisdictions to collaborate in the provision of sub-regional services
- they are regional service bodies responsible for providing important regional services to their entire regions

The common theme in these purposes is service provision. Regional districts may, as noted elsewhere, differ in their choices of specific purposes to emphasize. Every regional district, however, has the same *raison d'être*: to provide services.

**Voluntary Services** — Regional districts establish and provide services in direct response to the expressed needs, desires and instructions of their member jurisdictions. There are, to be sure, certain services that every regional district is required by provincial statute to deliver — general administration, electoral area planning and solid waste management planning are perhaps the most notable. The number of mandated services, however, is small.

The complete range of voluntary services provided by different regional

districts to and on behalf of their members is indeed impressive. It can include water and sewer utilities, recreation programs and facilities, community and regional parks, libraries, regulatory services such as animal control and building inspection, E-911 and fire protection, economic development and film industry promotion, regional growth strategies, airports and even television rebroadcast.

*“Individual jurisdictions, in general, are free to choose which services, if any, they wish to enter or initiate.”*

**Enlightened Self-Interest** — With the exception of the few mandated services noted above, member jurisdictions cannot be forced to participate in regional district services. Individual jurisdictions, in general, are free to choose which services, if any, they wish to enter (or initiate). Jurisdictions make their choices on the basis of self-interest. Put differently, individual jurisdictions choose to participate in regional district services when it is in their best interest to do so.

Self-interest, it should be emphasized, is not necessarily measured by the short-term benefit to be captured through participation. A jurisdiction's interest may instead be determined by a combination of other factors, such



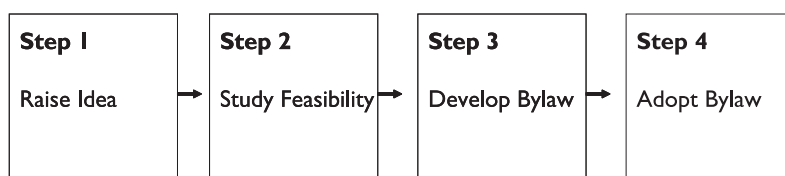


as the desire to build a strong regional body, or the wish to establish a base of inter-jurisdictional goodwill that can be called upon in future years. These other factors expand the notion of self-interest beyond immediate considerations, and for that reason, lead to the concept of enlightened self-interest.

**Service Establishment** — The flowchart below illustrates a simplified, generic process for establishing voluntary regional district services. The text below the chart explains the individual steps.

- In **Step 1** the idea for a new service emerges. There are several potential sources of ideas, including regional

Service Establishment  
Generic Process



district directors, citizens, municipal councils, municipal staff, the regional district board, regional district staff, the media and others.

- **Step 2** typically involves some kind of service feasibility study. The extent of the actual study will vary depending on the potential size and scope of the service. Most studies, however, will consider a checklist with the following types of items:
  - The proposed service has a clear and understood purpose
  - The proposed service has a defined and agreed-upon scope

- Specific, measurable goals for the service have been identified
- The parties agree on a way to share costs
- The parties agree on how the service should be governed
- The parties agree on how the service should be delivered
- The parties agree on a process for service review
- A start-up plan has been developed
- Support among elected officials is broad and sufficient

- If the proposed service is deemed feasible, a service establishing bylaw, required for most services, is de-

veloped (**Step 3**). The *Local Government Act* stipulates the mandatory elements of an establishing bylaw, and identifies various optional

items to include. Legislative changes introduced in 2000 expanded the opportunities for customization.

- **Step 4** involves the adoption of the bylaw. All establishing bylaws must be voted on using the “unweighted corporate vote” rule (see Fact Sheet 5). Under this rule, every director present must vote and is given one vote. A straight majority determines the outcome.

After third reading of the bylaw, the bylaw must receive the approval of the province’s Inspector of Municipalities, and the approval of the areas that are intending to participate in the service.





Approval of the participating areas can be obtained by the electors themselves through referendum. In certain cases, the board may choose to bypass the referendum route and obtain approval using an “alternative approval process” (i.e., counter-petition). In still other cases, approval may be given on behalf of a participating area by the council, the electoral area director or the board.

**Service Funding** — Once a service has been established it must be funded. The concept of “benefiting area” is critical to any discussion of regional district service funding. Each service provided by a regional district has a specified benefiting area throughout which the service is provided, and from which the full cost of the service is recovered. In a true regional service, the entire regional district – that is, all member municipalities and electoral areas – will comprise the service’s benefiting area. For a sub-regional service, the benefiting area might consist of only a handful of jurisdictions. A local service’s benefiting area might include only one electoral area, or even just a part of an

electoral area. In all, the actual benefiting area for any service can be whatever the member jurisdictions wish it to be. What is key to understand is that the service’s benefiting area determines both who receives the service and who pays for it. Jurisdictions and areas not included in a service’s benefiting area do not receive the service, and do not contribute to the cost of providing the service.

**Service Governance** — The decision to establish a new service is a decision of the entire regional board. Once a service has been established, the full board continues to be involved in certain instances. For the most part, however, decisions related to a specific service are the responsibility of the directors of the jurisdictions that have chosen to participate in the service (see Fact Sheet 5 on voting). By assigning this responsibility to the participating area directors, the system effectively aligns service governance with service funding. Put differently, those who make the decisions for the service are the same ones who pay for the service.

## More info

Readers may wish to consult the following sources for further information on service establishment, funding and governance, and on regional district services in general:

- the Ministry of Community Services’ (CSERV) *A Primer on Regional Districts* ([www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd))
- Fact Sheet 4 on Service Reviews
- Fact Sheet 5 on Regional District Voting Rules
- CSERV’s *Guide to Regional Service Arrangements & Service Reviews* ([www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd))
- Robert Bish’s *Regional District Review – 1999* ([www.uvic.ca.padm](http://www.uvic.ca.padm))



# Regional District Service Reviews & Service Withdrawal

## Reviews & Withdrawal

*Fact Sheet 4 focuses on regional district service reviews and service withdrawal.*

**Reviews & Withdrawal** — Most regional district services are created using establishing bylaws. The establishing bylaw for any given service is a legal document that identifies, among other items:

- the exact scope of the service
- the method by which the service is to be funded
- the way in which service-related decisions are to be made, and by whom

These items and others are determined collectively by the jurisdictions that choose to participate in the service. Taken together, the items outline the participants' terms of participation in the service, and constitute the service arrangement.

Typically, the actual contents of a service arrangement reflect the local demographics, economic conditions, interests and aspirations that exist at the time the arrangement is negotiated. As can be expected, these conditions change over time, often to the point that the original terms of participation are deemed by some participants to be inequitable or otherwise unsatisfactory. Service reviews provide the opportunity for service participants to examine and, if necessary, revise the original terms and conditions of participation. Service withdrawal, where applicable, provides the opportunity for participants to exit

services when terms cannot be changed to the participants' satisfaction.

**Legislative Change** — Local governments throughout the province have initiated and undertaken service reviews in one form or another since regional districts came into being in the mid 1960s. In 2000, however, service reviews assumed new prominence thanks to certain legislative changes introduced in that year. The *Local Government Act* was changed in 2000 to provide each participating jurisdiction – i.e., each

*“Typically, the actual contents of a service arrangement reflect the local demographics, economic conditions, interests and aspirations that exist at the time the arrangement is negotiated.”*

municipality and electoral area – the authority to initiate a formal review of the arrangements governing regional district services. The legislation was also changed to allow jurisdictions to withdraw from most services, following a review process.

**Rationale** — The rationales for the service review and service withdrawal mechanisms were alluded to earlier. Service reviews are intended to provide opportunities to re-structure arrange-





ments to accommodate changing realities. The ability to withdraw from a service is intended to provide the assurance that, in the event an agreement cannot be satisfactorily amended, an individual jurisdiction may exit what it perceives to be an untenable situation.

The provisions for review and withdrawal are consistent with the principle of self-interest that underpins the regional district approach to service provision. An individual jurisdiction's interest in a particular service will depend, to a significant degree, on the terms of participation in the service. Over time, as conditions change, the original terms of participation may become unsatisfactory, at least from the perspective of the jurisdiction. In such a situation, the principle of self-interest

*“The provisions for review and withdrawal are consistent with the principle of self-interest that underpins the regional district approach to service provision.”*

would require the jurisdiction to pursue changes to the service arrangement. If changes were not possible, the principle of self-interest would require the jurisdiction to seek withdrawal.

The review and withdrawal mechanisms are also consistent with the principle of borrowed power, another pillar of the regional district system. As far as service provision is concerned, regional districts derive the bulk of their power and legitimacy from their member jurisdictions (member jurisdictions, in essence, authorize regional districts

to provide specific services on their behalf). When participation in a specific service no longer makes sense for a jurisdiction, that jurisdiction needs to be able to initiate a formal review of the service and, if necessary, exit the service. The jurisdiction, in other words, needs to be able to rescind the authority to provide the service. The service review and withdrawal mechanisms enable the jurisdiction to take this action.

**Types of Reviews** — There are three types of service reviews available to regional districts and their member jurisdictions. The first is the Statutory Review. This type is the default option introduced in 2000 and outlined in the *Local Government Act*. The second type is termed the Bylaw-based Review. The legislative changes made in 2000 give participants in regional district services the authority to design their own review processes, and include the processes in the services' establishing bylaws. Once developed, the customized processes supersede the statutory default provisions. The third type of review is the Non-legislative Review which, as its name suggests, is undertaken independent of the legislative authority. All reviews that occurred prior to 2000 were non-legislative in nature.

Part 24 of the *Local Government Act* contains all of the provisions that govern Statutory Reviews and Bylaw-based Reviews. The Ministry of Community Services (CSERV) has produced a number of useful explanatory guides to help service participants understand the legislation. The guides also explore key questions related to reviews, such as:

## Reviews & Withdrawal





- when should a service review be considered (and not considered)
- what type of review should be considered
- who may initiate a statutory service review and under what conditions
- who are the parties to a review, and what are their respective roles
- what is the process that should be considered in conducting a review
- under what circumstances may withdrawal be initiated

The materials produced by the Ministry are listed in the “More Info” section of this Fact Sheet. It is not the intent of this Fact Sheet to reproduce the legislation or duplicate the Ministry’s efforts.

## Reviews & Withdrawal



### More info

Readers interested in learning more about service reviews and how to conduct them may wish to review the following CSERV publications, all of which are available online at [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd):

- *Regional Service Reviews: An Introduction*
- *Guide to Regional Service Arrangements & Service Reviews*
- *Reaching Agreement on Regional Service Review and Withdrawal Disputes*
- *Designing Regional Service Arrangements: An Introduction*



# Regional District Voting Rules

*Fact Sheet 5 explains the voting rules guiding regional district decision-making.*

Regional district boards of directors act through resolutions and bylaws. Before a resolution can be made or a bylaw adopted, voting must occur. In municipalities, voting is a relatively straightforward matter: every member of council votes on every issue, and every member receives one vote. In regional districts, voting is not always so simple.

In regional districts, special voting rules are needed to reflect specific realities, namely that regional districts are federations of different sized jurisdictions, and that regional district services are subscribed to and funded by different combinations of jurisdictions. In the context of voting, these realities mean that not all directors have the right to vote on all matters, or have the same number of votes in all situations.

There is a number of basic concepts that underlie regional district voting rules. The first concept is that of “*vote entitlement*”. Different combinations of directors on the board are entitled to vote on different types of questions. On some matters, all directors are entitled to vote, whereas on other matters, only the directors representing jurisdictions that participate in the service being discussed receive a vote.

The second concept is “*vote weighting*”. Each director on the board is assigned a specific number of votes based on the population of the jurisdiction the

director represents. Voting on some issues is “weighted”, which means that the directors who are entitled to vote receive their full allotments of votes. On other issues, voting is “unweighted”. In these instances, every director who is entitled to vote receives only one vote, irrespective of the population of his or her jurisdiction.

Related to vote weighting is the concept of “*voting unit*”. The voting unit is the size of population that constitutes one vote on a weighted vote decision. Consider an example of a regional district with a voting unit of 2,500 persons. On

*“In the context of voting, these realities mean that not all directors have the right to vote on all matters, or have the same number of votes in all situations.”*

weighted votes, each director of the regional district receives one vote for every 2,500 persons in his or her jurisdiction. A director whose jurisdiction has 11,000 persons would receive five votes in all weighted vote situations (11,000 divided by 2,500 equals 4.4, which, as per the legislation, is rounded up to 5).

The voting unit concept also impacts unweighted votes, albeit to a much lesser degree than with weighted votes. Under the *Local Government Act* (LGA), an individual director may only cast a maximum of five votes. Large jurisdic-

## Voting Rules

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## Voting Rules

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tions must, therefore, appoint (or in the case of the Central Okanagan's Westside Electoral Area, elect) more than one director to the regional district board. In unweighted votes, each director of the board receives one vote. A large jurisdiction that is represented by several directors on the board receives one vote for each of its directors.

Taken together, these concepts – vote entitlement, vote weighting and voting unit – help to promote important principles such as accountability, fairness and equity in regional district decision-making.

The concepts outlined above form the foundation for the key voting rules that guide decision-making at the board table. Three primary rules exist:

**Unweighted Corporate Vote** — This type of vote is used to decide matters that affect the corporation and all jurisdictions that comprise the regional district. Every director is entitled to vote and receives one vote. Unweighted corporate votes are used to determine a range of matters, including:

- establishing bylaws for services
- regulatory bylaws
- resolutions and bylaws on the conduct of the board's business (e.g., procedure bylaws, the conduct of meetings)
- several issues under LGA Part 26 (planning and land use management)

**Weighted Corporate Vote** — Weighted corporate votes govern decisions on money matters, including the adoption of the annual financial plan, borrowing, property acquisition and disposal, and key contracts. Each director on the

board is entitled to vote; each receives the number of votes as determined by the voting unit. All votes accorded a director, incidentally, must be used as a block (i.e., all in favour, or all against).

**Stakeholder Vote (Weighted)** — Stakeholder votes are used to make decisions related to the administration and operation of regional district services. Only directors representing jurisdictions that participate in the service in question are entitled to vote in stakeholder votes. All stakeholder votes are weighted votes; as such, each participating director receives the number of votes determined in accordance with the voting unit.

These three primary rules apply to all regional districts in British Columbia except the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). At the GVRD, there are no unweighted corporate votes. All votes, whether corporate or stakeholder, are on a weighted basis, except for the election of the Chair and Vice Chair, in which case an unweighted secret ballot vote is used.

Adding some complexity to this system is the fact that some decisions made at the board table are multi-level in nature and require more than one vote. For example, the decision to contract out a service to an external service provider rests with the stakeholders or participants in that service. However, the legal contract between the regional district and the external service provider requires a weighted corporate vote.

In addition to the primary rules, there are some secondary rules to note. One such rule states that no matter may be decided by only one director. Thus, in a case where only one director would





be entitled to vote, as per the primary rules, each director present at the table must vote on an unweighted basis. This type of situation occurs for decisions related to the administration and operation of a regional district service that is provided to only one jurisdiction.

Another secondary rule concerns the issue of abstention from voting. Every director who is at the board table and who is entitled to vote on a particular matter *must* vote — abstention from voting is not permitted. If the director does not indicate his or her preference in a vote, the director is deemed to have voted in the affirmative.

Most matters at the board table are determined by a simple majority of votes cast (i.e., 50% plus 1), whether weighted or unweighted. On certain matters, however, a two-thirds majority must be achieved in order for a motion to pass. Matters requiring an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of all directors include:

- the termination without cause of an Officer's employment
- delegation of the board's powers to a committee or commission of the board, or to an employee
- exercise of emergency powers
- the amendment or repeal of establish-

ing bylaws in specific cases

- property tax exemptions
- providing consent on behalf of an electoral area director

In 2000, changes to the *Local Government Act* were introduced to allow regional district boards to vary the stakeholder voting rule that governs decision-making as it relates to the administration and operation of services. Specifically, regional districts may change the number of votes provided to each director, or the basis on which votes are assigned. The board, for example, could assign votes on the basis of usage or property assessment, instead of population. Alternatively, all directors could be given the same number of votes (each director of a participating area must receive at least one). All variances must be identified in and enacted through the establishing bylaw for the service in question.

The ability to design customized voting rules is even stronger in situations where the board delegates authority over administration and operation to a body of the board, such as a commission. Membership in the body, voting weight and the size of majority required for decisions can all be customized to address specific goals and/or sensitivities.

## More info

The best resource for further information on regional district voting rules is Bulletin A.11.0.0 titled *Regional District Voting Rules*, published in late 2000 by the Ministry of Community Services ([www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd)). The Bulletin's Appendix A, titled "Application of Voting Rules Under Part 24", features a comprehensive and useful table.

Further information on regional districts' ability to vary the stakeholder vote rules is provided in the Ministry's Bulletin F.3.2.0 titled *Regional District Services Establishing Bylaws: Content and Approval Processes* (same website).



# REGIONAL DISTRICT VOTING RULES – QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

## FACT SHEET 5 – Regional District Tool Kit 2005

STATUTE SECTION	BOARD ACTION	ENTITLEMENT	COUNT	VOTES REQUIRED
<b>Corporate Powers</b>				
LGA 192(1)	Bylaw to delegate a power, duty or function	All	Directors	2/3
LGA 192(2)	Bylaw to revoke a board delegation	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 200(1)	Appointment of officers and employees	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 202(1)	Resolution to terminate an officer for cause	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 202(2)	Resolution to terminate an officer without cause	All	Directors	2/3
LGA 309 and 791(7)(b)	Authorizing the acquisition, expropriation or disposal of real property	All	Votes	Majority
LGA 798.1	Emergency powers (emergency declaration bylaw)	All	Directors	2/3
<b>Governance and Procedures</b>				
LGA 794(1)	Procedure, bylaws and enforcement	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 794(3)	Adopt certain bylaws at same meeting as third reading (bylaws not requiring approval, consent or assent)	All	Directors	2/3
LGA 795	Appointment of select committees	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 838	Bylaw to establish local community	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 791(4)	Administration and operation of a service (except general administration)	Participants <sup>1</sup>	Votes	Majority
LGA 800(2)(a) (b) and (c)	General administration; electoral area administration; feasibility studies (no establishing bylaw required)	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 791(7)(a)	Authorizing persons to enter into contracts on behalf of the regional district	All	Votes	Majority
<b>Service Powers</b>				
LGA 800 and Div 4.1	Establishing bylaws	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 796.1(2)(b)	Giving consent for a service inside the regional district, provided by another regional district	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 796.2	Authorities in relation to a service other than a regulatory service	Participants	Votes	Majority
LGA 797.1	Specific regulatory and other powers	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 799	Resolution requesting additional powers and exceptions	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 792(4)	Election of chairperson and vice chairperson	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 793(4)	Resolution to waive notice of special meeting	All	Directors	Unanimous
LGA 801(4)	Resolution to obtain approval of electors overall, instead of obtaining approval separately in the participating areas	All	Directors	2/3
LGA 801(2)(b)	Decision to obtain approval by alternative approval process	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 801.5(1)	Board consent on behalf of electoral participating area electors	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 801.5(3)	Resolution to dispense with electoral area director consent	All	Directors	2/3
LGA 802(1)	Amendment or repeal of establishing bylaws	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 802(2)	Dispense with electoral area director consent for amendment or repeal of establishing bylaws	All	Directors	2/3
LGA 813.02(2)	Service review or service withdrawal (appointment of	All	Directors	Majority

<sup>1</sup> Note that LGA Section 791(11) states that if only one director would be entitled to vote, each director who is present is entitled to vote and has one vote.

STATUTE SECTION	BOARD ACTION	ENTITLEMENT	COUNT	VOTES REQUIRED
	director to represent the board)			
LGA 950(2)	Heritage Conservation bylaw and permit procedures - resolution vary time limit for specific reapplication	Participants	Directors	2/3
<b>Finance / Budget</b>				
CC 204	Parcel tax roll review panel	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 791(7)(c) and 815	Adopt the Financial plan / annual budget bylaw	All	Votes	Majority
CC Div 4 of Part 6	Reserve Funds	Participants	Votes	Majority
CC 175	Liabilities under agreements	All	Votes	Majority
LGA 821	Bylaw to provide for revenue anticipation borrowing	All	Votes	Majority
LGA 822	Bylaw for short term capital borrowing	All	Votes	Majority
LGA 823 and CC 179	Loan authorization bylaws	All	Votes	Majority
LGA 823(3)	Resolution to dispense with EA director consent for amending or repealing a loan authorization bylaw	All	Directors	2/3
LGA 824	Financing municipal undertakings	All	Votes	Majority
LGA 825	Security issuing bylaws	All	Votes	Majority
LGA 808(2)	Bylaw to establish an annual variable tax rate system	Participants	Votes	Majority
LGA 809(3)	Bylaw to provide property tax exemptions	All	Directors	2/3
LGA 810(2)	Bylaw to provide property tax exemptions for heritage properties	All	Directors	2/3
LGA 810.1(5)	Repayment requirement in relation to heritage exemptions	All	Directors	2/3
LGA 811(2)	Bylaw to provide property tax exemptions for riparian property	All	Directors	2/3
LGA 287.2	Indemnification against proceedings	All	Directors	2/3
<b>Planning and Land Use Management</b>				
LGA 863 and 791(3)(f)	Bylaw to adopt a regional growth strategy (for entire regional district)	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 791(16)	Bylaw to adopt a growth strategy for an area less than the entire regional district	Participants (except per 791(17))	Directors	Majority
LGA 791(3)(g) and Part 26	Electoral area planning and land use management	All <sup>2</sup>	Directors	Majority
LGA 193	Bylaw to delegate public hearings	All	Directors	Majority
LGA 895(3)	Development approval procedures – resolution to vary time limit for specific reapplication	Participants	Directors	2/3
LGA 791(12)	Approval of cost sharing for Part 26 services	All (except per 791(12)(a) and 791(13)(a))	Directors	Majority

**This guide was written as a resource for regional district boards and is provided as a reference for convenience only. This is not an official description of the application of regional district voting rules. For more complete information, please refer to the legislation.**

<sup>2</sup> Subject to LGA 804.1 (Cost sharing for Part 26 services). Note that municipal directors do not vote if they have opted out of the planning service.



