

Strait Talk

Local Government Awareness Week May 16-22

May 16-22 is Local Government awareness week in BC. The goal for this week is to generate awareness and educate the public about the roles and responsibilities of local government and encourage the public to participate in local government processes. The Regional District framework is unique to British Columbia. It was established in 1965 with the creation of 29 regional districts to provide a flexible form of local government in which different services can be offered to different areas and across jurisdictional boundaries, and in which rural areas can be provided with local governance and representation. The regulatory framework for regional districts is provided by the Local Government Act and the Community Charter.

There are now 28 regional districts representing the incredible range and diversity of geography and population in this province. Some regional districts, such as MetroVancouver, are dominated by municipalities, whereas the Central Coast RD has no municipalities. In the SCRDC, there is relative balance between the populations in rural areas and those in the municipalities of Gibsons, Sechelt and the Sechelt Indian Government District. The RD system requires us to work together in a cooperative way to achieve both our mutual goals and the objectives of the individual areas within the federation.

The purpose and roles of a regional district include providing good government for the communities it serves, providing the services and other things that the board considers to be necessary or desirable for all or part of its member communities, providing stewardship of public assets within its communities, and fostering the current and future economic, social and environmental well-being of member communities. Through electoral area-municipal partnerships, the SCRDC provides services that can be regional (supplied to the whole region), inter-municipal (supplied to two or more members within the region) or local (provided to electoral areas, or within a subset of an electoral area, within the region).

Regional districts undertake functions that are mandated by the provincial government as well as voluntary functions decided upon by locally elected representatives based on the needs of the local communities they serve. In addition to the corporate and financial administrative functions every local government must undertake, regional districts also act on behalf of their member municipalities in their dealings with the Municipal Finance Authority, the municipal lender in BC. Regional districts are responsible for comprehensive solid waste management planning and emergency planning. In a separate role, regional district directors also govern regional hospital districts.

The real growth in regional districts since their inception has been in the voluntary

provision of services, controls, and regulation of service areas. Parks and recreation services and facilities, drinking water, sustainability planning, transit, grants in aid, ports, libraries, cycle and walking paths, cemeteries, building inspection, and nuisance controls such as for animals and smoke are examples of voluntary services the SCR D has undertaken over the years since its incorporation in 1967.

To find out more about the SCR D check out [HYPERLINK/www.scrd.ca](http://www.scrd.ca) or email me donna_shugar@hotmail.com.