

Terms of Reference:

Regional District of Nanaimo

Electoral Area G Community Issues Assessment

1.0 OVERVIEW

1.1 Background

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) was established in 1967 and is one of 27 regional districts in B.C. It is governed by a Board of Directors whose members are appointed from four member municipalities' councils and elected from the region's seven electoral areas. The RDN encompasses an area of more than 200,000 Ha with a population of 170,367 (2021) and is situated within the territories of several First Nations.

The RDN Board has 19 Directors, elected to office for a four-year term (current term November 2022 to November 2026). The RDN is a local government that provides a variety of localized and regional services to its electoral areas and municipalities, both under legislation and by agreement, including emergency response systems, water systems, fire departments, land use planning, building inspection, solid waste management and parks and recreation services. The Board meets regularly to govern the affairs of the region and to establish local bylaws and public policy.

Electoral Area G, located in the central part of the RDN, includes the communities of Englishman River, San Pareil, French Creek, Little Qualicum, and Dashwood. With a size of approximately 5,073 hectares, the area is bound to the north by the Strait of Georgia and both surrounds the City of Parksville and Town of Qualicum Beach and is bisected by the City of Parksville.

Since 2001, there have been several boundary extensions with the last one taking in an area including the Chartwell neighbourhood and the airport, resulting in a portion of Electoral Area G being incorporated into the Town of Qualicum Beach. The population for Area G has grown significantly. The 2021 Census estimates Electoral Area G's population to be 8,109 residents, with a population increase of 8.6% from the 2016 Census. This high growth trend is expected to continue, and it is anticipated that as many as 12,000 people could reside in Area G by 2026. The average age in Electoral Area G is 54 and the median age is 60 with 83% of dwellings being single detached homes.

In November 2021, the RDN submitted a request for funding to explore the possibility of a governance study for Electoral Area G. On May 30, 2023, the RDN followed up with subsequent correspondence to Minister Kang requesting approval of a Governance and Services Study for Electoral Area G, should funding be available.

Because many of Electoral Area G's residents live on the outskirts of Parksville and Qualicum Beach, it is not clear to what extent the community understands its current governance and service delivery arrangements, which include a mix of municipal, regional district, provincial, improvement district and private water services. In situations like this, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MUNI) recommends that a Community Issues Assessment (CIA) be undertaken before any further governance work is completed.

Undertaking a CIA will provide residents and the RDN with valuable information on their current system of governance and improve awareness about who provides services in the community. This will, in turn, help identify shared interests and opportunities that may lead to further governance work that targets specific service delivery issues.

Because of the proximity of Qualicum Beach and Parksville, and the overlap in municipal and regional district service provision (e.g., Parksville provides fire protection for parts of Electoral Area G), additional engagement beyond a typical CIA is required to ensure this process is thorough and effective.

1.2 Objectives

The CIA aims to provide residents with an understanding of the current system of governance in the RDN Electoral Area G, and to identify whether there are any key issues or emerging trends. Depending on the results of the CIA, further study may be considered to assess ways to address them.

The core objectives of the CIA for Electoral Area G are to:

- Identify and describe the different roles, responsibilities and jurisdictions of service providers;
- Assemble information on existing service delivery arrangements and governance relationships;
- Identify current and emerging issues and pressures related to services as seen by residents;
- Better understand how decisions are made and the relationships between service providers;
- Provide opportunities for residents, property owners, improvement district and First Nations to articulate the issues they see in Electoral Area G; and
- Summarize findings for consideration by the RDN Board.

2.0 SCOPE OF WORK

2.1 Study Area

The study area is for the entirety of Electoral Area G, which includes the communities of Englishman River, San Pareil, French Creek, Little Qualicum, and Dashwood.

A map of Electoral Area G is provided as Appendix A.

2.2 Study Methodology and Contents

The study must adhere to the following steps:

1. Compile information related to Electoral Area G, including:
 - a. General demographic and socio-economic data;
 - b. Current and emerging issues and pressures related to service delivery as defined by residents; and
 - c. A high-level overview of how decisions regarding services are made and the relationships between service providers.
2. Conduct an outreach process throughout Electoral Area G to solicit input and assess community perspectives on service delivery and governance issues. The outreach process may include (but is not limited to):
 - a. Public open houses/community forums held throughout Electoral Area G;
 - b. Web and/or paper-based surveys; and
 - c. Distribution of information.
3. Summarize the results of government-to-government engagement undertaken by RDN and MUNI with area First Nations, identifying perspectives on service delivery and governance issues;
4. Engage the improvement district at the staff level to identify their perspectives on service delivery and governance issues;

5. Engage private water utilities at the staff level to identify their perspectives on service delivery and governance issues;
6. Engage the neighbouring municipalities of Parksville and Qualicum Beach at the staff level to identify their perspectives on service delivery and governance issues;
7. Prepare a final report that includes summaries of the data on demographics, governance and service arrangement and a synopsis of concerns and opportunities raised by residents; and
8. Summarize findings of the study for the RDN Board of Directors.

