

# Reprint **Island Tides**

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## **Do you know your regional district?** Local Government Elections November 19

Sara Miles

Every three years, the citizens of BC elect their local government representatives. This is one of those years—November 19 is voting day for Local Government Elections. Nominations open October 4.

*Island Tides* readers living in rural electoral areas will vote for regional district directors (and some will vote for Islands Trust trustees). These directors sit on a Regional District Board. Those living in municipalities vote for mayors and councillors, who are then appointed by the municipal council to the District Board. School trustee elections also take place at this time, and referenda concerning community infrastructure are often administered at the time of local government elections.

*Island Tides* goes to readers in six regional districts. Let's look at how the structure of these districts affects voters on the various islands and municipalities on BC's south coast.

### **Capital Regional District (CRD)**

The CRD is managed by a board of 22 directors from 13 municipalities and three electoral areas. A director represents each of the three electoral areas: Juan de Fuca, Southern Gulf Islands, and Salt Spring Island. The municipalities are Central Saanich, Colwood, Esquimalt, Highlands, Langford, Metchosin, North Saanich, Oak Bay, Saanich, Sidney, Sooke, Victoria and View Royal.

The *Juan de Fuca Electoral Area* covers an area from Malahat to Port Renfrew. With an area of 1,512 square-kilometres it is the largest jurisdiction in the CRD, but with only 4,480 residents reported in the 2006 Census. Situated on the southwest tip of Vancouver Island, it includes several separate communities along the west coast and five First Nations Reserve Lands.

The *Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area* (SGIEA) is made up of more than 70 islands in a 216-square-kilometre area. The 5,000 residents live mostly on the five largest islands: Saturna, Mayne, North and South Pender Islands, and Galiano. A few people live on the smaller surrounding islands, but many islands are uninhabited.

First Nations Reserve Lands on Galiano and Mayne, as well as some Reserve Lands on the Saanich Peninsula, are included in the SGIEA. These are: Union Bay 4-Tseycum Band, Cole Bay 3-Pauquachin Band, South Saanich 1-Tsartlip Band, East Saanich 2-Tsawout Band, Galiano Island 9-Penelakut Band, and Mayne Island 6-Tsartlip Band.

*Salt Spring Island Electoral Area* is quite different from the other two electoral areas in the CRD. It is the largest of the Gulf

Islands, with an area of 180 sq-km and a population over 10,000.

One referendum is scheduled for the SGIEA. Qualified electors of the *Galiano Island Community Use Building Service Area* will vote on Bylaws #3792 and #3793. If the referendum questions pass, the CRD will be authorized to establish a service and borrow funds to provide a library, community and local government use building on Galiano, and borrow funds to pay for planning, designing, constructing and equipping such a facility.

Salt Spring and the five main islands in the SGIEA will also each vote for two Islands Trust trustees.

### **Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD)**

The CVRD, with an area of 1,725 sq-km, serves a population of about 58,824. In February 2008, the Comox Strathcona Regional District was divided in half into the CVRD and the Strathcona Regional District. It now constitutes three municipalities and three electoral areas. The municipalities are the Village of Cumberland, the Town of Comox and the City of Courtenay. The electoral areas are: Area A—Baynes Sound/Denman-Hornby Islands; Area B—Lazo North; Area C—Puntledge-Black Creek. Voters will elect one director for each electoral area. Voters in the Hornby and Denman Island local trust areas will also elect two trustees for each area, as their land use planning is carried out by the Islands Trust.

### **Strathcona Regional District (SRD)**

The SRD covers a large area, about 22,000sq-km. A 13-member Board serves a population of 43,000 residing within five municipalities and four electoral areas. The municipalities are the Villages of Zeballos, Gold River, Tahsis and Sayward, and the City of Campbell River. The electoral areas are: Area A—Kyuquot/Nootka-Sayward; Area B—Cortes Island; Area C—Discovery Islands-Mainland Inlets; and Area D—Oyster Bay-Buttle Lake. The Islands Trust Area does not reach this far north.

### **Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD)**

The CVRD is managed by 15 directors from four municipalities and nine electoral areas. The municipalities are the City of Duncan, the Towns of Ladysmith and Lake Cowichan and the District of North Cowichan. Eligible voters will elect one director for each of the following electoral areas: Area A—Malahat-Mill Bay; Area B—Shawnigan Lake; Area C—Cobble Hill; Area D—Cowichan Bay; Area E—Cowichan Station/Glenora/Sahtlam; Area F—Cowichan Lake South/Skutz Falls; Area G—Gulf

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Islands/Saltair; Area H–Diamond/North Oyster; and Area I–Meade Creek/Youbou.

Two trustees represent Thetis Island Trust Area.

This year there are two referendum questions for some CVRD residents. Voters in Area A will decide whether or not to approve Bylaw #3539 regarding an annual contribution of up to \$15,000 for the Mill Bay/Malahat Historical Society. Those in Area H will vote on Bylaws #3542 and #3543 regarding authorization for the Board to borrow up to \$3,030,000 for a 20-year period to finance the design and construction of two firehalls.

#### **Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN)**

The RDN has four municipalities and seven electoral areas. One director from each electoral area sits on the 17-member Board. The areas are: Area A–Cassidy, Cedar, Yellowpoint, South Wellington; Area B–Gabriola, DeCourcy, Mudge Islands; Area C–Extension, Arrowsmith-Benson, East Wellington, Pleasant Valley; Area E–Nanoose Bay; Area F–Coombs, Hilliers, Errington; Area G–French Creek, Dashwood, Englishman River; and Area H–Shaw Hill, Qualicum Bay, Deep Bay, Bowser. The municipalities are the City of Nanaimo, the City of Parksville, the District of Lantzville and the Town of Qualicum Beach.

Eligible voters from the Gabriola Island Local Trust Area, which actually includes 18 islands and islets, will elect two trustees.

#### **Powell River Regional District (PRRD)**

The PRRD has a seven-member board made up of two directors from the City of Powell River and one from each of the five electoral areas: Area A–Slammon, Lund, Savary Island; Area B–Paradise Valley; Area C–Saltery Bay, Lang Bay, Stillwater; Area D–Texada Island; Area E–Lasqueti Island. Two trustees are elected to represent the Lasqueti Local Trust Area.

#### **A Bit More About Local Gov't**

Any Canadian citizen can run in their local government election, provided they are over 18 and have been a resident of BC for at least six months. There are a few exceptions; municipal or district employees may not run.

Unlike the provincial elections administered by Elections BC, local government elections are managed by chief election officers appointed by each regional district.

Regional districts are a unique feature of the BC local government system. Each one is a federation of rural areas and municipalities, as we have seen, that provides a government for unincorporated areas, a forum for inter-municipal cooperation and a means for the province to carry out its mandates, such as regional waste management. ☞