# Regional District Finance

## Finance

*Fact Sheet 6 introduces the basics of regional district finance.*

### *Funding a Service*

#### *Creating Separate Service Funds*

Perhaps the key feature of regional district finance is its use of separate, discrete funds for different regional district services. Every service provided by a regional district is accounted for separately using a dedicated service fund. The fund identifies the full cost to the regional district of providing the service, including a portion of general overhead. Each year, revenues specific to the service must be collected to pay the full cost. No service is permitted to run an operating deficit in any year.

Because the funds are discrete, revenues and costs specific to one service cannot be arbitrarily shifted to or spread among other services. Each regional district service has its own group of participating jurisdictions. Participants in one service are not expected to subsidize, and are not permitted to be subsidized by, participants of other services. A key principle of the regional district system is fiscal equivalence, which in practice means that participating jurisdictions and the residents within them “pay for what they get”. The use of separate service funds supports this principle.

#### *Determining and Assigning Costs*

Regional district boards are responsible for determining and applying their own approaches and formulas for allocating overhead costs among services. It is

important to understand the difference between the terms “cost allocation” and “cost recovery”. The next few paragraphs clarify what these terms mean and how they are used.

As explained above, each regional district service has its own, dedicated service fund. All costs incurred in providing a particular service must be included in that service’s fund. Some costs incurred will clearly relate to one specific service — assigning these costs to the service’s fund will be a relatively simple exercise. Other costs incurred, however, will not relate exclusively to one function. Salaries of administrative staff, for example, will be attributable to several different services and will need to be allocated to, or spread across, a number of different service funds.

#### *Allocating Overhead to Services*

The full cost of providing a service includes a portion of the regional district’s overhead. “Overhead” includes, among other items, the cost of lighting and heating regional district buildings (e.g., the main office) and the salaries of key regional district administrative staff (e.g., the Chief Administrative Officer). Some overhead costs are incurred simply to run the regional district corporation — these costs cannot legitimately be allocated to any specific service, and so are grouped together under general administration



and/or electoral area administration. A portion of most overhead components, however, can be attributed to individual functions. It is clear, for example, that regional district finance staff members must dedicate a part, however small, of their time to the management of each service. The cost of that portion of time represents overhead for the particular service, and is allocated to the service's fund.

### *Determining Cost Recovery Method*

Once all costs have been allocated to the different funds, and the total cost of providing each service has been established, the regional district needs to determine how to recover, or pay for, the cost. In some cases, regional districts will turn to user fees and charges (e.g., utility charges, building permit fees) to recover the full cost of a service. In most cases, however, regional districts will rely on property taxes to recover at least a portion of the service costs.

### *Apportioning Costs*

The costs to be recovered using property taxes must be apportioned among, or shared by, the jurisdictions that participate in the individual services. The default basis on which to allocate costs is converted assessment. In accordance with this method, the portion of costs to be recovered through taxes is divided up among the participating jurisdictions based on each jurisdiction's proportion of the total service area's converted assessment (land and improvements).

If converted assessment is not considered appropriate, jurisdictions may

agree on another method (or combination of methods), such as:

- an alternative tax base (e.g., improvements only)
- population
- the quantity of service used by each jurisdiction
- fixed proportions
- a combinations of factors

In all, jurisdictions may base cost sharing on any one factor or combination of factors. Whichever method is chosen, however, must be identified in the service establishing bylaw. If the bylaw is silent on how costs are to be allocated among jurisdictions, converted assessment is automatically used.

### *Financial Plan*

Regional Districts, like municipalities, must adopt an annual five-year financial plan (i.e., budget). The financial plan must set out the proposed operating and capital expenditures and revenue sources for each service during each year of the five year planning period. The plan must be approved, by bylaw, by March 31st each year.

Prior to adoption, the regional district board must undertake a public consultation process on the proposed plan. The legislation does not specify what exactly is required in the consultation process – regional districts have wide discretion with respect to the type and level of consultation to conduct. Public meetings, open houses and newspaper information inserts are some of the ways regional districts choose to inform and engage their publics. Following



adoption, regional districts must send a copy of the proposed plan to each member municipality and to the province's Inspector of Municipalities.

## Revenue Collection

The major revenue sources for regional district services include property taxes, parcel taxes and fees and charges. Fees and charges, such as recreation admission fees and water usage charges, are collected directly from service users by the regional district (or its agent). Property value and parcel taxes are collected on behalf of the regional district by other governments. The system of collecting regional district tax revenues is different for electoral areas and municipalities:

- In electoral areas, regional district taxes are collected by the BC Ministry of Small Business and Revenue. Each year, the regional district submits tax requisitions for each service to the Ministry through the Inspector of Municipalities. The Ministry applies a rate against assessed property values within each relevant service area to raise the revenues required. Once collected, the revenues are paid to the regional district.

- In municipalities, regional district taxes are collected by the municipal governments. Each year the regional district sends each member municipality a requisition that identifies the amount of tax owed by property owners, within the municipality, who receive regional district services. The municipality collects the property and parcel taxes required to pay the requisition, and then forwards the revenues to the regional district.

## Tax Notices

Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a "regional district tax notice" since regional districts do not themselves collect tax revenues from property owners. Tax bills for regional district services do, however, appear both on the provincial property tax notices that are sent to residents of electoral areas, and the municipal property tax notices that are sent to residents of member municipalities. Both types of notice list regional district services in which the jurisdiction participates. Beside some of the listed services is a tax rate, and beside the rate is the amount owed by the property owner. The amount owing is determined by multiplying the tax rate by the property's assessed value. For

## Listing of Regional District Services on Tax Notices

Service	Assessed Value	Rate	Owing
Recreation	\$150,000	0.90	\$ 135.00
Fire Protection	\$150,000	0.85	\$ 127.50
EA Planning	\$150,000	0.34	\$ 51.00
E-911	\$150,000	0.05	\$ 10.00
Water	\$150,000	1.00	\$ 150.00



services that are funded using parcel taxes, only the amount owing shows. The diagram below illustrates how such information typically appears.

On both provincial (electoral area) and municipal tax notices, regional district services are itemized so that property holders can easily identify exactly what they are paying for each regional district service they receive. This approach to taxation is designed to maximize transparency and accountability.

## Debt Processing

A key mandated function of each regional district is to process all of the long-term borrowing that is undertaken by the regional district itself, and by each of its member municipalities. The flowchart below illustrates, in simplified form, the steps that the regional district and its municipalities must take.

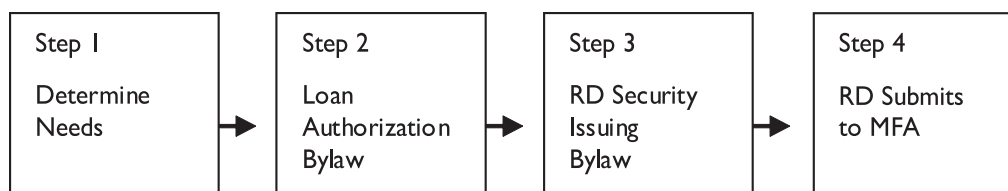
The process begins with the municipality or the regional district determining its own capital borrowing needs. Once the required level is determined, the municipality or regional district prepares a *loan authorization bylaw*. In most cases the loan authorization bylaw must receive the approval of the electors before it can be adopted by the

council or board. In every case, the loan authorization bylaw must receive a certificate of approval from the Inspector of Municipalities.

Once approved, the regional district loan authorization bylaw and in the case of municipalities, the security issuing resolutions, are submitted to the regional district board. The regional district board combines the required borrowing amounts from each bylaw and resolution and creates a *security issuing bylaw*. Each security issuing bylaw, like each loan authorization bylaw, must receive a certificate of approval from the Inspector of Municipalities.

Once the security issuing bylaw is adopted, it is forwarded by the regional district board to the Board of Directors of the *Municipal Finance Authority* (MFA). The MFA's Board of Directors is comprised of representatives of regional district boards across the province. On two occasions per year, the MFA's Board receives, considers and approves the combined local government borrowing needs, as outlined in the various regional district security issuing bylaws. Once the borrowing needs are approved, the MFA's executive and administration proceed to sell the necessary debentures in international markets.

## Processing Requests for Long-Term Borrowing



## Development Finance

A final point to mention with respect to regional district financing relates to the use of development finance tools. Some regional districts, like some municipalities, are situated in high-growth areas of the province. In these areas, the need to accommodate new growth often results in demands for new infrastructure such as sewer and water systems. Regional districts that are responsible for developing these systems have available a range of development finance

tools designed to assign the capital cost of growth-related infrastructure to new growth itself. The best known and most widely used tool is development cost charges (DCCs).

Within electoral areas, regional districts directly collect DCCs from developers through the development approval process. Within municipalities, regional district DCCs are collected by municipal governments during the municipal development approval process and remitted to the regional district.

## More info

Readers who would like to learn more about regional district finance may wish to consult the following items, all of which are published by the Ministry of Community Services and are available online at [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd):

- *A Primer on Regional Districts in British Columbia*
- Bulletin D.7.0.0. *Regional Districts: Financial Operations*
- *Development Cost Charges Guide*
- *Development Finance Choices Guide*
- *Development Coast Charge Guide for Elected Officials*

For further information on the processing of long-term borrowing, readers may wish to visit the Municipal Finance Authority's website at [www.mfa.bc](http://www.mfa.bc).





# Electoral Area Governance

*This Fact Sheet outlines the framework for governing electoral areas.*

Regional districts in British Columbia consist of incorporated jurisdictions known as municipalities, and unincorporated jurisdictions known as electoral areas.<sup>1</sup> Electoral areas are typically rural in nature, though some have evolved semi-urban or urban characteristics. One area – the Westside Electoral Area in the Central Okanagan Regional District – has grown into large urban community of 35,000 and now is larger than most municipalities in the province.

The governance framework for electoral areas consists of a number of different components. This Fact Sheet identifies and describes the key components.

**Citizens** — The citizens of electoral areas participate in a number of ways in electoral area governance. Citizens provide input, for example, to their electoral area director through both informal and formal means. Citizens – or at least those registered to vote – directly elect their electoral area director to represent the area on the regional district board of directors. Finally, through citizen initiatives, referenda and the alternative approval process (i.e., counter petitions), citizens choose the types of regional district services they wish to receive and pay for.

**Board of Directors** — The regional district's board of directors is the governing body for all electoral areas of the regional district. The board makes the bylaws required for the regional district to provide services to electoral areas. The board also makes most decisions required to regulate development and related activities in electoral areas. Depending on the issues being considered, only some members of the board may actually participate in voting and decision-making. Regardless of the number of directors voting, however, the decisions that emerge in all cases are decisions of the board.

Some regional district boards have chosen to establish commissions (see later), and to delegate some decision-making authority to those bodies. Ultimate authority over all regional district matters in electoral areas, however, rests with the board.

**Electoral Area Director** — Each electoral area is represented on its regional district's board of directors by one electoral area director.<sup>2</sup> The director is elected to the board every three years by the voters in his or her area during the province-wide local government elections. In plain terms, the director has three key responsibilities:

- 1 The Central Coast Regional District is the exception: it consists entirely of electoral areas. The Greater Vancouver Regional District includes only one electoral area.
- 2 The Westside Electoral Area of Central Okanagan Regional District is the sole exception with three electoral area directors.



## Electoral Areas





- to identify, using the input of citizens, the service needs and interests of his or her area
- to promote the area's service needs and interests at the board table, where they may be addressed through the establishment of, or through changes to, regional district local, sub-regional and regional services
- to participate in decision-making as it relates to the administration of services in which the electoral area participates, including electoral area planning, whose administration involves the consideration of development applications and the regulation of land use

*“Ultimate authority over all regional district matters in electoral areas, rests with the board.”*

The director, it should be understood, is not the mayor or CEO of his or her electoral area, nor is he or she the area's governing body. The regional district's board of directors, as noted earlier, is the legal governing body for the electoral area; and the chair of the board of directors is the CEO of the regional district corporation. The electoral area director is the area's representative on the board of directors, and clearly has an important role to play in representing the area's interests and promoting its needs to the board. Actions and initiatives proposed by the individual electoral area director, however, must

receive the support of the regional board in order to have any effect or authority.

**Alternate Director** — Each electoral area director is required under the *Local Government Act* to appoint an alternate director. The alternate must have the qualifications necessary to be nominated as director (e.g., must be a Canadian citizen, must have resided in BC for the last six months, etc.). The alternate is responsible for acting in place of the director during periods of absence. When acting for the director, the alternate has all of director's authority, including the authority to vote at the board table, and participate in discussions and development reviews as the electoral area's representative. In the event that the director, through death, resignation or disqualification, is unable to continue holding office, the alternate acts as the director until the next by-election or general local government election.

**Optional Components** — There are a number of optional components in the electoral area governance framework. For example:

- The regional district's board of directors may appoint an **Advisory Planning Commission** (APC) to advise the board or the electoral area director on land use matters, the preparation of an official community plan, or a proposed development bylaw or permit. The APC must be established by bylaw, and may only advise on matters that are referred to it by the board or director. At least two-thirds of the members of the APC must be residents of the electoral area; the

## Electoral Areas



director may not serve as a member, but may attend APC meetings.

- The board of directors may establish, by bylaw, a *Local Community Commission* (LCC) with delegated authority to oversee the administration of regional district services provided to a defined local community within an electoral area. Membership of the LCC consists of the electoral area director and a number of residents elected by the community either annually or every three years. The

establishment of the LCC must be approved by the electors within the identified local community.

- Some regional boards have established *Electoral Area Commissions* (EAC) with delegated authority to oversee services, such as electoral area planning, in which all of the region's electoral areas participate. EACs typically are given the authority to make all service-related decisions, except those that by law must be made by the board of directors.

## Electoral Areas



### More info

For more information, see *A Primer on Regional Districts in British Columbia*, available online at [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd). Also refer to Fact Sheet 2 on Structure of Regional Districts.



# Regional Districts & the Provincial Government

## RDs & the Province

*Fact Sheet 8 outlines the structural relationship between regional districts and the provincial government.*

### *Canadian System*

Canada's Constitution is the supreme law of the land. Sections 91, 92, 92A and 93 of the Constitution divide all powers and responsibilities between the federal and provincial orders of government. The federal government, for example, is given the authority under section 91 to make laws and undertake activities in areas such as foreign affairs, defence, banking and fisheries. Sections 92, 92A and 93 give provincial governments jurisdiction in areas such as education, natural resources and health care.

Local government is not recognized by the Constitution as a specific order of government. Instead, local government is identified in section 92 as a provincial responsibility. In the Canadian system of government, it is the provinces that have the authority to create and empower local governments. Each province in Canada has used this authority to establish a network of different types of local governments to provide important local services, as well as to provide democratic forums for local decision-making. The key local government types in BC's network are municipalities and regional districts.

### *Local Government Act*

In BC, the principal mechanism used to empower regional districts and

define their responsibilities is the *Local Government Act*. Historically, the *Local Government Act* was very prescriptive in nature. In the mid-1990s, however, the provincial government began a three-part reform of the legislation. Through this exercise, regional district boards were given broad powers to undertake the activities and services that they feel are important within their regions. Regional boards were not, to be sure, given carte blanche in all areas of activity; many important functions were kept exclusively under provincial jurisdiction. Boards were, however, given greater autonomy to act as they see fit within their defined areas of jurisdiction.

In 2004, the *Community Charter* came into force. This piece of legislation represents, in essence, a fourth stage in the legislative process that began in the mid-1990s. The *Charter* was drafted primarily for municipalities, and has become the principal statute for municipal governments. It expands on and entrenches the broad powers that were conferred upon municipalities in the earlier stages of the reform process. It also explicitly recognizes municipalities as an autonomous order of government, and sets out principles for municipal-provincial relations.



The principal statute for regional districts remains the *Local Government Act*. Recent changes to the Act, however, have served to make its treatment of local government fundamentally consistent with that of the *Charter*. Part 1 of the Act, for example, now recognizes that regional districts, like municipalities, are “...an independent, responsible and accountable order of government within their jurisdiction...”. Part 1 also sets out principles for provincial – regional district relations that, by and large, mirror the principles set out in the *Charter* for municipalities.

*“The principal statute for regional districts remains the Local Government Act.”*

#### Ministry of Community Services

The Ministry of Community Services (CSERV) is the main point of contact for regional districts in their dealings with the province. In broad terms, CSERV plays five different roles with respect to regional districts:

- CSERV administers and maintains the *Local Government Act*. The ministry is responsible in this role for ensuring that the Act provides the flexibility needed by regional districts to meet the needs of their communities within the broad framework of provincial interests and objectives.
- CSERV provides advice to regional districts on a wide variety of local government topics, including boundaries and structure, community development, elections, engineering

and safety, environment, finance, governance, legislation, planning and service arrangements. Much of the ministry’s advice is presented through various support materials produced by the ministry’s Local Government Department, including best practice guides, circulars and bulletins.

- CSERV administers various conditional and unconditional federal and provincial government grant programs that provide funding for regional district initiatives and infrastructure.
- The ministry regulates certain types of regional district activities, particularly those in the area of regional district finance. Through the Inspector of Municipalities, for example, the ministry reviews and approves all regional district service establishment, loan authorization and security issuing bylaws, as well as regional district DCC bylaws.
- CSERV increasingly assists regional districts in the area of dispute resolution. CSERV will, for example, assist in resolving disputes that are the subject of regional district service reviews (see Fact Sheet 4), regional growth strategies or other issues of concern or conflict between a regional district and a municipality.

#### Other Ministries, Agencies & Statutes

The Ministry of Community Services is the primary point of contact between the provincial government and regional districts, and the *Local Government Act* is the chief provincial statute that applies to regional districts. There are many other ministries, agencies and



statutes, however, that regional districts deal with on a regular basis. For example:

- *The Ministry of Environment* administers and maintains the province's *Environmental Management Act* which provides authority and contains provisions related to regional districts' waste management planning services. The same ministry regulates water, flood hazards and other environment-related issues that concern regional districts.
- *The Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General* oversees the *Liquor Control and Licensing Act* which outlines a regulatory role for regional districts in reviewing liquor license applications. The same ministry oversees the *Emergency Program Act* under which the Provincial Emergency Program operates.
- *The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner* – an independent agency – oversees the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. This statute determines how regional districts, as public bodies, may collect, use and disclose personal information.
- *The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands* manages the allocation of Crown land on behalf of the provincial government.
- *Ministry of Transportation* has authority over subdivision approval in electoral areas.
- *BC Assessment* provides regional districts with various annual statutory reports (e.g., Regional District Service Area reports, which identify the assessment base for each service area in a regional district), and receives from regional districts development and other information that may influence property assessments, or the classification of properties.

## More info

The best starting place for further information on the structural relationship between regional districts and the provincial government is the website of CSERV's Local Government Department ([www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd)). This site profiles the various roles of the Department and provides access to the full range of advisory and support materials for regional districts.

CSERV's *Summary of Local Government Legislation 2004*, also available on the web site, identifies various provincial statutes (and specific amendments) that affect local governments.



## RDs & the Province





# Regional Districts & First Nations

*Fact Sheet 9 introduces the topic of regional district-First Nations relations.*

In recent decades, First Nations in British Columbia have achieved increased recognition of their aboriginal rights to self-government and their claims over traditional lands. Over this same period, the need for effective working relationships between First Nations and local governments has also been increasingly recognized.

Working relationships involving First Nations and local governments (municipalities and regional districts) are developing, and will continue to develop, through a number of initiatives. This Fact Sheet outlines some of these initiatives.

## *Treaty Process*

In 1992, British Columbia, Canada and the First Nations Summit established the six-stage BC Treaty Process as the made-in-BC model for resolving the many outstanding First Nation land claims in the province. BC, Canada and the First Nations were identified as the three official parties with standing in the Process. The need to involve local governments in treaty talks, however, became apparent soon after the Process was unveiled. Many of the issues being discussed through the Treaty Process affect the interests of local governments and communities.

In 1993, UBCM, acting on behalf of local governments, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the

provincial government to guarantee local government participation in the treaty process. Arising out of the MOU came the establishment of local government *Treaty Advisory Committees* (TACs). Individual local governments (including regional districts) were asked to appoint a representative to sit on a TAC. Each TAC became responsible for coordinating the interests of the affected local governments, and presenting the interests as advice to the provincial government's negotiating team.

*“Many of the issues being discussed through the Treaty Process affect the interests of local governments and communities.”*

In 2003, UBCM and the provincial government signed a new MOU. The new document, which remains in effect today, serves to more clearly define and broaden the role of local governments in the treaty process. The new MOU explicitly provides the opportunity for a local government (including a regional district) to negotiate directly with a First Nation at a “side table” on issues related to the future relationship between the two governments. The MOU formally recognizes the usefulness of direct First Nation-local government talks.



