



REGIONAL  
DISTRICT  
OF NANAIMO

**Regional District of Nanaimo Board Voting Formula – Potential Options and Considerations**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Board receive the report titled “Regional District of Nanaimo Board Voting Formula – Potential Options and Considerations” dated March 3, 2026, for information.
2. That the Board support a change to the Regional District of Nanaimo Board Voting Formula.
3. That the Board provide direction on which Voting Formula Option(s) the Board would like to further consider.
4. That the Board direct that letters regarding the voting formula options that the Board would like to further consider be sent to the Mayor and Council of the City of Nanaimo, the City of Parksville, the District of Lantzville and the Town of Qualicum Beach seeking their input.
5. That the Board approve the Engagement Plan Highlights included as Attachment No. 2 to this report.

**BACKGROUND**

The Board passed the following resolution at its September 9, 2023, Regular Board meeting:

23-432

That staff be directed to bring back a report to the Board on the projected 2026 Census population figures and the potential impacts to the Board’s composition and voting strength.

ADOPTED ON CONSENT

The Board subsequently passed the following resolution at its May 14, 2024, Regular Board Meeting:

24-261

It was moved and seconded that the Board authorize staff to enter into discussions with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to review the voting unit assigned to the Regional District of Nanaimo and to look at options to change the voting unit that would maintain the principle of representation by population underlying the composition and operation of regional districts in British Columbia.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The report considered by the Board at the May 14, 2024, Regular Board Meeting is included as Attachment No. 1.

**Discussion with Ministry**

Further to the Board’s direction, Regional District of Nanaimo (“RDN”) staff met with staff from the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs (“Ministry”) to discuss the voting formula options and received recommendations

from the Ministry of questions for the Board to consider and information to include in a proposal requesting a change to the voting formula.

While some of the process in considering a voting formula involves mathematical calculations, the Ministry stressed that a value-based approach is important in developing a proposal for changing the formula to one that meets the projected short-term and long-term (“scalability”) priorities of the RDN to support effective governance. All projected population numbers used in this report are based on the Ministry’s projections.

The Ministry’s recommendation would be to ensure the proposal considers and responds to scalability in the long-term where the City of Nanaimo would not require 10 directors to be appointed in 2041 and not even require 9 directors to allow for at least one alternate director appointment. The Ministry’s policy is for each jurisdiction to retain at least 2 weighted votes. The proposal for a change to the voting formula may include a change to the voting unit, the divisor, or both (explained below and in Attachment No. 3 “Voting Formula Options”.) Ideally, the Board will have a fulsome discussion and achieve consensus on a proposal that will subsequently be submitted to the Ministry.

The questions raised during communications with the Ministry are listed below (bulleted items) with information available at this time (in blue). The Board may wish to further consider these questions, and the Board’s responses will be used to support a proposal to the Ministry and/or inform the next report to Board.

“In short, to properly assess a request to change the voting strength – and gain a deeper understanding of whether we can recommend this change to the Minister for Cabinet approval – the Ministry will require further information about the implications of any change. As a starting point, we’re hoping that RDN can provide answers to the following questions in a Proposal:”

- Is there a consensus at the RDN board table supporting this change? Has a vote been taken and what was the outcome?

The Board has considered the matter (see Attachment No. 1, Report to the Board entitled “RDN Board Composition and Voting Strength – Potential Impacts from Projected 2026 Census Population Figures” dated May 14, 2024). The Board has not yet taken a vote or achieved consensus.

- Did non-voting board members participate in the discussion?

The RDN has one non-voting Board member - Chief Recalma of Qualicum First Nation. A copy of this agenda was forwarded for his consideration. The Engagement Plan proposes that the RDN write to the First Nations with reserve lands located within the Regional District of Nanaimo - Snuneymuxw First Nation, Snaw-Naw-As First Nation, and Qualicum First Nation - whose traditional territories overlap with the RDN’s boundaries to inform them of the proposed change in the regional district voting formula and invite their comments.

- What issues are there for the RDN board (as a whole) with respect to the current voting strength? What are the anticipated impacts for the RDN board if there is a change in the voting strength?

