

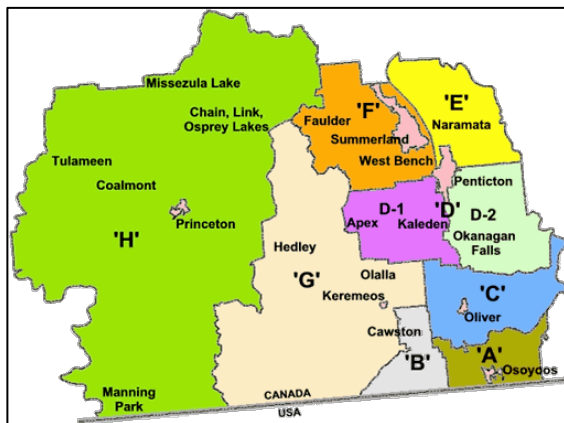


**RDOS Area D Governance Study
Fact Sheets
November 2015**

REGIONAL DISTRICT GOVERNANCE

► **What is a regional district?**

The Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) is one of 28 regional districts in BC. The boundaries of regional districts are vast – the RDOS spans 10,414 km² from the Okanagan Connector highway 97C in the north, south to the US border, stretching west from close to the Coquihalla highway 5, to well east of Skaha Lake. Regional district boundaries encompass municipalities as well as unincorporated lands, which are divided into smaller areas called electoral areas. Regional districts are modeled as a federation of municipalities and electoral areas, each of which has representation on the regional board. The RDOS encompasses 8 electoral areas and 6 municipalities.



Regional districts:

- Are the local government for rural (electoral) areas, providing them with basic local services such as community planning.
- Provide region-wide services to all electoral areas and municipalities within a region, such as solid waste management planning and emergency planning.

- Provide a framework for sub-regional or inter-municipal services to combinations of municipalities and electoral areas, such as garbage collection and animal control.

► **Who makes decisions?**

Regional districts are governed by a board consisting of two types of directors:

- **Electoral Area Directors** are elected directly by rural area voters, and serve 4-year terms.
- **Municipal Directors** are first elected to a municipal council, and are then appointed by their council to the regional district board for a term determined by their council.

The board selects its own chairperson, who has the authority to create committees to deal with issues such as planning, environmental management, and regional growth. In the RDOS the Board has established Planning & Development, Community Services, Corporate Services, Environmental Services, and Protective Services committees.

Each municipality or electoral area has a voting strength on the board based on population. In the RDOS, each jurisdiction has one vote for every 1,800 residents. The voting strength is then divided by 5 to determine the number of directors that sit on the board from each jurisdiction. The RDOS Board consists of 18 directors – one from each of the 8 electoral areas and one from each of the municipalities, with the exception of the City of Penticton, which appoints 4 directors, and the District of Summerland, which appoints 2.

The population of Area D was 7,384 in 2011, resulting in 5 votes – more than any of the other electoral areas or municipalities, with the exception of Penticton (19) and Summerland (7).

Some decisions are made by the entire board of directors, and others are made only by the directors from the areas participating in the service. There are two types of votes at the board:

- **Corporate votes**, in which all directors vote. Some of these votes are unweighted (1 director, 1 vote), such as for establishing new services, or regulatory bylaws. Weighted corporate votes are used for money matters, such as the financial plan, borrowing or buying property.
- **Stakeholder votes**, in which only those directors participating in a service are entitled to vote. Weighted votes (by population) are used. These votes are for the operations of existing services. If there is only one participating area, the entire board will vote on the service.

➤ What services does a regional district provide?

Regional districts can provide a broad range of services. With the exception of a few provincially mandated services, the services are determined by the regional board, with the support of residents. Because the board only provides services that their members, or residents, agree the regional district should provide, the menu of services varies by regional district, and can be different within each electoral area or community.

Some services, such as street lighting, may be provided to a portion of an electoral area, or to a combination of electoral areas and municipalities (such as the operation of the Campbell Mountain landfill). Regional services are those that are provided to all member municipalities and electoral areas, such as solid waste management planning.

Services are established to respond to needs identified by the board, electoral area directors, member municipalities, staff or residents. A proposed service must go through a process to determine its feasibility, including scope, cost, and delivery options. If deemed feasible, a service establishing bylaw must receive support from the regional district board. Ultimately the bylaw must also be approved by the province's Inspector of Municipalities, and supported by the residents that will participate in and pay for the service. Support can be demonstrated through a petition, alternative-approval process, referendum, or approval by a Council or electoral area director on behalf of residents of that jurisdiction.

➤ What services does a regional district NOT provide?

The provincial government provides some services to rural areas, including roads and policing. These services are not the responsibility of the regional district and they do not have control over how they are provided.

Just because the regional district *can* provide a service, does not mean that they *do*. There are many organizations that provide services. For instance, water service may be provided to a community privately, or through an Improvement District independent of the regional district. In Area D there are 6 improvement districts providing water, as well as private utilities such as the Lakeshore Highlands Water Utility and St. Andrews Utility Inc.

➤ How do regional districts pay for services?

Unlike a municipality, which has the flexibility to allocate "general revenues" to its services, each service provided by the regional district is budgeted for separately. Costs are recovered by billing those who benefit from the service. The expense of providing a service must be covered by revenue generated for that same service; one service cannot subsidize another. Taxes raised for a fire protection service must fund the fire department and no unrelated activity.

Regional districts raise funds primarily through property taxation – parcel taxes (a set amount per parcel, land area, or metre of frontage), or property taxes that are based on the assessed value of the property (land, improvements, or land and improvements combined). Tax bills reference the services, or group of services received, and the associated tax rates.

Regional districts also generate revenues from user fees and charges, such as dog licenses, garbage collection fees, recreation fees and provincial or federal government grants. Some services, such as garbage collection, are recovered fully through user fees, and do not require any taxation.

In electoral areas, the Province collects property taxes. Within municipal boundaries, property taxes are paid to the municipality. The Province and municipalities then transfer funds to the regional districts to cover the cost of local, sub-regional and regional services that the regional districts provide.