## RDs & First Nations





## Formal Agreements

In recent years, local governments and First Nations have directly negotiated (outside of the Treaty Process) a variety of formal agreements. Some agreements simply express the parties' joint commitment to working together and communicating with one another. These agreements are relationship-builders. Examples include:

- Regional District of Comox-Strathcona and the Xwemalhkwa (Homalco) First Nation's Protocol Respecting a Regional Accord
- Central Okanagan Regional District and the Westbank First Nation's Statement of Political Relationship

*"UBCM and the First Nations Summit held the first province-wide Community to Community Forum in 1997."*

- Fraser Fort-George Regional District and Lheidli T'enneh First Nation's Protocol on Cooperation and Communication

Other agreements deal with specific servicing issues, such as the provision of sewer and water to First Nation communities, and resource management issues. Examples include:

- Sunshine Coast Regional District and the Sechelt Indian Band's Watershed Accord
- Capital Regional District and T'souke Nation Agreement on resource management

- Central Okanagan Regional District and Westbank First Nation's Agreement on the provision of regional district sewer services to the Tsinkikeptum Indian Reserves 9 and 10

## Regional Governance Discussions

In recent years, increased attention has been given to the topic of First Nation participation on regional district boards. The Lower Mainland Treaty Advisory Committee (LMTAC) has identified a spectrum of possible participation models ranging from no participation to full membership on the board with the rights and responsibilities of a member municipality. The latter model exists already in the Sunshine Coast Regional District, which the Sechelt Indian Government District joined as a municipal-like member in 1988.

## Community to Community Forums

UBCM and the First Nations Summit held the first province-wide Community to Community Forum in 1997. The Forum brought together First Nation and local government elected leaders from across BC to discuss issues of common concern and strengthen government-to-government relationships.

The initial Forum prompted UBCM and the First Nations Summit to create the Regional Community to Community Forum Program, with on-going financial support provided by the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and provincial Ministry of Community Services. Events funded by this program are jointly organized by neighbouring local governments (municipal councils and/or regional boards) and



First Nations and provide a forum for dialogue on issues of common concern.

Since the year 2000, over 100 regional forums have been held between neighbouring First Nations and local governments across BC.

## RDs & First Nations



### More info

Readers interested in learning more about regional district-First Nation relationships, and the various initiatives in place to help relationships develop, may wish to consider the following sources:

- *Building Relations with First Nations: A Handbook for Local Government*, prepared by UBCM and LMTAC (available online at [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca))
- *Regional Governance and Governance in the Region*, prepared by LMTAC (also available online at [www.lmtac.bc.ca](http://www.lmtac.bc.ca))
- UBCM's introduction to the Regional Community to Community Forum Program (available online at [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca))
- MOU on *Local Government Participation in the Negotiation of Treaties and Agreements* (available online at [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd))
- *Approaches and Options for Treaties in Urban Areas* (available online at [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca))



# Regional Districts & Planning

*This Fact Sheet outlines the role of regional districts in planning and land-use management.*

**Planning for Electoral Areas** — Regional districts are the local governments for their electoral areas, responsible for providing core local government services. One such core service is electoral area planning, which includes planning for and regulation of all land development that occurs outside of a regional district's member municipalities. All electoral areas within a regional district must participate in the region's electoral area planning service. Municipalities may participate in all or part of this planning service, unless they opt out of paying for electoral area planning, after providing the required notice.

From a planning and development perspective, regional districts are to electoral areas what municipal governments are to municipalities: the only body with the authority and mandate to make the regulations and provide the services required for proper land development to occur. Property owners and developers who wish to develop within an electoral area must recognize and work within the regional district's planning regulations, in the same way that persons active in municipalities must recognize and work within the municipal government's regulations.

Through its electoral area planning service, a regional district may undertake the following types of initiatives and actions:

- prepare, adopt and administer **Official Community Plans** for electoral areas or parts of electoral areas
- prepare, adopt and administer **zoning bylaws** for electoral areas or parts of electoral areas
- identify **development permit areas**, create guidelines for development in the areas, review development permit applications and, where appropriate, issue permits
- review **development variance permit** applications and, where appropriate, issue permits
- establish and apply **development cost charge** bylaws and other development finance mechanisms
- enter into **housing agreements** for the provision of affordable and special needs housing

Regional districts do not have the authority to approve subdivisions — authority over subdivision approval in electoral areas continues to rest with the provincial Ministry of Transportation. Regional districts are involved, however, in reviewing subdivision applications to ensure conformity with the applicable OCP, zoning bylaw, subdivision and development servicing bylaw and other relevant items.

Electoral area planning and development-related regulatory decisions, with the exception of subdivision approval, are made by the regional board



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of directors who participate in electoral area planning. Directors in most regional districts are assisted in their decision-making by Advisory Planning Commissions (APCs) which the board may establish to provide advice on planning and land-use matters (see Fact Sheet 7 on Electoral Area Governance). Every regional district that has adopted a zoning bylaw must also establish a three-person Board of Variance. The Board of Variance is independent of the regional board of directors, and exists to review applications for variances to zoning bylaw regulations in cases where property owners feel that compliance would result in undue hardship.

**Planning for Municipalities** — Municipal governments, not regional districts, are the bodies with authority over planning and land use management within municipal boundaries. Many smaller municipalities, however, contract their regional districts to actually deliver the required planning and development services. In the North Okanagan, for example, the City of Armstrong, Village of Lumby and Township of Spallumcheen contract with the Regional District of North Okanagan to deliver planning and development services. In each case, the municipal council remains the governing and decision-making body for the services. The regional district administration is contracted to support the municipal council in preparing and administering the bylaws and approval processes.

**Planning for Regions** — Regional districts do not have regulatory authority over planning and land use management for the region as a whole. Re-

gional districts do have the authority, however, to create *Regional Growth Strategies*.

A Regional Growth Strategy is a long-range strategic vision document that:

- sets out, for the regional district and its member jurisdictions, agreed-upon economic, social and environmental goals
- guides the planning, growth management and development decisions of the regional district and member municipalities in ways that promote the agreed-upon goals

Regional Growth Strategies are initiated by regional districts, but are prepared by regional districts and their member municipalities working together as equal partners. Each strategy is, as noted, a long-range vision — 20 years is the minimum time frame. Each strategy must include a comprehensive statement on the future of the region, including the social, economic and environmental objectives of the strategy. It must project population and employment, and must set out proposed actions related to housing, transportation, services, parks and economic development to meet the needs of the future population.

A Regional Growth Strategy must be adopted by the regional district board (by bylaw) and accepted by the council of every member municipality (by resolution) in order to take effect. Dispute resolution processes are outlined in the *Local Government Act* to assist regional districts and member municipalities deal with objections to a proposed strategy.



Each municipality within the regional district that has an OCP must develop and insert into its OCP a *Regional Context Statement*. The Regional Context Statement sets out the relationship between the OCP and the Regional Growth Strategy. The Regional Growth Strategy, it should be understood, is intended to provide a context for planning and growth management policies that are created by the regional district itself and by its member municipalities. Each OCP created by the regional district or a member municipality, therefore, is expected to be consistent with the broad directions set out in the Regional Growth Strategy. The Regional Context Statement produced by each municipality speaks to the consistency that exists, or that will exist at some future point.

Regional Growth Strategies are voluntary initiatives, the authority for which has been in place since 1995. Today,

eight regional districts either have or are in the process of developing a strategy. Each of these regional districts is located in the province's three high-growth areas: the Lower Mainland, the Okanagan Valley and Southern Vancouver Island.

*Regional Planning Initiatives* — In addition to Regional Growth Strategies, some regional districts have undertaken various initiatives aimed at addressing planning and land use management issues of importance to the region as a whole. The Regional District of Central Okanagan, for example, has undertaken specific initiatives related to:

- transportation and mobility in the Central Okanagan
- economic development throughout the region
- regional air quality
- water resources in the Central Okanagan
- environmental protection

## More info

Parts 25 (Regional Growth Strategies) and 26 (Planning and Land Use Management) of the *Local Government Act* contain all of the relevant legislative provisions related to electoral area and regional planning. *About Regional Growth Strategies*, published online by the Ministry of Community Services ([www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd)) gives a good overview of Regional Growth Strategies.

*An Explanatory Guide to BC's Growth Strategies Legislation*, available on-line at [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd).

Readers may also wish to consult the Planning Department website at the Regional District of Central Okanagan ([www.regionaldistrict.com](http://www.regionaldistrict.com)). RDCO makes available on this site various information guides on electoral area planning and regional planning initiatives.

Finally, the Skeena-Queen Charlotte Regional District offers a *Development Procedure Manual*, 1998, available online at [www.sqcrd.bc.ca](http://www.sqcrd.bc.ca). This Manual walks developers through the development approval processes and regulations in the regional district's electoral areas.



This section of the *Tool Kit* contains a set of Effective Practices papers. As the category title suggests, these Effective Practices focus on *communications*. More specifically, the Practices presented here identify ways that regional districts can reach out and connect with different audiences to improve their understanding of regional districts. The Effective Practices do not advise regional districts on how to handle servicing issues, how to use new legislative provisions, how to develop policy, or other matters. Future editions of the *Tool Kit*, it is expected, will contain effective practices on these important topics. The present focus is limited to helping regional districts reach, communicate with and educate target audiences.

Potential target audiences to be reached using the Effective Practices on communications include:

- Elected and appointed officials from member municipalities
- MLAs, ministers and appointed provincial officials
- Media representatives, particularly those who are appointed to cover regional and regional district affairs
- Developers, particularly those who are active in electoral areas
- Persons and property holders who receive regional district services

### Contents

The First Edition of the *Tool Kit* contains ten separate Effective Practices papers on communications. With one exception (EP-C 10), all of the papers profile actual practices being followed by one or more regional districts in the province. The accompanying table identifies the individual papers.







	<i>Title</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
EP-C 1	Highlights of Board Meetings	To provide the public, member councils, the media and other interested parties with an objective, fact-based report on the most recent board meeting.
EP-C 2	Presentations to Member Jurisdictions	To educate councils of member municipalities and citizens of member jurisdictions (municipalities and electoral areas) on the regional district and, more specifically, what the regional district does for them.
EP-C 3	Board on the Road	To strengthen the relationship between the regional district and the residents of the regional district's electoral areas.
EP-C 4	Plenary Gatherings	To raise awareness of regional issues, and to strengthen the sense of regional community.
EP-C 5	The Sustainable Region (Regional District TV)	To profile for residents of the regional district a variety of issues, programs and initiatives that are important to the broader regional community.
EP-C 6	RDKBee (Public Newsletter)	To improve the general understanding among residents of the services provided by the regional district.
EP-C 7	CAO Sessions	To promote discussion among CAOs within the regional district of issues that affect all jurisdictions.
EP-C 8	Developer Forums	To help developers better understand the regional district's regulatory role in approving developments in electoral areas, and to help regional district staff better understand the concerns of the development community.
EP-C 9	Teacher Workshops	To help K-12 educators explore with their students some of the important (and inter-related) environmental, growth management and resource management issues affecting the regional community; and to help educators engage their students in identifying approaches they can take, as individuals and as a collective, to promote sustainable living in the region.
EP-C 10	Media Briefing Books	To provide media representatives with the information and knowledge they need to properly report on the regional district and its various activities.



# Publish Highlights of Board Meetings

Source: Central Okanagan Regional District (CORD)

## Target Groups

General Public › School Boards › Media › Community Groups ›  
Councils of Member Municipalities › First Nations › Other interested parties

## Purpose

To provide the public, member councils, the media and other interested parties with an objective, fact-based report on the most recent Board meeting.

## Description

On the day immediately following each Board meeting, CORD's Administration Department publishes *The Board Reports*, a one-page document that highlights the decisions and/or actions taken by the Board. Information in a typical edition might include notice of:

- readings given to proposed bylaws, or the adoption of a bylaw
- contracts awarded
- reports received
- grants-in-aid issued

Editions might also include public announcements related to regulations (e.g., water use restrictions), services and other matters. Every edition lists upcoming Board meeting and hearing dates, and provides a contact person whom readers may contact for further information.

Each edition is published in local newspapers throughout the regional district, and is posted on CORD's website. PDF copies of the document are emailed to member municipalities (including individual elected officials),

media representatives, the School District, First Nations' officials and key community groups. Any individual or group what wishes to receive a PDF copy by email may be added to the distribution list.

*“Every edition lists upcoming Board meeting and hearing dates, and provides a contact person whom readers may contact for further information.”*

The objectivity and apolitical nature of *The Board Reports* are important to emphasize. CORD's Communications Coordinator who writes the *Reports* is careful to document only the results of the Board's discussions — that is, the actual actions the Board decided to take. Perspectives and comments put forward by individual Directors are not reported. Elected officials do not participate in planning, writing, editing or publishing the Reports.

It is also important to note that *The Board Reports*, as its name suggests, is focused solely on the actions of the Board itself. Recommendations and statements of committees, task forces, staff and others are not included in the publication. Readers of the *Reports*

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Regional District Tool Kit  
EFFECTIVE  
PRACTICES

know that every decision, position and announcement featured in the publication is an official statement of the Board, and thus of the regional district.

### Desired Outcomes

Publications such as *The Board Reports* are information tools that, when used properly, can result in better informed citizens, councils, stakeholder bodies and media. These types of publications

*“Readers of the Reports know that every decision, position and announcement featured in the publication is an official statement of the Board, and thus of the Regional District.”*

can also result in a higher overall profile for the sponsoring regional district. Citizens, councils, reporters and others who continually see the highlights page begin to take notice of the regional district and its range of activities.

### Costs

The cost of publishing *The Board Reports* includes staff time and advertising (i.e., space in local newspapers).

### Success Factors

Regional districts that decide to create publications like *The Board Reports* need to:

- safeguard the objectivity and apolitical nature of the information presented (if the publication is used to promote causes or opinions, its credibility and value are lost)
- make sure that each edition is well-written, professional in appearance and easy-to-read
- limit each edition to one page in length
- guarantee to publish an edition immediately after every board meeting
- provide a contact person for readers – especially reporters – who require additional information

Regional districts that cannot meet these requirements should not select this particular tool.

## More info

CORD has been publishing *The Board Reports* on a bi-weekly basis since 2001. Further information on CORD's initiative can be obtained by contacting the CORD's Administration Department by email at [info@cord.bc.ca](mailto:info@cord.bc.ca), or by phone at 250.763.4918. Past copies of *The Board Reports* can be viewed at [www.regionaldistrict.com](http://www.regionaldistrict.com).

Various other regional districts publish their own highlights. The Cowichan Valley Regional District, for example, releases *CVRD Matters* after each Board meeting. The CVRD contact is the Administrative Services Department, [cvrld@cvrd.bc.ca](mailto:cvrld@cvrd.bc.ca), 250.746.2500.



## Publish Highlights



# Presentations to Member Jurisdictions

Source: Comox-Strathcona Regional District (CSRD)

## Target Groups

Councils of Member Municipalities › Citizens of Member Jurisdictions (municipalities and electoral areas) › Media › Other interested parties

## Purpose

To educate councils of member municipalities and citizens of member jurisdictions (municipalities and electoral areas) on the regional district and, more specifically, what the regional district does for them.

## Description

Each winter, in the months leading up to the adoption of the financial plan, the CAO and Chair of the CSRD make a presentation on the regional district to each of the region's member municipalities and electoral areas. The presentations to municipalities are made directly to the municipal councils at open council meetings. The presentations to electoral areas include the local directors, and are made to the general public.

The presentations follow a standard outline which includes the following information sections:

- brief history of the regional district
- map and statistics identifying the jurisdictions, their sizes and the geographic extent of the region
- inventory of services provided by the regional district
- regional district accomplishments over the past year
- overview of the regional district's upcoming budget (revenues sources

and expenditure categories), with an explanation of how budgets for individual services are managed

- regional district's recommended tax requisition for the specific jurisdiction (in the case of municipalities)
- sample tax notice to show, for every \$100,000 of assessed value, what property owners will pay for regional district services provided to the specific jurisdiction

*“Annual presentations to councils are intended to help improve the overall level of awareness.”*

The presentations end by profiling a current “success story” at the regional district. The 2005 story is the regional district's solid waste management service, which no longer requires a subsidy from taxpayers to operate (it is fully funded through tipping fees and scrap recoveries).

## Desired Outcomes

Council members are not always aware of the activities of their regional districts, or of the regional district services in which the municipalities participate. Annual presentations to councils are



intended to help improve the overall level of awareness. If done well, they can result in a better understanding of – and respect for – the regional district’s purposes, as well as its value to member jurisdictions.

In electoral areas, the presentations can result in citizens who are better informed about the activities of their regional district (which serves as their local government), and who feel more connected to the regional district organization.

### Costs

The primary costs incurred in making presentations are staff time and minor travel disbursements.

### Success Factors

Regional districts that decide to develop a program of presentations to member jurisdictions need to:

- ensure that the presentations are professional in appearance, easy to follow and customized, as much as possible, to the individual jurisdictions

- work with member municipalities to ensure that sufficient time on council agendas is made available (a ten minute opening delegation is not sufficient)
- anticipate and provide time for questions from council members and citizens
- make available at the presentations the names of persons who can be contacted for additional information
- commit to a program that includes presentations in all jurisdictions, not just a select few (CSRD presents to all seventeen of its jurisdictions each year)
- commit to making presentations every year

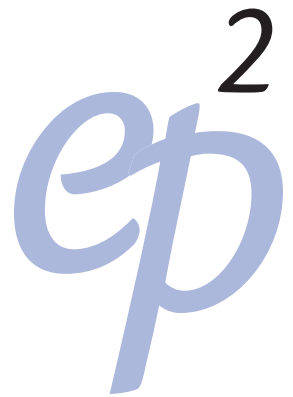
In addition to these points, it is critical that the Chair and the CAO of the regional district strongly support and firmly believe in the initiative. The active involvement of these two individuals in the presentations lends credibility to the exercise, and underscores the importance of the initiative.

## More info

Copies of the CSRD’s presentations to member jurisdictions can be obtained by contacting the regional district by email at [administration@rdcs.bc.ca](mailto:administration@rdcs.bc.ca), or by telephone at 250.334.6000. Other regional districts, including the Capital Regional District and the Cariboo Regional District, have similar established presentation programs.



## Member Presentations





# Board on the Road

Source: *Cariboo Regional District (Cariboo RD)*

## Target Groups

Residents of Electoral Areas

## Purpose

To strengthen the relationship between the regional district and the residents of its electoral areas.

## Description

The Cariboo RD is the local government for residents of the region's various electoral areas. The "Board on the Road" program is designed to help the regional district – and in particular the regional district Board – connect with these residents.

On the third Thursday of the month, every June and September, the Cariboo RD Board travels to one of the region's unincorporated communities. On the Thursday evening, the Board invites all local residents to an informal open house/barbecue. All Directors are present to speak with residents and to answer questions about regional district services and activities that are of particular importance to the area. Poster board displays are set up to provide additional information. Where possible, other social events are scheduled to coincide with the Board's visit. For example, at the June 2005 meeting in the community of Bouchie Lake, the local volunteer fire department was hired to provide the barbecue, with net proceeds going to the fire hall.

On the Friday, the Board holds its regular monthly meeting in the community

in the local community hall. To the extent possible, efforts are made to build the agenda around local issues. The local community association and other interested groups are invited to participate in the meetings as delegations.

The "Board on the Road" program has been very successful at fulfilling its primary purpose — that is, at strengthening the relationship between the regional district and the residents of electoral areas. The program has also proved invaluable at helping to build relationships among Board Directors. The road trips provide the all-important opportunities for Directors to interact in less formal settings, outside of the Boardroom.

Regular strategic planning has also been a positive by-product of the "Board of the Road" program. During the September trips, the Board takes advantage of its time together to sit down in a workshop setting with staff. On the Thursday, before the open house and barbecue, the Board brings in a facilitator to help Directors and department heads develop business plans for the following year.

The "Board on the Road" program is focused specifically on the electoral areas, since it is in these areas that the regional district is the only local government.



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## Desired Outcomes

Good connections between citizens and their local government are critical, particularly in rural areas where government tends to have a less visible (though no less important) presence than in urban centres. The “Board on the Road” program can create the opportunities for good connections to develop.

The program can also be an effective way to raise the profile (i.e., “show the flag”) of a regional district among its service recipients. A higher profile often results in a better understanding of the regional district, its purposes and its goals. A higher profile can also result in greater support among service recipients, and greater participation in governance and service delivery.

## Costs

Travel, accommodation and meals for Directors and staff are the major costs associated with the “Board on the Road” program. Facility rental and advertising costs may also be incurred.

## Success Factors

Regional districts that decide to develop a “Board on the Road” program need to

- budget adequately for the program

- advertise the events to the local community in which the events are to be held
- make an effort to build the meeting agenda around issues that matter to the community
- ensure that all Directors and staff are in attendance
- have relevant information on hand to answer questions of the local audience
- work with the local community association to provide the meal and plan special activities (e.g., charity softball game, tours) around the Board meeting

Regional districts should provide regular reminders of the trips to the general public, member municipalities, applicants for regional district permits and others, so that these parties can schedule their dealings with the Board around the Board’s travels. At the Cariboo RD, the June and September meetings are focused, to the extent possible, on the local community in which the meetings are held. Efforts are made to schedule applicants, delegations and others from outside of the local community for other Board meetings, or, where possible, Committee of the Whole meetings.

## More info

Further information on the “Board on the Road” program may be obtained from the Cariboo RD. Inquiries may be made by phone at 250.392.3351, or by email at [mailbox@cariboord.bc.ca](mailto:mailbox@cariboord.bc.ca).