2.3 Final Report and Outcomes

The final report should include the following:

1. Descriptions of the current governance and service delivery arrangements in the study area; and
2. A synopsis of the current issues/concerns and opportunities identified by the community, area First Nations, improvement district and private water utilities within Electoral Area G, and with the adjoining municipalities of Parksville and Qualicum Beach.

Expected deliverables from this project include:

1. A Progress Report to MUNI, on or before October 1, 2024, comprised of the consultant's proposal accepted as the basis of a contract for the Study and/or a preliminary outline of the Study work plan;
2. A draft Interim Report to RDN and MUNI, on or before February 3, 2025, comprised of the summary of service provision, demographics and governance arrangements prior to public engagement and presentation;
3. A draft Final Report to RDN and MUNI, on or before May 1, 2025, comprised of the information on the provision of service and governance and the public engagement findings; and
4. A Final Report to RDN and MUNI, on or before June 25, 2025, comprised of a copy of the final report with PowerPoint presented to the RDN Board, summarizing background, methods, results of information gathering and outreach, and study limitations.

Following completion of the study, the RDN will convey the findings to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Depending on the results of the study and subsequent decisions by the RDN Board, further steps towards a governance review for Electoral Area G may be considered by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, if warranted.

2.4 Out of Scope

The study will not include recommendations for governance change or an examination of municipal incorporation. The study will not provide detailed technical or financial information on the current situation or on the impact of changes to current governance. The study will not present options or make recommendations on changes to the existing governance model, services, or boundaries.

2.5 Timeline*

Task/Deliverable	Completion Date
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Procurement complete – consultant(s) selected and work commences	September 13, 2024
RDN to provide a progress report to MUNI	October 1, 2024
Draft interim report provided to RDN and MUNI staff for review/comment	February 3, 2025
Public/interested parties engagement complete	April 17, 2025
Draft final report provided to RDN and MUNI staff for review/comment	May 1, 2025
Final formatted report delivered to RDN and MUNI	June 9, 2025
Report findings presented to RDN Board	June 24, 2025

*Timeline will become more certain after consultants are selected and agreement is reached on a feasible study completion schedule.

3.0 ADMINISTRATION

3.1 Role of the RDN

The RDN Board will oversee the CIA. The Board will consider the findings and any recommendations to determine how to proceed. Ensuring the CIA process is carried out in an inclusive, open, and transparent manner, the study consultant will provide an important link between the community and the Board, complemented by the Electoral Area Director who may assist in raising awareness about the CIA and related public engagement events.

The RDN will procure one or more consultants following its procurement policy and process. Consultants will be sought with sufficient experience and expertise in local government boundary extension/restructure, service delivery and governance studies along with public and stakeholder consultative processes. The consultants shall report directly to the RDN staff who will administer the contract and ensure that expected outputs meet the requirements outlined in these Terms of Reference.

The RDN will provide a progress report to MUNI on or before October 1, 2024, through program staff, that includes a copy of the selected consultants' proposal accepted as the basis of a contract for the study, and/or a preliminary outline of the work plan before substantive work begins. A draft report will be provided to MUNI for review and comment prior to the report being finalized.

The RDN must ensure that the report and engagement with the community are neutral and balanced. The responsibility for ensuring the information collected by the consultant is appropriately shared with the public, RDN Board, community, and MUNI rests with the RDN staff.

3.2 Role of the Community

The community will be engaged by the consultant as the project progresses. RDN staff, in partnership with the consultant, will determine how best to engage with community members, the public more generally, and others, such as neighbouring municipalities, private water utilities, improvement district, directly affected in the development of the assessment. It is important to establish parameters for public participation so that residents and property owners understand the opportunities to participate.

At a minimum, engaging with the community should include:

- community events to present information and seek community feedback;
- a process to gather information from the public on their interests, needs and concerns and current governance and service delivery arrangements; and,
- a strategy for reporting out to the public on progress in developing the report.

3.3 Role of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs

RDN and MUNI staff will undertake engagement and outreach with First Nations who may have an interest in the CIA and in providing their input and views in addition to their participation in the public engagement component of this CIA.

Funding for the study is via Restructure Planning Grant Program, pursuant to the *Local Government Grants Act* and Regulation to the RDN from the MUNI.

MUNI staff will be available as a resource for the RDN and, when required, for the consultant.

APPENDIX A

Map of study area

