



Considering a Run for Local Government? Understanding the RDCK is the first step

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By Dan Elliott, RDCK Communications Coordinator

As British Columbia prepares for local government elections on October 17, some residents across the Kootenays may be asking themselves a simple question: *"Should I run?"*

For many, that interest begins with a desire to help address local issues such as housing, recreation, emergency services, planning, water systems or resource recovery. But before putting their name forward, prospective candidates should understand how local government works and the role of the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK).

The RDCK serves over 62,000 residents, provides over 180 services, and is governed by a 20-member Board of Directors made up of 11 electoral area directors and nine municipal directors. The Board brings together representatives from rural and municipal communities to make decisions on services and issues that affect the region as a whole. Local government elections are held every four years, giving residents a regular opportunity to choose who will represent their communities at the local and regional level.

While elected officials represent their individual communities, they also help make decisions that affect residents across the region. The RDCK Board oversees regional services and makes decisions through resolutions and bylaws. Directors are expected to balance local priorities with broader regional needs, working collaboratively with colleagues from different communities.

The RDCK includes 11 electoral areas, identified as Electoral Areas A through K. These areas represent residents living outside incorporated municipalities, from communities stretching from the Creston Valley to the Arrow Lakes. Each area elects one director to represent rural residents on the Board. If more than one candidate is nominated, an election is held. If only one candidate is nominated, that candidate will be elected by acclamation.

Residents in Castlegar, Creston, Kaslo, Nakusp, Nelson, New Denver, Salmo, Silvertown and Slocan elect mayors and councils. Those councils then appoint one of their members to represent the municipality on the RDCK Board. Municipal directors are therefore not elected directly to the RDCK Board. Together, municipal and electoral area directors form the RDCK's 20-member Board.

Board members debate issues, review staff reports, and vote on recommendations and bylaws. No single director can make decisions independently; outcomes depend on support from the Board as a whole. Understanding that regional governance is based on collaboration and majority decision-making is one of the most important lessons for prospective candidates.

Residents interested in seeking office are encouraged to learn more about the responsibilities of local government before nominations open. To understand more about local government elections, including if you are eligible to run, and how to complete your nomination documents, go to www.rdck.ca/elections.

Two Candidate Readiness Workshops will be held in August to help prospective candidates better understand elected office, local government structure, and campaign requirements:

- **Castlegar:** August 18, 6:00 pm, Castlegar & District Community Complex (2101 6th Ave.)
- **Creston:** August 20, 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm, Creston & District Community Complex (312 19th Ave. N) – this session is limited to 50 participants and pre-registration is required at www.creston.ca

"These workshops are a great opportunity for anyone considering a run for local government to learn what the role really entails," said Tom Dool, RDCK Chief Elections Officer. "Participants will gain a better understanding of the responsibilities of elected officials, how decisions are made at the local and regional levels, and what is required to become a candidate. Attending workshops, observing RDCK Board meetings, and learning more about the governance process can help residents determine whether running for elected office is the right fit for them. Whether someone is actively planning to run or simply exploring the possibility, the workshops provide valuable information to help them make an informed decision."

For those contemplating the next step and putting their name forward for this year's election, understanding the system is the essential first campaign promise—to themselves and to the communities they hope to serve. Because in regional government, success is not measured by how loud one voice is, but rather how effectively many voices work together.

For further information and media inquiries, please contact:

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