# Plenary Gatherings

Source: Peace River Regional District (PRRD)

## Target Groups

Elected Officials from Member Jurisdictions

## Purpose

To raise awareness of regional issues, and to strengthen the sense of regional community.

## Description

Twice per year, council members and electoral area directors from the PRRD's member jurisdictions come together for a plenary gathering. The gatherings, which are held under the banner of the (unofficial) Peace River Municipal Association, are used to draw attention to specific issues or developments that are of interest to the broader regional community.

Member municipalities take turns organizing and hosting the gatherings. One responsibility of the host municipality is to set the agenda for the event. A typical agenda focuses on a topic that holds particular significance to the local municipality, but that is also of interest and importance to the region as a whole. The agenda for a recent gathering in Tumbler Ridge, for example, featured an update on local coal mining initiatives and their implications for the Peace. At most gatherings, experts and other guest speakers are brought in to address the group.

The gatherings are largely informal events. Occasionally, however, the group will take a regional position on

an issue that is discussed. Where appropriate, the position takes the form of a resolution to put before the North Central Municipal Association.

All local government elected officials from throughout the Regional District are invited to attend each gathering, as are the chief administrative officers of the member municipalities and the PRRD. A standing invitation

*“By drawing attention to regional issues, the gatherings help to promote the value of regional cooperation, and the sense of regional community.”*

is extended to the area MLAs. Spouses are welcome to attend and participate in the social dinner that precedes each meeting. A typical gathering attracts between thirty-five and fifty people.

Local media and members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting portion of the event.

## Desired Outcomes

The informal plenary gatherings can be an effective tool to raise awareness among elected officials of issues and developments that affect the entire

# Plenary Gatherings



region. By drawing attention to regional issues, the gatherings help to promote the value of regional cooperation, and the sense of regional community. The social aspect of the plenary gatherings can help to promote the personal linkages that are often so important to inter-jurisdictional cooperation.

### *Costs*

Each member jurisdiction faces travel and accommodation costs for its participating members. Costs for the host municipality are more substantial. Dinner must be provided, guest speakers must be arranged and meeting space must be rented.

### *Success Factors*

The plenary gatherings in the PRRD have been a regular feature in the Region for the past twenty-five years. Over that time, lessons have been

learned that serve as important success factors for other regional districts that wish to organize a similar program.

One success factor concerns the role of the host municipality. The host municipality needs to be allowed to take ownership of the event. Other municipalities and the regional district need to allow the host to set the meeting agenda and choose the topics for discussion that it feels are of interest and importance to the broader group.

Another success factor concerns the informal nature of the event. Even though groups may occasionally make resolutions on issues, the gatherings are not intended to be highly-charged political meetings. The best gatherings provide an informal, relaxed setting for politicians to exchange perspectives, learn about new developments and build relationships.

## Plenary Gatherings



### More info

Further information on the PRRD's program of plenary gatherings may be obtained from the PRRD in Dawson Creek. Inquiries may be made by phone at 250.784.3200, or by email at [prrd@pris.bc.ca](mailto:prrd@pris.bc.ca).



# The Sustainable Region (Regional District TV)

RDTV

Source: Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD)

## Target Groups

General Public › Community Groups › School Groups (secondary & post-secondary) › Councils of Member Municipalities › Other interested parties

## Purpose

To profile for residents of the regional district a variety of issues, programs and initiatives that are important to the broader regional community.

## Description

The GVRD produces two separate but complementary television programs: GVTV and *The Sustainable Region*. GVTV is produced as a joint venture with the City of Vancouver; *The Sustainable Region* – the focus of this Effective Practice sheet – is undertaken by the GVRD on its own.

One episode of *The Sustainable Region* is produced each month. Each episode lasts one-half hour and is broadcast throughout the region on Shaw TV (Cable 4) two times per week for the first two weeks of the month. The episode is then re-broadcast over a two week period during the following month. Broadcast times for *The Sustainable Region* are Friday evenings at 8:30 p.m., and Wednesday afternoons at 2:30 p.m.

Each episode consists of a set of short five-minute videos on a common theme, and is presented in a news-magazine format. The episode's host introduces and ties the stories together for the audience. The themes explored in the episodes typically correspond to the GVRD's program and policy

priorities. One recent episode, for example, focused on air and water in the region, and brought together video clips dealing with:

- how the GVRD's Air Quality and Drinking Water Quality Plans will affect citizens of the region
- tips for wiser living that are easy on the environment and the pocketbook
- whether or not Greater Vancouver will have sufficient water for the upcoming summer

*“Each episode consists of a set of short five-minute videos on a common theme, and is presented in a news-magazine format.”*

Other episodes have focused other issues of importance to the Greater Vancouver region, including homelessness, transportation, emergency planning, and regional planning. A possible future episode may explore and explain governance in the region — that is, how decisions are made in the region, and by whom.

As noted, episodes of *The Sustainable Region* are shown on Shaw Cable at two different times each week. In addition to these showings, the materials



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produced are distributed widely in the following ways:

- VHS and DVD copies of episodes are available for order from the GVRD
- the shorter, individual video clips that comprise the episodes may be viewed, free of charge, online through the GVRD's website
- VHS and DVD copies of the episodes are distributed to every public library throughout the region, as well as to every member municipality
- each GVRD Board member receives a full copy of all materials produced
- episodes, combined with curricula and other support materials, are provided free of charge to school teachers throughout the region who wish to cover regional issues in their classes
- the availability of online video clips for use in research is advertised in school papers at UBC, SFU and local colleges
- video clips are incorporated into speeches and presentations made by GVRD staff to citizen groups and others

It is worth noting that the GVRD began using TV as a communications medium in 1998 with a program called *People & Policies*. *People & Policies* provided in-depth analyses and discussions on key issues facing the region. Each episode lasted one hour and featured various experts and stakeholders in moderated debates before a studio audience. *People & Policies* was replaced in 1999 by GVTV, a show that explores many issues of particular concern to the City of Vancouver. *The Liveable Region* was introduced in

2003 to focus solely on issues of broad, regional importance. This show was re-named *The Sustainable Region* in 2004.

The GVRD's use of TV reflects the organization's research finding that 95% of people use television as their main source of information. The GVRD understands that if it wishes to inform the citizens of the region about key issues that affect life in the region, it must embrace television as a key communications vehicle. The use of TV also reflects a commitment of the Board to move away from paper-based media towards electronic types.

### *Desired Outcomes*

Television enables an organization to communicate important messages to a broad audience, which may not regularly turn to other forms of media for information. Current technology also allows the material produced for TV to be packaged as digital files for use in a more targeted way, with specific groups and stakeholders, or for general access through the internet. The distribution of the information – through TV and internet, and in other more targeted ways – can raise the profile of important regional issues, as well as the programs being undertaken by the regional district to address the issues.

The production of TV programs and video clips is also a way to showcase the expertise of the organization and its staff members. Showcasing the organization's expertise can result in a greater level of confidence in the regional district on the part of the public and member jurisdictions. Showcasing can also boost morale within the organization.

RDTV

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## Costs

Readers may be tempted to automatically view regional district TV as an expensive initiative that, because of its cost, is impractical outside of the largest regional district in the province (the GVRD). It is important, therefore, for all readers to understand that regional district TV need not be an expensive undertaking.

The GVRD's annual budget for producing *The Sustainable Region* and co-producing GVTV totals \$160,000. The department responsible for the programs has one full-time staff member (Executive Producer); technicians, researchers and producers are brought in on contract as required. The GVRD supplements the cost of production by partnering with other government agencies and community groups on individual episodes and video clips.

The GVRD, it should be noted, shares a production studio and equipment with the City of Vancouver. Other regional districts that wish to consider developing a program may explore the possibility of producing their shows through their local cable provider (e.g., Shaw), many of whom provide production assistance and air time to community initiatives. Regional districts could also partner with local technical colleges whose students may be seeking

practical experiences, and who may, as a result, be willing to volunteer their services to the project. The possibility of developing cost-sharing deals with other partner groups (e.g., member municipalities, provincial ministries, community groups, etc.) to produce specific episodes could also be explored.

## Success Factors

A key success factor is support from the highest levels of the organization. At the GVRD, support for *The Sustainable Region* is strong from the CAO, senior management and the Board.

A commitment to quality and professionalism is also key. Programs that appear boring and amateur will not engage viewers, and may actually turn people off the regional district and its initiatives. Care needs to be taken to produce high energy, dynamic clips and episodes that capture viewers' attention and are interesting. Feedback from residents of the GVRD confirms that they find *The Sustainable Region* program to be both informative and interesting.

Another key success factor relates to the choice of topics. Shows need to focus on topics that are truly regional in nature and of importance and interest to the regional community. Topics that appeal to only a small constituency are not good candidates for programs.

## More info

Readers are encouraged to visit the GVRD's website at [www.gvrd.bc.ca](http://www.gvrd.bc.ca). Under "Media", readers will find a section for "TV Programs". The full range of video clips, arranged by episode, may be downloaded and viewed free of charge from that page. An email contact is also listed for feedback and questions.





# RDKBee (Public Newsletter)

## Newsletter

Source: Regional District of Kootenay Boundary (RDKB)

### Target Groups

General Public

### Purpose

To improve the general understanding among residents of the services provided by the regional district.

### Description

Elected officials and staff at the RDKB have discovered through their interactions with residents across the region that many people do not have a clear understanding of what the regional district is or what exactly it does. Some people are aware of the services provided by the RDKB (e.g., solid waste management), but are often not aware that it is the regional district that provides them. Many people are not aware that the RDKB – like all regional districts – is a federation of member jurisdictions, and a service body that exists to provide services in response to the needs and instructions of its members.

In an effort to improve residents' general understanding of the regional district, the RDKB has developed a comprehensive public communications program. One element of the program is the *RDKBee*, a public newsletter first published in 2003. The *RDKBee* is a two-page publication released three times per year. A typical edition features:

- an overview, presented by the Chair, of recent RDKB initiatives and

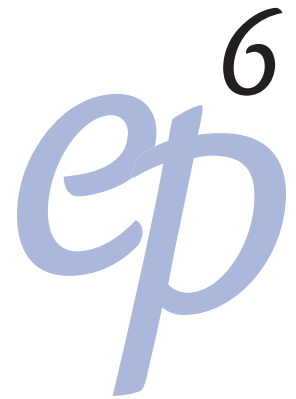
developments that have occurred since the last edition

- important service changes that affect residents in all or part of the region
- new initiatives being undertaken, such as the development of a new Official Community Plan
- tips to help residents more easily comply with regulations or achieve service goals

*“Many people are not aware that the RDKB – like all regional districts – is a federation of member jurisdictions, and a service body that exists to provide services in response to the needs and instructions of its members.”*

- referrals to the organization's website where readers can obtain more detailed information on the various items profiled in the newsletter
- contact details that residents can use to reach their own RDKB Director, or RDKB staff
- a listing of upcoming RDKB meetings

One edition each year focuses on the RDKB annual financial plan. A complete summary of the plan is provided and explained. Readers are referred to the website, their Directors and staff for further information.



Editions of the *RDKBee* are bulk-mailed to every household throughout the region. A copy of the current edition and back issues are available online. Production of the newsletter is managed by the regional district's Public Education Coordinator. This position edits the entire publication and writes many of the entries. Wherever possible, the Coordinator works with department heads and service experts in the organization to produce pieces related to specific functions or services. The Coordinator works with the Chair of the regional district on the introductory overview for each issue.

*“The newsletter, combined with the other components of the communications program, has helped to make the Regional District more of a known quantity.”*

As noted, the *RDKBee* is one component of a larger public communications program. Other components include:

- the regional district's website ([www.rdkb.com](http://www.rdkb.com)), which has been developed as the central source of information on the regional district and its services
- the *Media Helper*, which presents highlights of the RDKB's monthly Board meetings (back issues are available online)
- news releases (also available online)
- school presentations on key services such as solid waste and recycling



- brochures and monthly flyers, produced by individual departments, that describe programs and events (most available online)

### *Desired Outcomes*

Newsletters like the *RDKBee* can help to raise the profile of the regional district that produces it. In Kootenay Boundary, the regional district has not, traditionally, enjoyed a high profile among residents who rely on the organization's key services. The newsletter, combined with the other components of the communications program, has helped to make the regional district more of a known quantity.

Public newsletters can also be useful ways to communicate important notices and developments to large numbers of people, particularly when such newsletters are distributed widely (as in Kootenay Boundary).

Finally, because such publications help to focus a positive spotlight on the organization, its services and its people, newsletters can help to boost morale among staff and elected officials.

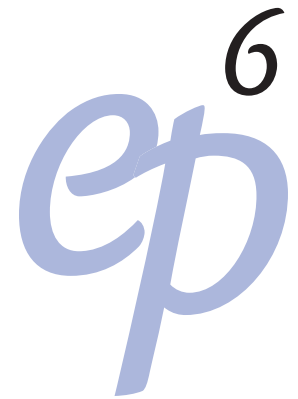
### *Costs*

Editions of the *RDKBee*, while professional in appearance, are modest in terms of cost. Each edition is produced in-house using standard office software. Most editions are black-and-white and limited to two sides of a legal-size sheet (i.e., 8.5" x 14"). The budget edition is a colour production and slightly larger at two 11" x 17" pages.

Including bulk mailing costs to 15,000 homes (but not including staff time),



## Newsletter



each regular edition of the newsletter costs approximately \$5,000 to produce. The budget edition costs about \$7,000.

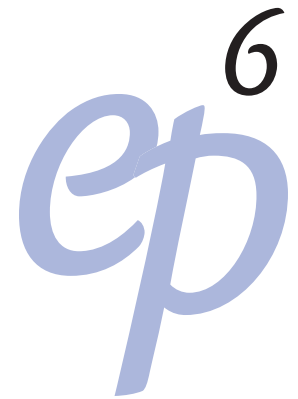
### *Success Factors*

Perhaps the most important success factor that needs to be considered relates to support from the top. Initiatives such as newsletters and communications programs must receive the support of the Board and senior staff. The organization must develop a culture that understands the importance of, and that places a premium on, public communications. Without such a culture, communications initiatives will be difficult to develop and implement.

Regional districts considering a newsletter must also realize that such a publication is not a one-off undertaking. To be of any real value, an organization's newsletter must be released on a regular basis. Newsletters that are released only sporadically risk giving the impression of an administration that is not well organized, and/or not seriously committed to communications.

Finally, regional districts that choose to publish a newsletter should assign a position with lead responsibility over the initiative, to ensure the publication stays on schedule.

## Newsletter



### More info

Readers are encouraged to visit the Kootenay Boundary Regional District's website at [www.rdkb.com](http://www.rdkb.com) to view the current and past editions of the newsletter.



# CAO Sessions

Source: *Regional District North Okanagan (RDNO)*

## Target Groups

CAOs of Member Municipalities

## Purpose

To promote discussion among CAOs within the regional district of issues that affect all jurisdictions.

## Description

Twice a year, the CAO of the RDNO organizes and hosts an informal meeting with municipal counterparts throughout the region. The meetings provide an opportunity for the group to discuss any number of issues that are of importance to the broader regional community, and to the individual jurisdictions that comprise the broader community. A typical meeting might feature:

- a discussion on the establishment of a specific new regional service
- a review of an existing service's funding arrangement, governance structure or scope
- a discussion of service needs in the region, and the potential for addressing the needs through existing or new regional district services
- a briefing on an important initiative or development in the region

The CAOs from the RDNO's six member municipalities attend the bi-annual meetings. One CAO volunteers to take minutes so that agreed-upon action items are not forgotten. The RDNO's CAO acts as meeting chair, to the extent that a chair is required. Each

meeting lasts up to four hours. Staff members from key departments are brought in, as required, to give briefings and/or address specific agenda items. Representatives of regional service groups, such as the region's Fire Chiefs' Association, are also invited from time to time to make presentations or address particular items. (Service groups may also make written submissions to the CAOs.)

*“The sessions provide a forum in which to raise issues that, left unaddressed, could undermine future initiatives or cause future disputes.”*

The CAO sessions are firmly rooted in the belief that regular, proactive and open communication among senior staff is vital to good inter-jurisdictional relations and intra-regional harmony. The sessions provide a forum in which to raise issues that, left unaddressed, could undermine future initiatives or cause future disputes.

It is worth noting that in addition to the informal region-wide CAO sessions, a more formal CAOs Committee existed during the start-up period of the Greater Vernon Services Commission,



## CAO Sessions



a political body created by the RDNO Board to govern a set of regional district services provided throughout the Greater Vernon sub-region. The CAOs Committee included the CAOs of the RDNO, the City of Vernon and the District of Coldstream. It worked closely with the RDNO's General Manager in charge of the Greater Vernon services, and liaised with the Commission. The CAOs Committee, like the CAO Sessions, was formed to promote and facilitate open communication among senior staff from different jurisdictions.

### *Desired Outcomes*

Informal, regular CAO sessions can produce a number of positive outcomes for a regional district and its member jurisdictions. CAO sessions, for example:

- promote regional thinking and intra-regional cooperation
- promote the value of regional districts as vehicles through which member jurisdictions can work together to address common needs
- help to produce fair and sustainable service arrangements by identifying and addressing all potential concerns early in the process, before services are actually established

- minimize (if not eliminate) the need for formal service reviews by identifying and dealing proactively with perceived inequities in existing service arrangements

These outcomes and others have been realized in the RDNO.

### *Costs*

The biggest cost associated with the regular CAO sessions is the value of the CAOs' time (an in-kind contribution). Actual disbursements tend to be limited to lunch and refreshments.

### *Success Factors*

Regional districts that choose to hold CAO sessions should strive to keep the meetings informal in nature. An informal atmosphere will promote relationship building, and will make it easier for participants to raise sensitive issues that should be identified and addressed.

It is also suggested that the regional district CAO assume and maintain responsibility for organizing the meetings. The meetings are intended to focus on regional issues that affect all jurisdictions. Assigning responsibility for the meeting to a member municipality's CAO may result in a shift in focus from regional issues to local concerns.

## CAO Sessions



## More info

Readers interested in learning more about the RDNO's experiences with CAO sessions are invited to contact the CAO's office by phone at 250.550.3700, or by email at [info@nord.ca](mailto:info@nord.ca).





# Developer Forums

Source: Comox-Strathcona regional district (CSRD)

## Target Groups

Developers active in Electoral Areas

## Purpose

To help developers better understand the regional district's regulatory role in approving developments in electoral areas, and to help regional district staff better understand the concerns of the development community.

## Description

In 2004, the CSRD's CAO and Director of Planning held two Forums with developers who are active in the regional district's electoral areas. The initiative was based on the premise that open dialogue between the parties would lead to a better understanding of each party's role and issues, and a better overall relationship.

The first Forum began with a high-level presentation by the two regional district managers on the CSRD — what it is, what it does and how it functions. The managers also explained the regional district's authority over development in electoral areas, and outlined the regional district's development approval process. The managers then asked developers to identify their concerns with the regional district and/or the process. Most of the concerns focused on requirements in the process, and process timelines.

In the second Forum, the managers presented the organization's plan for

addressing the key issues identified by the developers. Process requirements and timelines were addressed in the plan. An initiative to automate the regional district's process was also featured. Once this initiative is completed, developers will be able to track their applications online at any time. The increased involvement of the CAO in contentious development applications was another action item identified in the plan.

*“Developers who are active in these areas need to have a good understanding of the specific regional district's regulatory authority and processes.”*

As noted, the CAO and the Director of Planning organized and hosted the two forums. Thirty individuals from the development community (e.g., developers, builders) attended to learn about the regional district and discuss their specific issues. Both forums were held in the regional district office. The organization provided lunch to all attendees.

According to the CAO, feedback from the developers who participated in the Forums has been positive. In an effort to build on the positive feelings, and to



## Developer Forums





keep the channels of communication between the parties open, the CSRD plans to hold one Developer Forum each year, beginning 2005.

### *Desired Outcomes*

Regional districts are the regulatory authorities for land-use and development approval in their electoral areas. Developers who are active in these areas need to have a good understanding of the specific regional district's regulatory authority and processes. Similarly, regional districts need to have a good understanding of their local development communities and the concerns of developers in these communities. Only by understanding each other's roles and concerns can the two parties work together to identify and achieve common goals.

Developer Forums, which promote open dialogue, are able to help the parties achieve the mutual understanding they need.

### *Costs*

Staff time is required to organize and host Developer Forums. Staff time is also required to put together and imple-

ment the plans required to address issues that are raised during the Forums. The cost of providing lunch to Forum participants is incurred by the CSRD.

### *Success Factors*

A willingness to listen openly to developers' concerns is the key success factor for Developer Forums. Regional districts that are not inclined to view concerns as legitimate and worthy of consideration should not consider this initiative.

The involvement of senior staff is another success factor. The active involvement of the CAO and the Director of Planning in the CSRD's Developer Forums sends a clear message that the organization takes the events seriously.

Finally, regional districts that are interested in hosting a Developer Forum must be willing to take action to address developers' concerns that are particularly important. The CSRD's willingness to examine its approval requirements, and to automate its entire approval process, has helped to show the local development community that it has indeed been heard and taken seriously.

## More info

Regional districts interested in learning more about the CSRD's Developer Forum initiative should contact the regional district by email at [administration@rdcs.bc.ca](mailto:administration@rdcs.bc.ca), or by telephone at 250.334.6000.