Following the 2026 Census, and under the current voting formula, the City of Nanaimo will not be able to appoint the number of directors required. General impacts of changing the voting formula are that Nanaimo will not have as many directors; Parksville will lose a director at least in the short-term; EA voting strength is impacted by the various options with Electoral Areas ‘A’, ‘F’, and ‘G’ losing one weighted vote each at least in the short-term; Qualicum Beach voting strength is also impacted in several options. Lantzville and the remaining Electoral Areas are directly affected in some options. The impacts vary according to option chosen. Impacts are listed in Attachment No. 3 “Voting Formula Options”.

- What operational challenges are there for the City of Nanaimo under the current board composition? Please provide specific examples.

The Regional District of Nanaimo has 9 elected officials. Already, with 8 directors and only one alternate there are occasions where other priorities result in less than 8 directors representing the City of Nanaimo attending Board meetings. Following the 2026 Census, and with no change to the Voting Formula, the City will be required to appoint 10 elected officials to the RDN Board. The number of Directors required is greater than the current size of Council.

- What impact will there be on the City of Nanaimo voting strength? How is this proposed change viewed by the current City of Nanaimo council? What consultation and outreach have been done with the City of Nanaimo council? What would a future City of Nanaimo council be giving up if there were a change to the voting unit?

The City of Nanaimo does not want to change the size of their Council. They recognize a change to the Voting Formula is required to address the population growth, and that there will be impacts.

The Engagement Plan (Attachment No. 2) proposes that letters be sent to the City of Nanaimo, the City of Parksville, the District of Lantzville and the Town of Qualicum Beach to find out their views.

- What impact will there be on the voting strength of other RDN members? Has there been any consultation with the other municipalities/EA's and what are their opinions on this change?

There has been discussion at the Board table. The municipalities have not yet been formally consulted for their opinions. The Engagement Plan (Attachment No. 2) proposes that letters be sent to the City of Nanaimo, the City of Parksville, the District of Lantzville and the Town of Qualicum Beach. Concurrently Electoral Area Directors can further consider the matter.

- Which specific kinds of votes / region-wide services would be affected by a voting strength change, and how? Are there any examples where a specific service may be affected by a change in voting strength?

Looking at specific votes, the following can be observed:

- Unweighted corporate votes:
  - one director present = one vote;
  - If an area goes up or down in directors, it directly impacts the unweighted corporate vote;
  - the relative vote of each director is affected by the size of the Board.
- Weighted corporate votes:
  - Weighted corporate votes = voting strength (population/voting unit) of directors present;
  - If the voting strength goes up or down, the director's vote carries a larger or smaller voting strength;
  - The relative vote of each director is affected by the overall total voting strength of the regional district.
- Weighted participant votes:
  - equals voting strength of directors present representing participants in the service;
  - If the voting strength goes up or down, the director's vote carries a larger or smaller voting strength;
  - The relative vote of each director in the service is affected by the overall total voting strength of all participants in the service.

See example voting formula options included in Attachment No. 3 for further option-specific information on the impact to the unweighted and weighted corporate votes. See the "Weighted Participant Vote Impacts" section below and Attachment No. 4 for impacts to Services.

- Any other impacts this change may have that are important to identify?

All municipalities and Electoral Areas will be impacted by all of the options to varying degrees. Even if an area's own director count and weighted vote count do not change, their relative voting power will be affected by the change in the number of directors and/or the voting strength of the other jurisdictions.

The City of Nanaimo is affected by all options as is expected with the catalyst for this change being the projected requirement for seating a sufficient number of directors at the RDN Board table exceeding their capacity to provide.

The City of Parksville will lose one director at least in the short-term (affecting unweighted corporate votes) and may lose one unit of voting strength (affecting weighted corporate and weighted participant votes).

The Electoral Areas 'A', 'B', 'E', 'F', 'G' and 'H', the City of Parksville, the District of Lantzville and the Town of Qualicum Beach are impacted in various options with respect to weighted corporate voting and with respect to weighted participant voting according to the services in which they participate.

- Please provide a summary of any consultation undertaken or votes taken on this issue with the RDN board and each individual RDN jurisdiction. This may include council minutes documenting the view of board or council or letters of support for the proposal.