## Developer Forums



# Teacher Workshops

Source: Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD)

## Target Groups

School Teachers • Students (K-12)

## Purpose

The purpose of the Teacher Workshops is twofold:

- to help K-12 educators explore with their students some of the important (and inter-related) environmental, growth management and resource management issues affecting the regional community
- to help educators engage their students in identifying approaches they can take, as individuals and as a collective, to promote sustainable living in the region

## Description

Staff from the Education Office at the GVRD present workshops on environmental, growth management and resource management issues to K-12 teachers from the 11 school districts that operate throughout Greater Vancouver. The workshops, which are offered free of charge to participants, provide teachers with activity ideas, teaching strategies and resource materials for use in their classrooms.

Workshop topics are carefully chosen to assist teachers in meeting key learning outcomes mandated by the province and set out in the provincial K-12 curricula. Consider the Workshop titled *From Source to Sea*. This workshop explores water supply, water protection, water usage (and choices) and waste water treatment in the GVRD, and in so doing,

equips teachers with the information and tools they need to achieve the learning outcome related to students' understanding of water cycles. The full list of Workshops presently being offered includes:

- *Shaping a Livable Region*
- *Temperature Rising (What's all the fuss about Climate Change?)*
- *From Source to Sea*
- *No Time to Waste*
- *Let's Clean the Air*
- *Get Tapped In*

An Education Advisory Committee made up of school administrators and teachers assists the GVRD in selecting Workshop topics and developing related resource materials. Two qualified teachers with a combined 15 years of classroom experience work full-time at the GVRD to deliver the Workshops and produce the resource materials.

The GVRD has offered Teacher Workshops for 14 years. Most Workshops are delivered at professional development ("Pro-D") events, or at subject-specific gatherings such as the Social Studies Teachers' Conference. In 2004, over 700 teachers participated in one of the Workshops — a figure more than double that of the previous year.

The Teacher Workshops, it should be noted, are but one component of a broader public education program at

# Teacher Workshops



the GVRD. Like the Teacher Workshops, the other components of GVRD's public education program are designed to raise awareness within the GVRD of the key environmental, growth management and resource management issues affecting the regional community.

### *Desired Outcomes*

Teacher Workshops have the potential to produce teachers who are aware of, and who understand, the importance of sustainable development in regional communities.

Through teachers, the Workshops have the potential to engage young people in thinking about how the choices they make affect the quality of life in their regions. Put differently, the Workshops have the potential to help develop informed citizens who understand the connections between environment and development, and who think regionally.

### *Costs*

The GVRD allocates \$50,000 to \$60,000 each year in non-staff costs to the development and delivery of the Teacher Workshops, and to the development and production of the related resource materials. In addition, two full-time staff are dedicated to the initiative.

These costs, which will appear out of reach to some other regional districts,

reflect the substantial size and breadth of the GVRD effort. Regional districts interested in this initiative may be able to develop a more modest and lower-cost program. A regional district with limited funds, for example, could start by developing just one Teacher Workshop with the help of a local (voluntary) Education Advisory Council, and the services of an existing communications employee or educator on secondment to the region. Grants may be available through local, provincial or national governments and foundations to assist in the development and production of resource materials.

### *Success Factors*

One key success factor relates to the choice of topics for the Workshops. Selecting topics that correspond to the learning outcomes in the provincial K-12 curricula will draw larger numbers of teachers to the events.

Another factor concerns the involvement of qualified teachers in the initiative. At the GVRD, two qualified teachers serve as the full-time staff members responsible for developing and delivering the Workshops, and developing the support materials. Teachers also sit on the advisory committee that helps guide the initiative. The involvement of teachers gives the Workshops instant credibility among educators.

### *More info*

Regional districts interested in learning more about the GVRD's Teacher Workshops should begin by exploring the detailed information posted on the GVRD's website at [www.gvrd.bc.ca/education/teacher-workshops.htm](http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/education/teacher-workshops.htm). Specific information on curriculum resources produced for distribution at the Workshops can be reviewed at [www.gvrd.bc.ca/education/curriculum-resources.htm](http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/education/curriculum-resources.htm).



# Teacher Workshops<sup>9</sup>

# Media Briefing Books

Source: Neilson-Welch Consulting Inc.

## Target Groups

Media

## Purpose

To provide media representatives with the information and knowledge they need to properly report on the regional district and its various activities.

## Description

Through their reporting on regional district decisions and activities, reporters play an important role in helping the public to understand the regional district system and follow events in their own regional district. To play their role effectively, however, reporters themselves need a good understanding of regional districts and the specific regional district organization they are expected to cover. Not all reporters assigned to write on regional districts have the knowledge base required.

Regional districts can take a passive approach to media affairs and expect local reporters to educate and inform themselves. Alternatively, regional districts can choose to adopt a proactive approach and help reporters acquire the knowledge and information they need to do their jobs. The proactive approach may result in better and more consistent media coverage.

One initiative that is consistent with a proactive approach involves the development of a Media Briefing Book. The book could consist of three sections:

### Section 1: Regional Districts in BC

The first section could educate reporters on BC's regional district system. The Fact Sheets and Regional District Booklet from the UBCM's Tool Kit could be included in this section.

### Section 2: Profile of the Regional District

The second section could profile the specific regional district. Key information for this section of the book could include:

- background information on the Board members
- an overview of the Board's committee structure, including a description of each committee's mandate and make-up
- a list of local, sub-regional and regional services provided by the regional district
- information sheets on major regional district projects and services
- an organizational chart showing the make-up of the administration

### Section 3: Dates & Points of Contact

The third section could list key dates, as well as persons within the organization, for reporters to contact. Specific items might include:

- a one-year calendar showing Board meeting dates and Committee meeting dates, public hearing dates (that are known), and dates for other key



Media

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PRACTICES

events such as elections, inaugural meetings and the budget process

- Board and administration points of contact for different types of information
- website addresses where media reps could download agendas for meetings, and register to receive regular media releases

### Desired Outcomes

Media Briefing Books are designed to help reporters learn about regional districts and the activities of the particular regional district they are expected to follow. Reporters who understand the system and who are informed of events will be better able to report accurately on the decisions and actions of the Board and the organization. Such reporters are also likely to be more interested in regional affairs, and more inclined to report on them. More and better reporting on the regional district and regional affairs can only result in a better informed and more interested regional community.

### Costs

The cost of producing Media Briefing Books would be minor. Staff time and printing costs would be the key items to consider.

### Success Factors

The chief success factor relates to ease of use. To be of any value, a Media

Briefing Book needs to be easy for the reader to use. Ease of use is maximized when:

- the book is logically and physically divided (using firm separators) into separate sections
- information is presented in clear, concise formats
- charts and visuals are used throughout the text to present and explain information
- the book itself is small enough to be carried around by the user
- updates can be easily distributed and inserted to keep the information current
- a web-based duplicate copy is available for browsing or downloading

Regional districts that do not have communications professionals on staff or on contract should consider using outside experts to assist in the development of the books. Books that appear unprofessional or user *unfriendly* will not be used.

A second factor to consider relates to content. Regional districts interested in developing Media Briefing Books should refrain from using the books as promotional or public relations tools. Reporters – the audience for the books – want the straight facts only. Reporters will not react favourably to books that attempt, or are perceived to attempt, to shape views or promote messages.

### More info

The GVRD has a set of media pages on its website. These pages provide points of contact, information about the organization and its services, and copies of news releases. See <http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/media/index.htm>.





This section of the *Tool Kit* contains a set of Discussion Guides.

Local government elected and appointed officials who work within the regional district system face a variety of complex questions, many of which are related to the roles and accountability of regional district directors. Answers to these questions will ultimately help regional districts function more smoothly. The problem, however, is that in many cases, there is no one “correct” answer — approaches that are considered appropriate in one regional district may be considered unworkable in another.

Complex questions that affect the ability of a regional district to function need to be discussed by individual regional districts and their members. Discussion at the regional district board level will allow stakeholders to reflect on and understand the issues involved, and to develop their own answers. It is recognized, however, that regional districts and their members, in initiating such discussions, may benefit from some guidance. To that end, the Discussion Guides have been developed.

In specific terms, the Discussion Guides are intended to:

- identify important questions for regional districts and their member jurisdictions to explore; and
- provide stakeholders with the perspectives, information and advice

required to hold meaningful discussions and determine workable answers.

The target audience for each Discussion Guide will depend on the question being considered. In general, however, the Discussion Guides are intended to engage regional district boards, council members from member municipalities and senior regional district and municipal staff. These four groups include the people who have important roles to play in making the regional district system work.

## Using the Guides

When initiating discussions using the Discussion Guides, it is strongly recommended that proponents:

- Appoint a neutral facilitator to run the discussions
- Ensure that the sessions are adequately planned and that adequate time is provided
- Ensure that all key parties (e.g., directors, senior staff) are in attendance
- Confirm that participants understand the purpose of the discussions (namely, to consider complex questions, and arrive at a common understanding of how to address the issues involved)

## Contents

The First Edition of the *Tool Kit* contains five separate Discussion Guides.

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*Discussion Guides*  
*first edition*

	<i>Title</i>	<i>Question</i>
DG 1	Regional / Local Interests	Whose interests should directors promote at the board table?
DG 2	Municipal Directors	To what extent should municipal directors be expected to stick to their councils' positions at the board?
DG 3	Staff & Directors	Whom does staff serve?
DG 4	Corporate Responsibilities	What are the director's responsibilities to the regional district corporation?
DG 5	Involvement in Discussions	Should directors get involved in discussions related to services on which they have no vote?

## Introduction

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# Whose Interests Should Directors Promote at the Board Table?

## Promoting Interest

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It is not uncommon to hear the statement, presented by some as a truism, that regional district directors should promote the interests of the broader regional community in addition to those of their local jurisdictions at the board table. A related statement that is also heard suggests that where regional and local interests conflict, it is the interests of the region that should prevail.

Are these statements correct? Whose interests should directors promote at the regional board table: those of their own jurisdictions, those of the broader regional community or both?

### Issues to Consider

In thinking about the topic question, there are certain issues and perspectives that directors, municipal councils, senior staff and others may wish to consider:

#### Accountability

Municipal directors are appointed to the regional district board by their municipal councils. Electoral area directors are elected to the board by the electors of their respective electoral areas. Neither municipal directors nor electoral area directors are appointed or elected to the regional board by a group that represents, or that is drawn from, the region as a whole.

The system of appointments and elections for directors suggests that

individual directors are accountable to their local jurisdictions. These lines of accountability may suggest, in turn, that individual directors should promote the interests of those jurisdictions over those of the broader region. To the extent that local and regional interests conflict, one perspective is that the interests which should prevail will depend on the issue being considered.

#### Participation in a Service

Underlying the regional district model is the principle of self-interest, which maintains that a jurisdiction's deci-

*“In all, there will be many instances when a jurisdiction's own, local interest is furthered by the willingness of its regional board representatives to compromise and collaborate with others to pursue regional initiatives.”*

sion to participate in services that are provided through the regional district should be based on the jurisdiction's own interest. Except in those few cases where the Province requires the regional district to provide a service (e.g., solid waste management planning), individual jurisdictions cannot be forced to participate in regional district services. Municipalities and electoral areas choose to participate in services when it is in their best interest to do so.



Self-interest is not, to be sure, a simple concept, determined solely by the potential for short-term benefit through cooperation with other jurisdictions. A jurisdiction's interest in a particular service or activity may be much more complex. A jurisdiction may decide, for example, that the prospect of future benefits, including goodwill, is important. A jurisdiction may decide that the development of a strong regional community, achieved through widespread and regular cooperation, is in that jurisdiction's own interest.

*“Decision-making requires every director to put forward positions and perspectives, but also to demonstrate a willingness and ability to compromise.”*

In all, there will be many instances when a jurisdiction's own, local interest is furthered by the willingness of its regional board representatives to compromise and collaborate with others to pursue regional initiatives. In these instances, however, local interests are not being compromised for the benefit of the broader regional community. Local interests, in these instances, simply happen to be compatible with and strengthened by actions that are perceived to benefit a broader group of jurisdictions. The true test comes when a jurisdiction's interest, as understood by its director(s), is not furthered by initiatives that are deemed by others to benefit the region as a whole. In these cases, whose interests should the

director promote? The principle of self-interest, as described here, appears to suggest that the director should act on the interests of his or her own jurisdiction.

#### *Established Services*

The principle of self-interest, it may be argued, is intended solely to guide a jurisdiction's decision on whether or not to participate in a regional district service. The need to staunchly defend a jurisdiction's local interest is not intended to guide a director in governing a service, once the decision on participation has been made by the jurisdiction's electors or council. Indeed, it could be argued that as far as established services are concerned, the director's responsibility is to promote what is best for the service, irrespective of local interests.

This line of thinking suggests that once a jurisdiction has decided to participate in the service, the jurisdiction's director(s) should promote views and positions that will promote the service's value to its users and to the entire community it reaches. At the board table, therefore, where decisions on services are made, the director promotes the interests of the broader region, or at least the broader community that receives the service.

#### *Practical Concerns*

Regional district boards of directors are collective decision-making bodies. In any such body, individual directors have a responsibility to participate in discussions, and to contribute constructively to the decision-making process. Decision-making requires every director to

## Promoting Interest

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put forward positions and perspectives, but also to demonstrate a willingness and ability to compromise. If every director insisted on sticking to positions that he or she believed to reflect his or her jurisdiction's local interest, the board would constantly face the risk of paralysis. From a practical perspective, therefore, it may be argued that directors must be willing to look beyond their own jurisdiction's interests.

### Other Comments

In exploring the topic question, directors and others may find it useful to examine different types of decisions that boards are expected to make. Directors may be able to collectively distinguish between matters that should be viewed from a regional perspective (i.e., wearing "regional hats"), and matters on which local, jurisdictional concerns should be considered paramount.

## Promoting Interest

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### More info

There are three sources that readers may wish to consult for further information and additional perspectives. The first is an article by Eli Mina titled *Which Hat Am I Wearing Now?*, published in the August 2003 edition of UBCM News ([www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca)). The second is Robert Bish's *Regional District Review – 1999* ([www.uvic.ca.padm](http://www.uvic.ca.padm)), and the third is a 2003 paper by Lorena Staples titled *The Roles and Responsibilities of Regional Directors* ([www.sms.bc.ca](http://www.sms.bc.ca), under "Handbooks").



# To What Extent Should Municipal Directors be Expected to Stick to Their Councils' Positions at the Board?

## Municipal Directors

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Municipal directors are appointed by, and are accountable to, their municipal councils. Given this accountability, should councils expect their directors to “stick to the script” and not deviate from the councils’ stated positions in decision-making at the regional board table?

### Issues To Consider

One of the more important decisions a regional district makes is to establish a new service. The decision on whether or not a member municipality participates in the service, it should be noted, is made by the municipal council itself on behalf of, or with the approval of, the municipality’s electors. The decision is not made by the municipal director(s) on behalf of council or the municipality.

Once the service has been established, however, there are various service-related decisions that municipal directors from participating municipalities must help to make. There is also a host of other issues and questions that the board must regularly address in its decision-making. Municipal directors, as members of the board, participate in the discussions and votes through which these other types of decisions are made.

On the questions and issues that do involve municipal directors directly, to what extent should a council expect its

director(s) to stick to the council’s positions when voting?

One school of thought would suggest that a council may provide guidance to its director(s), and probably *should* provide guidance on controversial or particularly important topics. A council should not, however, expect its director(s) to stand firm on a position in the face of compelling information and arguments that undermine the position’s validity.

Regional districts, it must be remembered, provide a political forum for representatives of all member jurisdictions to discuss and debate perspectives. The exchanges and compromises that occur within this political forum are critical to good policy-making and good governance. The expectation that municipal directors should simply present stated positions then close their minds to the arguments and information put forward by other decision-makers, is not consistent with the regional district model or any other model of corporate governance. Indeed, if municipal directors were expected to simply present concrete positions, there would be no need for directors at all — councils could simply submit their positions in writing to the board.

On a purely practical level, it is worth noting that a municipal council will not actually have a firm,



stated position on many of the issues that arise at the board table. The municipality's director(s) may have a sense of the council's views on the issues, and will have a general understanding of the municipality's interest in the matter. The director(s) will not, however, have strict "marching orders" from council. In these situations, the need for directors to exercise their own judgement is even greater.

Some observers would suggest that there will always be certain issues on which a municipal council holds strong views and a clear position. The same observers would argue that, in debates on these issues at the board table, the council should be able to expect its director(s) to present and defend the council's stated position. If a director, after listening to the views of others at the board table, believes that the council's stated position is no longer tenable or preferred, he or she should be expected to return to council and seek further direction.

The expectation on the part of a council that its municipal director presents a stated position is surely legitimate in certain cases, on certain issues. In the regional district system after all, municipal directors are, first and foremost, accountable to their councils. The ex-

pectation that directors stick to a script on all issues, however, is problematic.

The related belief that directors should confer with their councils before making any important decision at the board table is also problematic. There will be instances when a director simply cannot vote before speaking to his or her council. In these instances, other decision-makers should be encouraged to respect the need for consultation, providing that such instances are the exception and not the rule. Councils that expect their directors to always check back before voting on important matters, however, are guilty of obstruction. In order for regional districts to function properly, decisions must be made and voting must take place. Every director and every participating jurisdiction have a responsibility to ensure that these processes occur.

### Other Comments

Councils need to consider their expectations of their directors and set reasonable parameters that provide for balance between a council's need to promote certain positions on key issues, and the regional district's need for municipal directors who are free to participate constructively in collective decision-making.

## Municipal Directors

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### More info

Readers may wish to review Eli Mina's article titled *Which Hat Am I Wearing Now?*, published in the August 2003 edition of UBCM News ([www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca)). The 2003 paper by Lorena Staples titled *The Roles and Responsibilities of Regional Directors* ([www.sms.bc.ca](http://www.sms.bc.ca), under "Handbooks") may also be useful.





## Whom Does Staff Serve?

Whom does staff serve – electoral area directors, municipal directors or both? Are the interests of one group of directors supposed to take precedence over the interests of the other?

### Issues to Consider

When considering this question, it is important to frame the issue properly. Regional districts function in three different capacities:

- they are local governments for electoral areas, responsible for providing basic local government services
- they provide the frameworks necessary for combinations of member jurisdictions to collaborate in the provision of sub-regional services
- they are regional service bodies responsible for providing important regional services to their broader regional communities

When a regional district is acting as the local government for its electoral areas, it is inevitable, as far as contact with directors is concerned, that staff will interact almost exclusively with the electoral area directors. Staff's focus in these situations is appropriate, assuming that staff's time is funded through an electoral area administration service, or through the specific local government services being provided. It is also important to note that in these situations, municipal directors and their jurisdictions have, by definition, no interest in the decisions that are taken.

Thus, in working to promote the interests put forward by one set of directors (electoral area directors), the regional district's staff is not working against the interests put forward by another set (municipal directors).

When regional districts are functioning in their sub-regional and regional servicing capacities, the situation for staff vis-à-vis directors changes entirely. In these other capacities, the interests of a regional district's unincorporated areas may diverge from those of its member municipalities. A decision by staff to focus its energies on helping electoral

*“It is in the negotiation of sub-regional and regional service arrangements that the question of whom staff serves is most critical.”*

area directors promote the interests of their areas could result in staff working against the interests expressed by the municipal directors. It is in these situations that the topic question – Whom does staff serve? – becomes particularly relevant as an issue for discussion.

Many observers take the view that when working to facilitate sub-regional and regional service arrangements, a regional district's staff works for all directors. The organizational structure of regional districts (see Fact Sheet 2) seems to support this

## Staff & Directors

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view. According to this structure, staff reports directly to the entire board, not to a sub-set of directors.

Some observers approach the question in a slightly different way by noting that a regional district's staff exists to serve "the process". In serving the process, staff is responsible for ensuring that services are developed and delivered in ways that are fundamentally fair to all jurisdictions involved. Staff's goal in serving the process is to build sustainable service arrangements and sustainable inter-jurisdictional relationships.

Not all participants in the regional district system agree that staff should serve electoral and municipal directors equally, particularly during the development of sub-regional and regional service arrangements. These observers note that municipal directors are supported in service negotiations by their municipal organizations, and as such are not dependent on regional district staff for information or advice. These observers note further that because they have access to their own municipalities' resources, municipal directors involved in negotiations have a considerable advantage over electoral

area directors. Regional district staff, the argument goes, needs to provide a higher level of support and assistance to the electoral area directors in these situations, if only to balance the scales.

### Other Comments

It is in the negotiation of sub-regional and regional service arrangements that the question of whom staff serves is most critical. The argument that staff, in these situations, is responsible for ensuring that arrangements are fundamentally fair to all jurisdictions involved is persuasive. Arrangements that are less than fair, after all, would serve only to undermine confidence in the particular regional district, and in the federal model that lies at the root of the regional district system. In working to build fair arrangements, regional district staff may be forced to challenge assertions put forward by some directors, and advocate on behalf of others. The appropriateness of such actions would appear to depend on staff's motivation. If staff is motivated solely by the desire to build sustainable, working arrangements that stand the test of time, such actions may be quite acceptable and, indeed, necessary.

## Staff & Directors

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### More info

For additional information, readers may wish to consult Robert Bish's *Regional District Review* – 1999 ([www.uvic.ca.padm](http://www.uvic.ca.padm)). Readers may also wish to review Chapter 2 of the full Report & Action Plan produced by UBCM's Regional District Issues & Non-Legislative Solutions Working Group (Working Group 1). This publication is available online at [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca).



# What are the Director's Responsibilities to the Regional District Corporation?

## Corporate Responsibility

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Each regional district director has different sets of responsibilities that he or she is expected to fulfill. Responsibilities to the regional district corporation constitute one important set that is not always well understood.

### Issues to Consider

Each regional district director, it is suggested, has at least three different sets of responsibilities that he or she must fulfill at different times:

Each director has responsibilities to the individual jurisdiction that has appointed or elected him or her to the board. During negotiations aimed at establishing a new service, for example, a director is responsible for advocating his or her jurisdiction's specific interests as they relate to service funding, scope and governance. On a continual basis, a director is responsible for keeping his or her jurisdiction informed of regional district events and decisions of the board. Each director is also responsible for consulting his or her jurisdiction (electoral area electors or a municipal council, as the case may be) on servicing needs and issues.

Each director is responsible, along with other directors, for ensuring the success of regional district services in which the director's jurisdiction participates. Once the terms of participation in a service have been developed,

the participating jurisdictions' directors need to work and make decisions in the best interest of the service.

Each director has important responsibilities to the regional district corporation. Regional districts provide a political forum for representatives of all member jurisdictions to discuss and debate perspectives on issues of regional importance. The exchanges and compromises by directors within this political forum are critical to good regional policy-making and governance. Also, a director is responsible for do-

*“Regional districts provide a political forum for representatives of all member jurisdictions to discuss and debate perspectives on issues of regional importance.”*

ing his or her part to ensure that the regional district corporation functions smoothly. Smooth functioning requires directors, as a collective, to pass budgets, fill staff positions, process debt requests, hold meetings and make decisions. Finally, all directors have a responsibility to protect the integrity (financial, legal and otherwise) of the corporation.

In general, regional district directors understand and are keenly aware of their responsibilities to their individual



jurisdictions. Where directors appear on the whole to have more trouble, is in understanding and remaining aware of their other sets of responsibilities, particularly those to the corporation.

*Discussion Guide 2* considers the degree to which municipal directors should be constrained by their councils' stated positions when sitting at the regional board table. The related question, on whether or not directors should confer with their jurisdictions before making important decisions at the board,

*"One particular corporate responsibility relates to the need for all directors to maintain confidentiality."*

is also addressed. The point is made that directors who regularly feel compelled to ask the board to delay decisions so that they may seek guidance from their jurisdictions are impeding the corporation's ability to function. Arguably, other directors who regularly indulge such requests are guilty of the same charge. (The key term here is "regularly"; rare requests for delays may not be problematic.) As suggested earlier, in order for the regional district to function smoothly, the board must attend to matters and make decisions. Every director must do his or her part to facilitate such functions.

One particular corporate responsibility relates to the need for all directors to maintain confidentiality. As members of the corporation's

legal governing body, regional district directors are expected and required to keep in confidence all *in camera* matters discussed at the board table. In such instances, a director's responsibilities to the regional district corporation must outweigh his or her other responsibilities, including those to his or her local jurisdiction. The unauthorized release of confidential information is, by definition, detrimental to the corporation's interests.

It is worth noting that the decision to apply the *Community Charter's* confidentiality provisions to regional districts means that directors who intentionally release confidential information may be held personally liable for any losses incurred by the corporation.

Some directors would suggest that their responsibility to protect the corporation's integrity compels them to become involved in discussions on issues related to services in which their jurisdictions do not participate, and on which they themselves are not entitled to vote. This view is rooted in the reality that it is the board as a whole that is ultimately responsible, and that may be held liable, for all decisions that are made at the board table, including those made by a sub-set of directors representing service participants.

The involvement in service-related discussions by directors from non-participating jurisdictions is explored at length in *Discussion Guide 5*.

### *Other Comments*

In any discussion on a director's responsibilities to the regional district

## Corporate Responsibility

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corporation, the views of individual directors will undoubtedly differ to some degree. Disagreement on some of the specifics may not be cause for major concern in every case. What is fundamental for all directors to accept in the discussion, however, is that they

are members of the governing body of a legal corporation. In this capacity, they have responsibilities to the corporation that are distinct from their other responsibilities, including those to their local jurisdictions.

## Corporate Responsibility

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### More info

Discussion Guide 2 and Discussion Guide 5 are identified in the text as resources for further information. To learn more about the *Community Charter's* confidentiality requirements, see *Open Meetings*, an information piece prepared by the Ministry of Community Services as part of its advisory materials on the *Charter*. *Open Meetings* can be found online at [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/charter/advisory\\_materials/open\\_meetings.htm](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/charter/advisory_materials/open_meetings.htm)





# Should Directors Get Involved in Discussions Related to Services on Which They Have No Vote?

## Involvement in Discussions

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Many issues that come before a regional district's board of directors are service-related issues on which only directors from participating jurisdictions – i.e., jurisdictions that actually participate in the service being discussed – are entitled to vote. Voting directors are expected to become fully informed on such issues, and to engage in whatever discussions develop. But what about the non-voting directors? Should they become involved in the discussions?

### Issues to Consider

The argument could be made that all directors, including those representing non-participating jurisdictions, should demonstrate genuine interest in every issue being discussed, and should show appropriate diligence in challenging proposed courses of action that may affect, in some way, the corporation. This argument is rooted in the reality that it is the board as a whole that is ultimately responsible, and that may be held liable, for all decisions that are made at the board table, including those made by directors representing service participants.

This argument may be supported by the limitations in the *Local Government Act* on the board's ability to delegate decision-making authority to committees, commissions and other bodies created

by the board. The Act allows a board to delegate the authority over certain types of decisions, but very clearly does not permit the board to delegate some powers, such as the authority to adopt bylaws. By explicitly forbidding boards to delegate bylaw making powers, the Act guarantees that all critical decisions are made at the board table where they can be scrutinized by all directors.

The argument may also find support in the Act's requirement for the board to be represented as a separate party in

*“If every director wanted, or felt compelled, to enter every discussion, meetings would become impossibly lengthy and onerous.”*

all service reviews. This requirement, it may be suggested, recognizes that the board as a whole has an interest in all services that are provided by the regional district, and that this interest must be protected.

Not all observers would agree with the suggestion that directors should get involved in discussions on issues related to services in which their jurisdictions do not participate. Opposition is based, in part, on the concern that increased involvement would simply be impractical. Regional district boards are called upon to cover





a wide variety and large amount of material in their meetings. If every director wanted, or felt compelled, to enter every discussion, meetings would become impossibly lengthy and onerous.

Opposition may also be based on the belief that involvement by non-participant directors is not legitimate. Legitimacy, in the minds of these opponents, is a function of funding: only those directors from jurisdictions that actually help to fund the service being discussed may legitimately participate in the discussions.

The impacts of certain service-related decisions will not always remain confined within the borders of the participating jurisdictions. In some cases, decisions will have implications for immediately adjacent jurisdictions, or for the regional district as a whole. When the implications for non-participating jurisdictions are particularly significant, the argument for involving the directors from these jurisdictions in the service discussions may be strengthened. In these cases, legitimacy as it relates to speaking out may be determined by more than funding.

In some cases, directors from non-participating jurisdictions will have information or experiences that, in their view, would be of use to participant directors. Efforts on the part of the non-participant directors to get involved in discussions that occur may reflect their desire to share information.

## More info

See Fact Sheet 3 on Regional District Services.



## Other Comments

There will be situations when directors of non-participating jurisdictions feel compelled to discuss service-related issues on which they have no vote. Regional district boards may wish to allow – encourage even – the contributions of non-participants in these cases, instead of automatically considering such contributions as illegitimate and tantamount to interference. The need to properly manage board meetings may require, simply, that contributions from non-participants be treated as the exception rather than the rule.

The regional district Chair and/or CAO may be able to help the board by identifying service-related issues that have significant potential implications for non-participants, or that would benefit from a broader examination involving non-participants, some of whom may have useful experiences to relate.

Finally, it is worth noting that boards that delegate the authority to make service-related decisions to commissions made up solely of representatives from participating jurisdictions will automatically minimize the opportunities for involvement in discussions by non-participant directors. Because boards cannot delegate the authority to make all service-related decisions (e.g., the power to adopt bylaws for a service), however, some opportunities will remain.



# Involvement in Discussions

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# Presentation on Regional Districts

## Presentation

This section of the *Tool Kit* contains a PowerPoint presentation entitled *Regional Districts: Introduction & Overview*, with a set of speaking notes to assist presenters. These individuals could include senior regional district staff, board members and any others who have a considerable familiarity with the regional district system and/or a specific regional district.

As its title suggests, the presentation introduces audiences to the basics on regional districts. The range of audiences that may receive the presentation is broad:

- Groups of service recipients
- Staff from provincial ministries and agencies
- MLAs
- First Nations
- School classes
- The development sector

The information needs of these audiences will differ to some degree. It is important for persons who deliver the presentation to take these differences into account, and to focus on the needs of the specific audience being targeted. To assist presenters in this task, the

presentation is broken into separate, discrete information sections. Presenters may pick and choose which sections to present to different groups, but in all cases, they will want to use the first and last slides and accompanying speaking notes, (“Title slide” and “Further Information”).

### Customizing

The individual slides in the presentation contain generic information that applies to all regional districts. Presenters may wish to elaborate on or supplement the material in the slides using examples from a specific regional district. The slides themselves cannot be physically altered — as such, presenters who wish to add to the material will need to do so verbally, through handouts, or with supplemental visual aids.

### Contents

The following table lists the separate sections of the presentation. The speaking notes are provided on pages 1 through 19

The presentation, in PowerPoint format, is provided on a CD included in the *Tool Kit*.

Regional District Tool Kit



## PowerPoint Presentation

### Presentation Speaking Notes

	<i>Title</i>	<i>Description</i>
Title Slide	Introduction and Overview	Explains the purpose of the presentation.
Section 1	Regional Districts in BC	Introduces regional districts as an integral part of BC's system of local government.
Section 2	What Are They?	Explains what regional districts do.
Section 3	How Do They Work?	Describes the regional district corporate structure, service establishment process and voting rules.
Section 4	Electoral Areas & Member Municipalities	Reviews electoral area governance, and the structural relationship between member municipalities and regional districts.
Section 5	Money Matters	Explains regional district finance.
Section 6	Planning & Land Use Management	Focuses on the role of regional districts in electoral area planning. Regional district involvement in municipal and regional planning are also reviewed.
Section 7	Regional Districts & First Nations	Profiles the ways in which regional districts and First Nations have developed, and are continuing to develop, effective working government-to-government relationships.
Section 8	Regional Districts & The Province	Explains how regional districts relate to, and interact with, the provincial government.
Section 9	Further Information	Intended to introduce, and provide contact details for, individuals in a given regional district who are available as sources of further information.

## Presentation



# Presentation on Regional Districts

## Presentation *Introduction*

### *Speaking Notes*

Slide	#	Speaking Notes
Title Slide: <b>Introduction and Overview</b>	1	<p>This presentation has been developed as part of the Regional District Tool Kit. The Tool Kit is a set of resources produced by the Union of BC Municipalities working in collaboration with the Ministry of Community Services, focused on improving the general understanding of regional districts. The presentation provides an overview of regional districts in BC's system of local government.</p> <p>The presentation consists of the several components, each of which describes a different feature of regional districts.</p> <p>The presentation was developed for use by all regional districts; as such, the slides do not contain information specifically related to an individual regional district. At various points during the presentation, however, we can depart from the slides to talk about some specific examples from our own region.</p>
<b>Components</b>	2	<p>The full presentation consists of the sections listed on the slide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Regional Districts in BC</b></li><li><b>2. What Are They?</b></li><li><b>3. How Do They Work?</b></li><li><b>4. Electoral Areas &amp; Member Municipalities</b></li><li><b>5. Money Matters</b></li><li><b>6. Planning &amp; Land Use Management</b></li><li><b>7. RDs &amp; First Nations</b></li><li><b>8. RDs &amp; The Province</b></li><li><b>9. Further Information</b></li></ul>

RD



Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION I</b>		<b>REGIONAL DISTRICTS IN BC</b>
<i>Title Slide:</i> <b>Regional Districts in BC</b>	3	<p>BC's system of local government is similar to that in other provinces in that it features municipalities. The presence of regional districts, however, makes BC's system unique.</p> <p>Regional districts are local government authorities created to meet certain service needs that municipalities and the provincial government can't meet.</p>
<b>Provision of Services</b>	4	<p>There are three specific types of service needs regional districts are designed to meet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of basic local government services to unincorporated parts (electoral areas).</li> <li>• Provision of services across groups of municipalities and electoral areas (sub-regions).</li> <li>• Provision of services throughout entire region to all jurisdictions.</li> </ul>
<b>Map of RDs</b>	5	<p>Regional Districts were first created in 1965.</p> <p>There are 27 regional districts today. The Entire province, except for the Stikine in northwest BC, is covered by a regional district.</p> <p>Almost every citizen in the province lives within, and relies upon a regional district for various services. The largest regional district is the GVRD with over 2 million people; smallest is Central Coast with 3,900 people.</p>

## Presentation Section 1



Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 2</b>		<b>WHAT ARE THEY?</b>
<i>Title Slide:</i> <b>What Are They?</b>	6	<p>All but one regional district consists of member municipalities and electoral areas, (the exception is the Central Coast Regional District which consists entirely of electoral areas). All jurisdictions work together to enable the regional district to fulfill its purposes.</p> <p>Regional districts exist as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• service providers</li> <li>• administrative agencies</li> <li>• federations</li> </ul>
<b>Service Providers</b>	7	<p>Most importantly, regional districts exist to provide local government services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional districts are local governments for electoral areas, responsible for providing core local services. Examples of such services typically include electoral area planning, water supply, fire protection, community halls and others.</li> <li>• They exist as inter-jurisdictional service bodies that provide local government (sub-regional) services across municipal &amp; electoral area boundaries. Examples might include recreation facilities, parks, water supply, transit, building inspection and others.</li> <li>• They are regional service bodies, responsible for providing services across entire regions. Examples might include E-911, water supply, sewage treatment, regional parks, economic development, libraries and others.</li> </ul> <p>Regional districts establish and provide local, sub-regional and regional services in direct response to the needs and instructions of their municipalities and electoral areas.</p> <p>Provincial law does require regional districts to provide certain services, such as solid waste management planning. But the number of required services is small compared to the number of voluntary services regional districts can choose to provide, in response to the needs and instructions of their members.</p> <p>Any member jurisdiction or combination of jurisdictions may call on the regional district to provide a service.</p>

## Presentation Section 2





Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 2</b>		<b>WHAT ARE THEY?</b>
<b>Administrative Agencies</b>	8	<p>Regional districts manage certain administrative functions for the province:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They coordinate and process (through the Municipal Finance Authority) local government capital borrowing requests.</li> <li>• They serve as Regional Hospital Districts to raise capital funds for hospital facilities in their areas.</li> </ul>
<b>Federations</b>	9	<p>Important to understand that regional districts do not represent a separate level of local government in BC, above or apart from municipalities.</p> <p>Regional districts are best thought of as federations of the municipalities and electoral areas that exist with regional district boundaries</p> <p>With few exceptions, such as solid waste management planning, regional districts receive their authority to act from their member jurisdictions, not from provincial statute and act only in response to the expressed needs and instructions of members.</p>

## Presentation Section 2



Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 3</b>		<b>HOW DO THEY WORK?</b>
<i>Title Slide:</i> <b>How Do They Work?</b>	10	Regional districts differ from one another in terms of population, scope of services, area covered and other respects. But all share the same corporate structure and function, more or less, in same way.
<b>Structure</b>	11	<p>The Board of Directors is the governing body of the regional district, responsible for the services provided and actions taken by the regional district.</p> <p>The Board is made-up of Directors from member municipalities and electoral areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal Directors are appointed by and are accountable to their own Councils</li> <li>• Electoral Area Directors are directly elected to the Board by the voters in the areas, and are accountable to those voters</li> </ul> <p>Each Board of Directors headed by a Chair who is also the Chief Executive Officer of the regional district. Each year the Board elects one Director to serve as Chair and another to serve as Vice Chair.</p> <p>It's important to point out as well, that each director also has responsibilities to the regional district corporation. Regional districts provide a political forum for representatives of all member jurisdictions to discuss and debate perspectives on issues of regional importance. The exchanges and compromises by directors within this political forum are critical to good regional policy-making and governance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committees and Commissions typically exist to assist the Board in its decision-making;</li> <li>• Committees are advisory in nature and provide recommendations to Board</li> </ul> <p>Commissions often created to oversee regional district services on behalf of Board; they usually have delegated authority to make decisions</p> <p>Regional districts follow the Board-CAO model of government, which features separation of governance and administration. The Board is the governing body, responsible for making decisions; the CAO is the professional manager, responsible for administration.</p>

## Presentation Section 3



Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 3</b>		<b>HOW DO THEY WORK?</b>
		Department Heads are accountable to CAO for particular functions (e.g., finance) or areas of service (e.g. planning). The number of Department Heads is usually determined by the size of the organization, and the number of services it provides.
<b>Establishing Services</b>	12	<p>Provision of services is central to regional districts. Before a service can be provided, however, it must be established.</p> <p>The basic process for establishing services consists of four steps:</p> <p>Step 1 – The idea for a new service emerges. It might come from directors, citizens, councils, staff or others.</p> <p>Step 2 – A study is undertaken to determine if the service is something that could and should be established. The municipalities and electoral areas that would participate in the service will decide whether to proceed, based on the results of the study.</p> <p>Step 3 – If the participating jurisdictions agree that the service should be established, the regional district develops a service establishing bylaw.</p> <p>Step 4 – Adoption of the bylaw begins. The entire Board (all Directors), the Inspector of Municipalities (a provincial government senior official) and the electors in the participating areas must all approve.</p>
<b>Voting</b>	13	<p>The Board of Directors acts through resolutions and bylaws. Before a resolution can be made or bylaw adopted, voting must occur.</p> <p>Special voting rules are in place to reflect two realities unique to regional districts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• regional districts are federations of different sized jurisdictions</li> <li>• services are funded by different combinations of jurisdictions (i.e., participants)</li> </ul> <p>In terms of voting, these realities mean that not all Directors can vote on all matters; and that of those that may vote, not all have the same number of votes</p>

## Presentation

### Section 3



Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 3</b>		<b>HOW DO THEY WORK?</b>
<b>Types of Votes</b>	14	<p><i>Unweighted Corporate Vote</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• every Director votes; one vote each</li> <li>• establishing bylaws, regulatory bylaws, procedure bylaw, etc.</li> <li>• not used at all by GVRD, except for voting in the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the board.</li> </ul> <p><i>Weighted Corporate Vote</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• every Director votes; number of votes based on size of population represented</li> <li>• money matters</li> </ul> <p><i>Stakeholder Vote</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• only Directors from service participants vote; number based on population</li> <li>• decisions on service administration and operation</li> </ul>

## Presentation

### Section 3





Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 4</b>		<b>ELECTORAL AREAS AND MEMBER MUNICIPALITIES</b>
<i>Title Slide:</i> <b>Electoral Areas &amp; Member Municipalities</b>	15	Regional districts consist of unincorporated electoral areas and incorporated member municipalities. (The only exception is the Central Coast Regional District, which consists entirely of electoral areas.)
<b>Electoral Areas</b>	16	The unincorporated land within each regional district is divided into electoral areas. Electoral areas are typically rural in nature, though some have evolved semi-urban or urban characteristics. Regional districts act as the local governments for electoral areas. At a minimum, electoral areas rely on their regional districts for core local government services, such as land use planning and administration.
<b>Electoral Area Governance</b>	17	<p>Each electoral area has its own director who is elected to the regional district Board every three years by the area's electors. The director has some key responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to identify, with citizen input, the service needs and interests of his or her area</li> <li>• to promote these needs and interests at the Board table, where they may be addressed through the establishment of, or changes to, services</li> <li>• to participate in decision-making in the regional district, particularly as it relates to services in which the area participates</li> </ul> <p>The director is a key player in the broader governance framework in which decisions affecting the electoral area are made. Other players are also important, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Citizens</i> – Citizens elect their Director, and provide input to their Director. Through citizen initiatives, referenda and counter petitions, citizens choose the services they want.</li> <li>• <i>Board of Directors</i> – The board is the governing body for all electoral areas. The board makes the bylaws required for services, and most decisions on the regulation of development.</li> <li>• <i>Alternate Director</i> – Each director must appoint an alternate to act during periods of absence. When acting, the alternate has all of the director's authority.</li> </ul>



Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 4</b>		<b>ELECTORAL AREAS AND MEMBER MUNICIPALITIES</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Others</i> – Some boards appoint Advisory Planning Commissions to advise the board or a director on land use matters. The board may establish a Local Community Commission to oversee regional district services in part of an electoral area. Some boards create Electoral Area Commissions to oversee services (e.g., planning) in which all electoral areas participate.</li> </ul>
<b>Member Municipalities</b>	18	<p>Every municipality in BC is a member of a regional district. With the exception of certain mandated services, municipalities choose for themselves the regional district services to participate in and/or initiate.</p> <p>Each council appoints one or more of its members as municipal directors to the regional district board (the actual number is determined by the municipality's population size relative and the regional district's voting unit). Directors may be appointed each year or until a new Director is appointed – in other words, they serve at the pleasure of council. The directors are accountable to the council that appoints them.</p> <p>Citizens of a member municipality formally relate to their regional district through their municipal council. Citizens elect their council, which then decides which regional district services to join and/or initiate (with the exception of mandated services which the municipality must join).</p> <p>Citizens hold their council accountable for the services they receive, whether the services are provided directly by the municipality, through the regional district or by some other party (e.g., a private contractor hired by council).</p>

## Presentation Section 4







Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 5</b>		<b>MONEY MATTERS</b>
<b>Title Slide: Money Matters</b>	19	<p>An understanding of regional district finance requires an understanding of a certain topics and concepts, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Funds</li> <li>• Allocation &amp; Recovery of Costs</li> <li>• The Financial Plan</li> <li>• Revenue Collection</li> <li>• Tax Notices</li> <li>• Debt Processing</li> </ul>
<b>Service Funds</b>	20	<p>Service funds are the key feature of regional district finance. Every service is accounted for separately using a dedicated service fund.</p> <p>The fund identifies the full cost of providing the service, including a portion of regional district overhead. Each year, revenues specific to the service must be collected to pay the full cost. Operating deficits are not allowed.</p> <p>The funds are dedicated – thus, revenues and costs from one service cannot be shifted or spread among other services.</p>
<b>Allocation &amp; Recovery</b>	21	<p>Each service has its own fund to record all costs incurred in providing the service. Costs, such as salaries that are attributable to more than one service, must be allocated to, or spread across, the various affected services' funds.</p> <p>Once costs have been allocated, and the total cost of providing each service established, the region must determine how to recover, or pay for, the total. User fees are one way; property taxes are another.</p> <p>Costs to be recovered using property taxes must be allocated to, or shared by, the jurisdictions that participate in the service. Converted assessment (land &amp; improvements) is the default basis on which to allocate costs. But participants can agree to share costs using any basis, or combination of measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an alternative tax base (e.g., improvements)</li> <li>• population</li> <li>• quantity of service used</li> <li>• etc.</li> </ul>



Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 5</b>		<b>MONEY MATTERS</b>
<b>Financial Plan</b>	22	<p>Like municipalities, regional districts must adopt an annual five-year financial plan. The plan must set out proposed operating and capital expenditures and revenue sources for each service during each year of the plan.</p> <p>Public consultation must occur prior to adoption of the plan each year.</p>
<b>Revenue Collection</b>	23	<p>User fees, property value taxes and parcel taxes are the major revenue sources for regional districts. User fees are collected by the regional district from service users. Taxes are collected on behalf of the regional district by other governments.</p> <p>In electoral areas, regional district taxes are collected by the Ministry of Small Business &amp; Revenue. The regional district submits tax requisitions for each service to the Ministry through the Inspector of Municipalities.</p> <p>In municipalities, the regional district sends each member municipality a requisition each year that identifies the amounts owing by property owners within the municipality who receive regional district services. The municipality then collects the revenues from property owners and forwards them to the regional district.</p>
<b>Tax Notice (1)</b>	24	<p>There's actually no such thing as a "regional district tax notice" since regional districts do not themselves collect taxes. Tax bills for regional district services do, however, appear both on the provincial property tax notices sent to property holders in electoral areas, and municipal tax notices sent to property holders in municipalities. Both types list the regional district services in which the jurisdiction participates.</p>
<b>Tax Notice (2)</b>	25	<p>Here's how the information appears...</p> <p>Regional district services are itemized so that property holders can easily identify exactly what they are paying for each service they receive. This approach is designed to maximize transparency and accountability.</p>



## Presentation Section 5



Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 5</b>		<b>MONEY MATTERS</b>
<b>Debt Processing</b>	26	<p>A mandated function of each regional district is to process all of the long-term capital borrowing that is undertaken by the regional district itself, and by each of its member municipalities.</p> <p>The process consists of four steps:</p> <p>Step 1 – The municipality or regional district determines its capital borrowing needs.</p> <p>Step 2 – The municipality or regional district prepares a loan authorization bylaw, which usually must receive the approval of the electors before it can be adopted.</p> <p>Step 3 – The loan authorization bylaws of all local governments in the region are submitted to the regional board. The required amounts from each bylaw are combined and put into a regional district security issuing bylaw.</p> <p>Step 4 – The security bylaw is forward to the Municipal Finance Authority. Twice per year the MFA receives and approves local government borrowing needs. The MFA then raises the funds required on international markets.</p> <p>The Inspector of Municipalities formally approves all loan authorization and security issuing bylaws. This approval, along with the strength of the combined assessment bases of BC's local governments, helps MFA secure low rates.</p>

## Presentation Section 5



Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 6</b>		<b>PLANNING AND LAND USE MANAGEMENT</b>
<i>Title Slide:</i> <b>Planning &amp; Land Use Management</b>	27	When discussing planning and land use management in regional districts, we need to focus on planning for electoral areas and regional growth strategies.
<b>Electoral Area Planning</b>	28	<p>Regional districts are the local governments for electoral areas, responsible for providing core local services. One of these services is electoral area planning.</p> <p>EA planning includes planning for and regulation of all land development that occurs outside of a regional district's member municipalities. All electoral areas within a regional district must participate in the region's EA planning service. Municipalities can also participate in all or part of an EA planning service unless they opt out after providing the required notice.</p> <p>Regional districts are to electoral areas what municipal governments are to municipalities: the only body with the authority and mandate to make the regulations and provide the services required for proper land development to occur.</p> <p>Through EA planning, regional districts undertake a range of initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prepare, adopt and administer Official Community Plans (OCPs)</li> <li>• prepare, adopt and administer zoning bylaws</li> <li>• establish and administer development permit areas</li> <li>• administer the development variance permit process</li> <li>• establish Development Cost Charges (DCCs) and other development finance mechanisms</li> <li>• enter into housing agreements</li> <li>• etc.</li> </ul> <p>Regional districts do not have subdivision approval authority – this lies with the Ministry of Transportation. They are, however, involved in reviewing subdivision applications.</p> <p>EA planning decisions are made primarily by the regional board of directors using, in most instances, the stakeholder voting rule.</p> <p>Many boards have established advisory planning commissions to advise the board and individual EA directors on EA planning matters that are referred to the commissions.</p>



## Presentation Section 6



Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 6</b>		<b>PLANNING AND LAND USE MANAGEMENT</b>
<b>Municipal Planning</b>	29	<p>Municipal governments, not regional districts, are the bodies with authority over planning and land use management within municipal boundaries. But some smaller municipalities contract their regional districts to deliver planning services.</p> <p>The municipal council in these cases remains the governing and decision-making body for the services; the regional district administration provides the necessary staff support to the council.</p>
<b>Regional Planning</b>	30	<p>Regional districts do not have regulatory authority over planning and land use management for the region as a whole. Regional districts do have authority, however, to develop and adopt regional growth strategies.</p> <p>A regional growth strategy is a 20-year vision document that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sets out, for the regional district and its member jurisdictions, agreed-upon economic, social and environmental goals</li> <li>• guides planning and growth management decisions in ways that promote the goals</li> </ul> <p>Regional growth strategies are initiated by regional districts, but are prepared jointly by regional districts and their municipalities. Each municipality must develop a Regional Context Statement that speaks to the consistency that exists, or that will exist, between the municipality's OCP and the regional growth strategy.</p> <p>Today, eight regional districts either have, or are in the process of developing, a regional growth strategy. All are located within the highest growth areas of the province the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island and the Okanagan.</p>

## Presentation Section 6



Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 7</b>		<b>REGIONAL DISTRICTS AND FIRST NATIONS</b>
<b>Title Slide: Regional Districts &amp; First Nations</b>	31	<p>In recent decades, First Nations in BC have achieved increased recognition of their aboriginal rights and title claims over traditional lands. Over this same period, the need for effective working relationships between First Nations and local governments has also been increasingly recognized.</p> <p>Working relationships involving First Nations and local governments (including regional districts) are developing through a number of different initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BC Treaty Process</li> <li>• Formal Agreements</li> <li>• Regional Governance Discussions</li> <li>• Community to Community Forums</li> </ul>
<b>Treaty Process</b>	32	<p>In 1992, BC, Canada and the First Nations Summit established the six-stage BC Treaty Process to resolve the many outstanding First Nation land claims.</p> <p>BC, Canada and the First Nations are the three official parties in the Process. Local government is not recognized as a party with standing. The three parties do accept, however, the need for local government involvement.</p> <p>In 1993, a MOU between UBCM and Province of BC guaranteed involvement of local governments in the treaty process. Treaty Advisory Committees were established to define and represent local government interests in treaty negotiations through the provincial negotiating teams.</p>
<b>Formal Agreements</b>	33	<p>Local governments and First Nations have directly negotiated (outside of the Treaty Process) a variety of formal agreements in recent years.</p> <p>Some are “relationship-builders” that express a joint commitment to working together and communicating with one another:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RD Comox-Strathcona &amp; Xwemalxkwu (Homalco) First Nation: Protocol Respecting a Regional Accord</li> <li>• RD Central Okanagan &amp; Westbank First Nation: Statement of Political Relationship</li> </ul>

## Presentation Section 7





Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 7</b>		<b>REGIONAL DISTRICTS AND FIRST NATIONS</b>
		<p>Others deal with specific servicing issues, and resource management issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RD Sunshine Coast &amp; Sechelt Indian Band: Watershed Accord</li> <li>• RD Capital &amp; T'sou-ke (Sooke) Nation: Agreement on resource management</li> <li>• RD Central Okanagan &amp; Westbank First Nation: Agreement on the provision of regional district sewer services to Indian Reserves 9 &amp; 10.</li> </ul>
<b>Regional Governance Discussions</b>	34	<p>The topic of First Nation participation on regional district boards is being studied in many parts of the province, due to interest expressed by the First Nations and local governments involved.</p> <p>The Lower Mainland TAC has identified a spectrum of participation models, ranging from no participation to full membership. In the Sunshine Coast Regional District, the Sechelt Indian Government District joined the board as a municipal-like member in 1988.</p>
<b>Community to Community Forums</b>	35	<p>UBCM and the First Nations Summit held the first province-wide Community to Community Forum in 1997. The Forum brought together First Nation and local government elected leaders from across BC to discuss issues of common concern and strengthen government-to-government relationships.</p> <p>The initial Forum prompted UBCM and the First Nations Summit to create the Regional Community to Community Forum Program, with on-going financial support provided by the federal and provincial governments. Events funded by this program are jointly organized by neighbouring local governments (municipal councils and/or regional boards) and First Nations and provide a forum for dialogue for focusing on issues of common concern.</p> <p>Since the year 2000, over 100 regional forums have been held between neighbouring First Nations and local governments across BC.</p>

## Presentation Section 7



Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 8</b>		<b>REGIONAL DISTRICTS AND THE PROVINCE</b>
<i>Title Slide:</i> <b>Regional Districts &amp; The Province</b>	36	<p>Canada's Constitution divides all powers and responsibilities between the federal and provincial levels of government.</p> <p>Local government is not recognized in the Constitution as a specific order of government. However, it is the provinces that have the authority to create and empower local governments and in BC, local governments are recognized as orders of government in provincial legislation.</p> <p>Each province has used its authority to establish a network of different types of local governments to provide services, and to provide forums for local decision-making. In BC's network, the key local government types are municipalities and regional districts.</p>
<b>Legislation</b>	37	<p>The Local Government Act is the key mechanism used to by the Province to empower regional districts and to define their responsibilities.</p> <p>Reforms to the Act began in the mid-1990s. Regional districts were given broad powers to identify and undertake, within their defined areas of jurisdiction, the services that they feel are important</p> <p>The Community Charter was introduced in 2004, primarily for municipalities. It recognizes municipalities as an autonomous order of government, and sets out principles for relations with the Province.</p> <p>The Local Government Act remains the key piece of legislation for regional districts. Recent changes, however, make its treatment of local government fundamentally consistent with that of the Charter. Regional districts, for example, are now recognized as an independent order of government. Principles for relations with the Province are also set out.</p>

## Presentation Section 8





Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 8</b>		<b>REGIONAL DISTRICTS AND THE PROVINCE</b>
<b>Ministry of Community Services</b>	38	<p>The Ministry of Community Services or “CSERV” is the main point of contact for regional districts in their dealings with the province. CSERV plays five different roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSERV administers and maintains the Local Government Act</li> <li>• CSERV provides advice on various topics, including boundaries &amp; structure, community development, elections, engineering and safety, environment, finance, governance, planning and service arrangements</li> <li>• CSERV administers conditional and unconditional senior government grant programs</li> <li>• CSERV regulates certain regional district activities, particularly those in the area of regional district finance</li> <li>• CSERV assists regional districts in the area of dispute resolution, including the resolution of disputes that are the subject of service reviews</li> </ul>
<b>Other Ministries</b>	39	<p>There are other provincial ministries, agencies and statutes that regional districts deal with on a regular basis. For example:</p> <p>Ministry of Environment administers the Environmental Management Act, which regulates regional districts’ waste management planning services. It also regulates water, flood hazards and other environment-related issues that concern regional districts.</p> <p>Ministry of Public Safety &amp; Solicitor General (PSSG) oversees the Liquor Control and Licensing Act, which outlines a regulatory role for regional districts in liquor licensing. PSSG also oversees the Emergency Program Act.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner oversees the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which regulates regional districts’ collection, use and disclosure of personal information</li> <li>• The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands manages the allocation of Crown land on behalf of the provincial government.</li> <li>• BC Assessment provides regional districts with various annual statutory reports.</li> </ul>



Slide	#	Speaking Notes
<b>SECTION 9</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>FURTHER INFORMATION</b>
<b>Further Information</b>		<p>NOTE TO USER:</p> <p>This final section is intended to introduce, and provide contact details for, individuals in a given regional district who are available as sources of further information.</p>

## Presentation

### Section 9





This section of the *Tool Kit* contains the booklet entitled *Introduction to Regional Districts*. The booklet is the most elementary component of the *Tool Kit*. It is intended to provide a simple and concise overview of the regional district system and its main features. It is written for a broad audience, including the general public.

Some regional districts may choose to make copies of the booklet available in front-counter brochure racks. Others may choose to distribute copies to each household. Many, it is expected, will make a copy available through their websites. Note that the version of the

booklet provided in this *Tool Kit* is copy-ready for reproducing as a double-sided, centre-folded and stapled booklet. (Pages to be copied must be placed on the copier in LANDSCAPE position).

Like the PowerPoint presentation, the booklet contains generic information that applies to all regional districts. Regional districts may also wish to provide other materials with relevant local examples to supplement the booklet.

### Contents

The table below describes the various sections of the booklet.

### Booklet – Profile of Sections

Section	Description
Regional Districts in BC	Section 1 introduces regional districts as a key component of BC's system of local government.
What Are They?	Section 2 identifies and explains what regional districts do.
How Do They Work?	Section 3 reviews the regional district corporate structure, service establishment process and voting rules.
Regional District Finance	Section 4 explains regional district finance.
Questions & Answers	Section 5 anticipates and answers a wide variety of different questions that readers may have about regional districts.



# *Introduction* *to* *Regional Districts:* **Communities in Partnership**





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## REGIONAL DISTRICTS IN BC

Each province in Canada has its own system of local government. British Columbia's system is similar to that of every other province in that it features, at its core, a network of municipalities. In every province, municipalities have been created to address the service needs of urban communities, and to provide democratic forums for local-decision making.

British Columbia's system is unique from others, however, in one key respect: the use of regional districts. Regional districts are local government authorities that exist to meet certain local government service needs that neither municipalities nor the province itself are particularly well-suited to address. One such need relates to the provision of basic local government services to small, unincorporated communities and rural areas of the province. Another need concerns the provision of services across municipalities and unincorporated areas, throughout broader sub-regional areas or entire regions. Regional districts, first introduced in the mid-1960s, were created specifically to address these needs.

Almost everyone in British Columbia lives within, and relies upon, one of the province's 27 regional districts. Not all British Columbians, however, have a good, basic understanding of what regional districts are, what they exist to do and how they function. This booklet sets out to help citizens develop this understanding.

This booklet is one part of the larger *Regional District Tool Kit* produced by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, in partnership with BC's Ministry of Community Services. The *Tool Kit* is a comprehensive information resource designed to help various audiences – citizens, elected officials, media, First Nations, developers and others – better understand the regional district system. Readers who wish to learn the details about regional districts should consult the *Tool Kit's* other components. The full *Kit* is available online at [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca).

## WHAT ARE THEY?

Every regional district is made up of municipalities, referred to as member municipalities, and unincorporated areas, referred to as electoral areas. The individual jurisdictions that comprise a regional district work together to enable the organization to fulfill its purposes. This section of the booklet identifies and explains those purposes.

### *Service Providers*

First and foremost, regional districts are local government service providers. They exist to play three important service-related roles:

- they are the **local governments** for their electoral areas, responsible for providing basic local services such as community planning, water supply, fire protection and nuisance regulation
- they are **inter-jurisdictional service bodies** that provide local government sub-regional services across jurisdictional boundaries to different combinations of municipalities and electoral areas
- they are **regional service bodies**, responsible for providing important regional services to their entire regional communities

Regional districts establish and provide their local, sub-regional

and regional services in direct response to the expressed needs, desires and instructions of the municipalities and electoral areas that comprise the region. The regional district **Board of Directors**, on which all electoral areas and member municipalities are represented, serves as the political forum in which these needs, desires and instructions are expressed.

There are certain services that every regional district is required by provincial law to deliver – general government administration, electoral area planning and solid waste management planning are perhaps the most notable. The number of required services, however, is small, both in absolute terms and relative to the number of voluntary services most regional districts choose to provide, in keeping with the wishes of their members.

The range of **voluntary services** provided by different regional districts is vast. It includes water and sewer utilities, recreation programs and facilities, community and regional parks, libraries, regulatory services such as animal control and building inspection, emergency planning and fire protection, economic development and film industry promotion, regional growth management, airports and even television rebroadcasting. Some of these services are provided locally to individual jurisdictions, while

others are provided to and on behalf of groups of municipalities and electoral areas that jointly choose to receive the services. Still others are provided regionally to every municipality and electoral area in the regional district. Any member jurisdiction or combination of jurisdictions can choose to provide services through their regional district.

### *Administrative Agencies*

The provision of services to and on behalf of their members is, as noted, the primary purpose of regional districts. In addition to service provision, however, regional districts are called upon by the province to manage certain administrative functions. Two key examples are the processing of local government debt, and the collection of capital funds for hospital projects.

*Debt* – In 1971, the provincial government created the **Municipal Finance Authority (MFA)** as the central borrowing agency for municipalities and regional districts. By law, all local governments, with the exception of the City of Vancouver, are required to borrow funds for capital projects through the MFA. Regional districts function as a critical part of the MFA system. All capital borrowing requests from member municipalities and from the regional district corporation

itself must be coordinated and processed by the regional district before being forwarded to the MFA.

*Hospital Funding* – Regional districts are designated under provincial law as **Regional Hospital Districts (RHDs)** for the purpose of raising capital funds for hospital facilities in their areas. RHDs provide the local share (about 40 percent) of funding for capital costs associated with the construction, acquisition and maintenance of hospital facilities and major equipment in their areas. These capital costs are shared with the Health Authorities according to criteria established by legislation. RHD boards are comprised of municipal and electoral area directors who are members of the corresponding regional district. There are currently 23 RHDs, some of which overlap regional district boundaries. Note that due to provisions in the *Greater Vancouver Transportation Act*, the Greater Vancouver Regional District no longer has a RHD.

### *Federations*

Regional districts are federations of the various municipalities and electoral areas that exist within the regional district boundaries. With the exception of certain provincially-mandated duties, regional districts derive their authority to act from

the municipalities and electoral areas that make up the region. These jurisdictions collectively decide what their regional districts should and should not do.

It is this reliance on their member jurisdictions for authority to act that makes regional districts distinct from regional governments in other provinces. Regional governments elsewhere are typically set up with exclusive legislated powers to provide specific services or take certain actions. In BC, the provincial government does mandate regional districts to undertake certain functions. On the whole, however, regional districts act only in response to the expressed needs and instructions of the individual

jurisdictions – municipalities and electoral areas – that comprise them.

As noted, regional districts were first introduced in the mid-1960s. Numerous legislative changes that have occurred since that time have modified the way in which regional districts act, and the range of requirements placed on regional districts by the provincial government. The changes that have taken place, however, have not fundamentally altered the basic nature of regional districts. They continue to function as federations of member jurisdictions, in place to serve the needs and interests of their members.

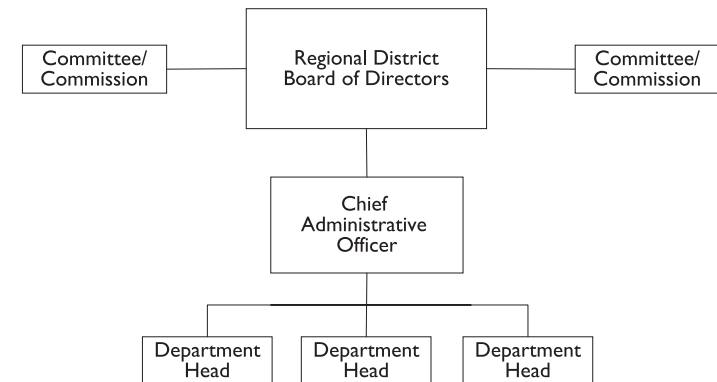
## HOW DO THEY WORK?

British Columbia's regional districts differ significantly from one another in several respects, including size of population served, scope of services provided and area of land covered. All regional districts, however, share the same corporate structure, and function, more or less, in the same way.

### Corporate Structure

The following chart presents the basic corporate structure used by

regional districts. At the top of the chart is the Board of Directors. The Board is the governing body of the regional district, ultimately responsible for all of the services provided and actions taken by the regional district corporation. Directors from the regional district's member municipalities are known as **Municipal Directors** and are appointed to the Board by their respective municipal councils. Directors from the region's electoral areas are known as **Electoral Area Directors**. They



are elected directly to the Board by the electors in the areas they represent.

Each Board of Directors is headed by a **Chair**, who is also the Chief Executive Officer of the regional district. Each year, the Board elects one Director to serve as Chair and another to serve as Vice-Chair.

Most regional districts have various committees and commissions to assist the Board in its decision-making. **Committees** are advisory in nature, which means that they provide recommendations to the Board on matters that fall within the Committees' mandates. **Commissions** are typically created to oversee regional district services on behalf of the Board. They usually have delegated authority from the Board to make certain decisions on behalf of the regional district.

Regional districts in BC operate in accordance with the **Board-CAO** model of government. The central feature of this model is the separation of governance and administration. The Board is the governing body in the model, responsible for setting a vision, developing strategies to achieve the vision, and formulating policies. The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is the professional manager, responsible for the administration of the regional district. The CAO implements the Board's policies and decisions, and handles all operations. The CAO also serves as the Board's chief policy advisor.

Reporting to the CAO are the regional district's **Department Heads**, professional managers who are accountable to the CAO for the administration of particular functions (e.g., finance) or areas of service (e.g., development services). The number of Department

Heads in a regional district typically depends on the size of the organization and the range of services being provided.

## Service Establishment

The provision of services, as explained, is central to regional districts. Before a service can be provided, however, it must be established. All regional districts follow the same basic process to establish services. The figure below illustrates this process.

**Step 1.** In step 1 the **idea** for a new service emerges. There are several potential sources of ideas, including regional district directors, citizens, municipal councils, municipal staff, the regional district board, regional district staff, and others.

**Step 2.** The second step involves some kind of **service feasibility study**. The extent of the actual study will vary depending on the potential size and scope of the service. Most studies, however, will

run through a checklist of items to confirm that:

- the proposed service has a clear purpose
- the proposed service has a defined and agreed-upon scope
- the parties agree on a way to share costs
- the parties agree on how the service should be governed
- the parties agree on a process for service review
- a start-up plan has been developed
- support among elected officials is broad

**Step 3.** If the proposed service is deemed feasible, a **service establishing bylaw** is developed at step 3.

**Step 4.** Step 4 involves the **adoption of the bylaw**. Adoption begins with an initial vote (first three readings) of the Board in which

every Director present must participate. After this initial vote, the province's **Inspector of Municipalities** must approve the bylaw. The electors in the jurisdictions that have chosen to participate in the service must also approve the bylaw. Approval of the electors may be obtained in all cases through referendum. In certain cases, the Board may choose to bypass the referendum route and obtain approval using an "alternative approval process" which requires opponents to register their opposition through petition. In still other cases, approval may be given on behalf of a participating area by the Municipal Council, the Electoral Area Director or the Board.

## Voting

The Board of Directors in every regional district is a collective decision-making body that acts through resolutions and bylaws. Before a resolution can be made or a bylaw adopted, voting must occur. In municipalities, voting is a relatively straightforward matter: every member of Council votes on every issue, and every member receives one vote. In regional districts, voting is not always so simple.

Special voting rules are needed in regional districts to reflect specific realities, namely that regional districts are federations of different sized jurisdictions, and that region-

al district services are subscribed to and funded by different combinations of jurisdictions. In the context of voting, these realities mean that not all Directors have the right to vote on all matters, or have the same number of votes in all situations.

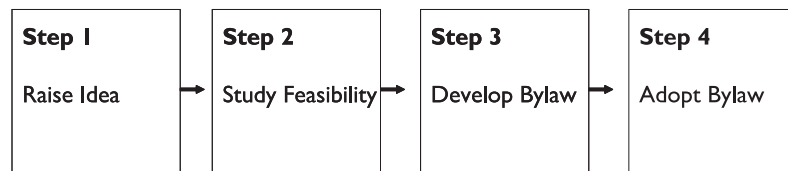
Three key regional district voting rules determine what kind of vote is taken in each instance:

**Unweighted Corporate Vote.** Under this type of vote, every Director votes and receives one vote. Unweighted corporate votes are used to decide matters that affect the corporation and all jurisdictions that comprise the regional district. Examples of such matters include:

- establishing bylaws for services
- regulatory bylaws
- resolutions and bylaws that govern the conduct of the Board's business
- various planning and land use management issues

**Weighted Corporate Vote.** Weighted corporate votes govern decisions on money matters, including the adoption of the annual financial plan, borrowing, the acquisition and disposal of property, and key contracts. Each Director on the Board

Service Establishment  
Generic Process



is entitled to vote. Each receives a number of votes that is proportional to the size of the population the Director represents.

**Stakeholder Vote.** Stakeholder votes are used to make decisions related to the administration and operation of regional district services. Only Directors representing jurisdictions that participate in the service in question are entitled to vote. All stakeholder votes are weighted votes; as such, each participating Director receives a num-

ber of votes that is proportional to the size of population he or she represents.

These three rules apply to all regional districts in British Columbia with the exception of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). At the GVRD, all votes, whether corporate or stakeholder, are on a weighted basis, except for the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair, in which case an unweighted secret ballot vote is used.

## REGIONAL DISTRICT FINANCE

Regional district finance – the system through which regional districts collect, spend and account for public monies – is understandably a topic of interest to residents and property holders that fund regional district services. This section of the booklet identifies and explains some of the key features of the system.

### Services

A key feature of regional district finance is the use of separate, individual funds for different services. Every regional district service is accounted for separately using a **dedicated service fund**. The fund identifies

the full cost to the regional district of providing the service, including a portion of general overhead. Each year, revenues specific to the service must be collected to pay the full cost. No service is permitted to run an operating deficit in any year.

Because each fund is dedicated to a service, revenues and costs specific to one service cannot be shifted to or spread among other services. Each regional district service has its own group of participating jurisdictions. Participants in one service are not expected to subsidize, and are not permitted to be subsidized by, participants of other services. A key principle of the regional district system is “fiscal equivalence”, which

in practice means that participating jurisdictions and the residents within them “pay for what they get”. The use of separate, dedicated service funds supports this principle.

### Revenue Collection

The major revenue sources for regional district services include **property value taxes, parcel taxes and fees and charges**. Fees and charges, such as recreation admission fees and water usage charges, are collected directly from service users by the regional district or its agent that delivers the service. Property value and parcel taxes are collected on behalf of the regional district by other governments. In participating electoral areas taxes are collected for the regional district by BC’s Ministry of Small Business and Revenue. Regional district taxes are collected in participating municipalities by the municipal governments.

### Tax Notices

Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a “regional district tax notice” since regional districts do not themselves collect tax revenues directly from property owners. Tax bills for regional district services do, however, appear both on the provincial property tax notices that are used in electoral areas, and on the municipal tax notices that are sent to residents of member municipalities.

Both types of notice list regional district services in which the jurisdiction participates. Beside some of the listed services is a tax rate, and beside the tax rate is the amount owing by the property owner. The amount owing is determined by multiplying the tax rate by the property’s assessed value. For services that are funded using parcel taxes, only the amount owing shows. The figure below illustrates how such information typically appears:

**Regional District Services on Tax Notices**

Service	Assessed Value	Rate	Owing
Recreation	\$150,000	0.90	\$ 135.00
Fire Protection	\$150,000	0.85	\$ 127.50
EA Planning	\$150,000	0.34	\$ 51.00
E-911	\$150,000	0.05	\$ 10.00
Water	\$150,000	1.00	\$ 150.00



On both provincial (electoral area) and municipal tax notices, regional district services are itemized so that property owners can easily identify exactly what they are paying for each regional district service they receive. This approach is designed to maximize transparency and accountability.

## *Budgets*

Regional districts are required by law to adopt an annual five-year budget — termed a **five-year financial plan**. The financial plan must set out the proposed operating and capital expenditures and revenue sources for each service during each year of the five year planning period. Prior to adoption, the Board undertake some degree of public consultation on the proposed plan. Open houses and public meetings are two of the more typical consultation tools used during the preparation of the plan.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

This section of the booklet anticipates and answers common questions that citizens may have about regional districts.

### **Q:Are regional districts a separate level of government?**

A: Regional districts are not a separate level of government. Regional districts are, instead, federations of the municipalities and electoral areas that exist within their boundaries. Except in a limited number instances (related to provincially-mandated services), regional districts act only in response to the expressed needs, interests and instructions

of their members. With few exceptions, regional districts derive both their legitimacy and authority to act from their member jurisdictions.

### **Q:Can municipalities or electoral areas be forced to participate in a regional district service?**

A: With the exception of a few provincially-mandated services (e.g., solid waste management planning, general government administration), member jurisdictions cannot be forced to participate in regional district services. In general, individual jurisdictions are free to choose which services, if any, they

wish to enter (or initiate). Jurisdictions choose to participate in regional district services when it is in their best interest to do so.

### **Q:How are Municipal Directors different from Electoral Area Directors?**

A: Regional district Boards of Directors include both Municipal and Electoral Area Directors. Municipal Directors are appointed by, and are accountable to, their respective municipal councils. Electoral Area Directors are directly elected to the Board by the electors in their respective areas, and are accountable to those electors. All directors, municipal and electoral area, have responsibilities to the regional district corporation.

### **Q:What is the role of regional districts in land-use planning and growth management?**

A: Regional districts are responsible for land-use planning and development approval in electoral areas. Regional districts exercise their responsibilities through a planning service in which every electoral area is required to participate and in which municipalities can, and often do, voluntarily participate in planning for all or part of the speci-

fied area. Through this service, regional districts create official community plans, zoning bylaws, development permit bylaws and other instruments to regulate how development in electoral areas may occur.

Regional districts are also responsible for preparing, in consultation with their member municipalities, regional growth strategies to manage growth throughout their entire regions. These plans provide a context for planning and regulation within municipalities and electoral areas.

It should be noted that for the Islands Trust Area, the Island Trust has all the power and authority of a regional district for land use planning purposes.

### **Q:What are Advisory Planning Commissions?**

A: A regional district's Board of Directors may appoint an Advisory Planning Commission (APC) for one or more electoral area. The role of the APC is to advise the Board, or the Electoral Area Director(s) on land use matters, the preparation of an official community plan, or a proposed development bylaw or permit. The APC must be established by bylaw, and may only advise on matters that are



referred to it by the Board or the Electoral Area Director(s). At least two-thirds of the members of the APC must be residents of the electoral area(s); the Director(s) may not serve on the APC, but may attend meetings.

**Q:What is an Alternate Director?**

**A:** Every Electoral Area Director must appoint an Alternate Director to carry out the Director's responsibilities in his or her absence. Municipal Councils must also appoint an Alternate Director to take the place of the Municipal Director when required. Municipalities with more than one Municipal Director may appoint one Alternate per Director, or one or more general Alternates who are available to act in place of any one of the Directors.

When acting for the Director (Municipal or Electoral Area), the Alternate has all of the Director's authority, including the authority to vote at the Board table, and to participate in discussions and development reviews. In the event that the Director, through death, resignation or disqualification, is unable to continue holding

office, the Alternate acts as the Director until:

- in the case of an electoral area, a by-election or the next general local government election
- in the case of a municipality, the Council appoints a new Director

**Q:Why do some electoral area boundaries change over time?**

**A:** Over time, some electoral areas – or parts of electoral areas – develop and take on characteristics of urban areas. Residents in these areas often begin to demand a broader range of urban, municipal services, and/or a higher degree of local control over decisions. Residents in one area may feel that their needs would be better addressed if the area were governed as part of an existing municipality, or as its own municipality. To that end, residents may choose to pursue a boundary change that would allow them to become part of an existing municipality, or a full local government restructure initiative that could result in an amalgamation with a municipality, or the incorporation of a new municipality.

**Q:How can citizens participate in regional district decision-making processes?**

**A:** There are a number of ways that citizens can get involved:

- by directly contacting their Regional District Directors and/or, in the case of municipal citizens, their Municipal Councils (to whom the Municipal Directors are accountable)
- by attending and speaking at a Regional District Regular Board Meeting (all of which are open to the public), a committee/ commission meeting, a public hearing or some other regional district public event
- by voting in elector assent referendums and/or participating in alternative approval processes (for proposed services)

- by attending the open houses and other events that most regional districts use to obtain feedback on their proposed five year financial plans

Citizens who own property in an electoral area may also participate in decision-making by petitioning the regional district to provide a new service to all or part of the electoral area. For a petition to be valid, it must be signed by the owners of at least 50% of the parcels in the proposed service area. The persons signing must also be the owners of parcels that in total represent at least 50% of the net taxable value of all and improvements in the proposed area.

*More info*

For more information on regional districts, see the UBCM website at [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca) for a full copy of the *Regional District Tool Kit* or consult the regional district in your area.



**British Columbia  
Regional Districts  
2005**



### Fact Sheets

**1** Readers interested in exploring further the purposes of regional districts may wish to review Robert Bish's *Regional District Review – 1999* (available online at [www.uvic.ca/padm](http://www.uvic.ca/padm)). The chapter titled “The Role, Expectations and Philosophy of Regional Districts” is particularly helpful. Readers may also wish to review Chapter 2 of the full *Report & Action Plan* produced by UBCM's Regional District Issues & Non-Legislative Solutions Working Group. This publication is available online at [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca).

**2** A number of resources provides further information on the structure of regional districts, and related topics such as voting rules and delegation of authority:

- the Ministry of Community Services (CSERV) has available *A Primer on Regional Districts*: [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd)
- Fact Sheet 5 explains regional district voting rules
- CSERV has available a 2003 document titled *A Guide to Regional District Board Delegation to Committees & Commissions*: [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd)

**3** Readers may wish to consult the following sources for further information on service establishment, funding and governance, and on regional district services in general:

- the Ministry of Community Services' (CSERV) *A Primer on Regional Districts* ([www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd))
- Fact Sheet 4 on Service Reviews
- Fact Sheet 5 on Regional District Voting Rules
- CSERV's *Guide to Regional Service Arrangements & Service Reviews* ([www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd))
- Robert Bish's *Regional District Review – 1999* ([www.uvic.ca/padm](http://www.uvic.ca/padm))

**4** Readers interested in learning more about service reviews and how to conduct them may wish to review the following CSERV publications, all of which are available online at [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd):

- *Regional Service Reviews: An Introduction*
- *Guide to Regional Service Arrangements & Service Reviews*
- *Reaching Agreement on Regional Service Review and Withdrawal Disputes*
- *Designing Regional Service Arrangements: An Introduction*

**5** The best resource for further information on regional district voting rules is Bulletin A.11.0.0 titled *Regional District Voting Rules*, published in late 2000 by the Ministry of Community Services ([www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd)). The Bulletin's Appendix A, titled “Application of Voting Rules Under Part 24”, features a comprehensive and useful table.



Further information on regional districts' ability to vary the stakeholder vote rules is provided in the Ministry's Bulletin F.3.2.0 titled *Regional District Services Establishing Bylaws: Content and Approval Processes* (same website).

**6** Readers who would like to learn more about regional district finance may wish to consult the following items, all of which are published by the Ministry of Community Services and are available online at [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd):

- *A Primer on Regional Districts in British Columbia*
- Bulletin D.7.0.0. *Regional Districts: Financial Operations*
- *Development Cost Charges Guide*
- *Development Finance Choices Guide*
- *Development Coast Charge Guide for Elected Officials*

For further information on the processing of long-term borrowing, readers may wish to visit the Municipal Finance Authority's website at [www.mfa.bc](http://www.mfa.bc).

**7** For more information, see *A Primer on Regional Districts in British Columbia*, available on-line at [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd). Also refer to Fact Sheet 2 on Structure of Regional Districts.

**8** The best starting place for further information on the structural relationship between regional districts and the provincial government is the website of CSERV's Local Government Department ([www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd)). This site profiles the various roles of the Department and provides access to the full range of advisory and support materials for regional districts.



CSERV's *Summary of Local Government Legislation 2004*, also available on the web site, identifies various provincial statutes (and specific amendments) that affect local governments.

**9** Readers interested in learning more about regional district-First Nation relationships, and the various initiatives in place to help relationships develop, may wish to consider the following sources:

- *Building Relations with First Nations: A Handbook for Local Government*, prepared by UBCM and LMTAC (available online at [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca))
- *Regional Governance and Governance in the Region*, prepared by LMTAC (also available online at [www.lmtac.bc.ca](http://www.lmtac.bc.ca))
- UBCM's introduction to the Regional Community to Community Forum Program (available online at [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca))
- MOU on Local Government Participation in the *Negotiation of Treaties and Agreements* (available online at [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd))
- *Approaches and Options for Treaties in Urban Areas* (available online at [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca))

**10** Parts 25 (Regional Growth Strategies) and 26 (Planning and Land Use Management) of the *Local Government Act* contain all of the relevant legislative provisions related to electoral area and regional planning. *About Regional Growth Strategies*, published online by the Ministry of Community Services ([www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd)) gives a good overview of



Regional Growth Strategies.

*An Explanatory Guide to BC's Growth Strategies Legislation*, available on-line at [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd).

Readers may also wish to consult the Planning Department website at the Regional District of Central Okanagan ([www.regionaldistrict.com](http://www.regionaldistrict.com)). RDCO makes available on this site various information guides on electoral area planning and regional planning initiatives.

Finally, the Skeena-Queen Charlotte Regional District offers a *Development Procedure Manual*, 1998, available online at [www.sqcrd.bc.ca](http://www.sqcrd.bc.ca). This Manual walks developers through the development approval processes and regulations in the regional district's electoral areas.

### Effective Practices

**1** CORD has been publishing *The Board Reports* on a bi-weekly basis since 2001. Further information on CORD's initiative can be obtained by contacting the CORD's Administration Department by email at [info@cord.bc.ca](mailto:info@cord.bc.ca), or by phone at 250.763.4918. Past copies of *The Board Reports* can be viewed at [www.regionaldistrict.com](http://www.regionaldistrict.com).

Various other regional districts publish their own highlights. The Cowichan Valley Regional District, for example, releases *CVRD Matters* after each Board meeting. The CVRD contact is the Administrative Services Department, [cvrld@cvrd.bc.ca](mailto:cvrld@cvrd.bc.ca), 250.746.2500.

**2** Copies of the CSRD's presentations to member jurisdictions can be

obtained by contacting the regional district by email at [administration@rdcs.bc.ca](mailto:administration@rdcs.bc.ca), or by telephone at 250.334.6000. Other regional districts, including the Capital Regional District and the Cariboo Regional District, have similar established presentation programs.

**3** Further information on the "Board on the Road" program may be obtained from the Cariboo RD. Inquiries may be made by phone at 250.392.3351, or by email at [mailbox@cariboord.bc.ca](mailto:mailbox@cariboord.bc.ca).

**4** Further information on the PRRD's program of plenary gatherings may be obtained from the PRRD in Dawson Creek. Inquiries may be made by phone at 250.784.3200, or by email at [prrd@pris.bc.ca](mailto:prrd@pris.bc.ca).

**5** Readers are encouraged to visit the GVRD's website at [www.gvrd.bc.ca](http://www.gvrd.bc.ca). Under "Media", readers will find a section for "TV Programs." The full range of video clips, arranged by episode, may be downloaded and viewed free of charge from that page. An email contact is also listed for feedback and questions.

**6** Readers are encouraged to visit the Kootenay Boundary Regional District's website at [www.rdkb.com](http://www.rdkb.com) to view the current and past editions of the newsletter.

**7** Readers interested in learning more about the RDNO's experiences with CAO sessions are invited to contact the CAO's office by phone at 250.550.3700, or by email at [info@nord.ca](mailto:info@nord.ca).

## More Info





**8** Regional districts interested in learning more about the CSRD's Developer Forum initiative should contact the regional district by email at [administration@rdcs.bc.ca](mailto:administration@rdcs.bc.ca), or by telephone at 250.334.6000.

**9** Regional districts interested in learning more about the GVRD's Teacher Workshops should begin by exploring the detailed information posted on the GVRD's website at [www.gvrd.bc.ca/education/teacher-workshops.htm](http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/education/teacher-workshops.htm). Specific information on curriculum resources produced for distribution at the Workshops can be reviewed at [www.gvrd.bc.ca/education/curriculum-resources.htm](http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/education/curriculum-resources.htm).

**10** The GVRD has a set of media pages on its website. These pages provide points of contact, information about the organization and its services, and copies of news releases. See <http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/media/index.htm>.

### Discussion Guides

**1** There are three sources that readers may wish to consult for further information and additional perspectives. The first is an article by Eli Mina titled *Which Hat Am I Wearing Now?*, published in the August 2003 edition of *UBCM News* ([www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca)). The second is Robert Bish's *Regional District Review – 1999* ([www.uvic.ca.padm](http://www.uvic.ca.padm)), and the third is a 2003 paper by Lorena Staples titled *The Roles and Responsibilities of Regional Directors* ([www.sms.bc.ca](http://www.sms.bc.ca), under “Handbooks”).

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**3** For additional information, readers may wish to consult Robert Bish's *Regional District Review – 1999* ([www.uvic.ca.padm](http://www.uvic.ca.padm)). Readers may also wish to review Chapter 2 of the full *Report & Action Plan* produced by UBCM's Regional District Issues & Non-Legislative Solutions Working Group (Working Group 1). This publication is available online at [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca).

**4** Discussion Guide 2 and Discussion Guide 5 are identified in the text as resources for further information. To learn more about the Community Charter's confidentiality requirements, see Open Meetings, an information piece prepared by the Ministry of Community Services as part of its advisory materials on the Charter. Open Meetings can be found online at [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/charter/advisory\\_materials/open\\_meetings.htm](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/charter/advisory_materials/open_meetings.htm)

**5** See Fact Sheet 3 on Regional District Services.