The discussion so far has occurred at the Board table. The Engagement Plan (Attachment No. 2) proposes that letters be sent to the City of Nanaimo, the City of Parksville, the District of Lantzville and the Town of Qualicum Beach. Concurrently Electoral Area Directors can further consider the matter.

See example options included in Attachment No. 3 for further option-specific information on the impact to the unweighted and weighted corporate votes. See the "Weighted Participant Vote Impacts" section below and Attachment No. 4 for impacts to Services.

- It could also be helpful to have a summary of how interested members of the public have been informed of this potential change along with any opportunities to raise their concerns with the board.

See "Voting Formula Engagement Plan Highlights", Attachment No. 2 to this report.

- Representation by population – is change equitable?
- What is the goal?
  - Status-quo or realignment
- What are the priorities?
  - Directors, voting strength
  - Municipalities, Electoral Areas
- City of Nanaimo participation in regional service delivery? City of Parksville participation in regional service delivery?

See the below section "Weighted Participant Votes" and Attachment No. 4 for impacts. The Engagement Plan (Attachment No. 2) proposes that letters be sent to the City of Nanaimo, the City of Parksville, the District of Lantzville and the Town of Qualicum Beach for their feedback on these impacts.

## Supporting Information

The *Local Government Act* provides that the voting power on a Board is based on the change in population of each municipality and electoral area as established by census and takes effect in the year following the year in which the census is taken. Therefore the 2026 Census will be applied to the Regional District of Nanaimo for 2027.

In order to address the principal of representation by population underlying the composition and operation of the regional district, the options for the Board's consideration can be broadly categorized as follows:

- Option 1: changes to the Voting Unit
- Option 2: changes to the Voting Divisor
- Option 3: changes to the Voting Unit and Voting Divisor.

### Option 1: Changes to the Voting Unit

- The voting unit determines the voting strength of each director for the weighted votes.
- It means the unit of population specified in the letters patent (constituting document) that is used for dividing the population of the municipality or electoral area to determine the weighted vote for each area.
- The voting unit varies significantly across the province from 600 to 20,000. See "Table: Regional District Voting Formula Statistics" below.
- Changing the voting unit can change the number of directors and the voting strength depending on the population of the jurisdiction.
- The RDN's current voting unit is 2,500.
- The *Local Government Act* provides that the voting unit is specified in the letters patent. A change to the voting unit can be achieved by a proposal requesting the letters patent be amended to include a different voting unit. The Ministry is willing to consider a proposal that includes a change to the voting unit.
- The 2021 Census population is 170,367. Therefore, the RDN's voting strength is the total population for the municipality or electoral area divided by the voting unit to obtain the weighted vote. The numbers are always rounded up. For the entire RDN, the calculation is:

$$170,367 \div 2,500 = 73$$

**“Table: Regional District Voting Formula Statistics”**

<b>Regional Districts</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>No. Directors</b>	<b>Voting Unit</b>	<b>Divisor</b>	<b>Voting Strength</b>
Metro Vancouver	2,642,825	41	20,000	5	145
Central Okanagan	222,162	12	5,500	5	43
Capital	415,451	24	5,000	5	92
Fraser Valley	324,005	24	5,000	5	73
Fraser-Fort George	96,979	14	4,000	5	31
Thompson-Nicola	143,680	27	3,250	5	56
Bulkley-Nechako	37,737	15	3,000	5	20
Peace River	61,532	12	3,000	5	27
Central Kootenay	62,509	20	2,500	5	35
Nanaimo - RD	170,367	19	2,500	5	73
Cariboo	62,931	16	2,500	5	33
East Kootenay	65,896	15	2,500	5	33
North Okanagan	91,610	14	2,500	5	42
Kootenay Boundary	33,433	13	2,500	5	20
Columbia Shuswap	57,021	12	2,500	5	29
Cowichan Valley	89,013	16	2,000	5	50
Alberni-Clayoquot	33,521	14	2,000	5	26
Kitimat-Stikine	37,790	12	2,000	5	27
Squamish-Lillooet	50,496	11	2,000	5	29
North Coast	18,181	10	2,000	5	15
Sunshine Coast	32,170	9	2,000	5	20
qathet	20,699	7	2,000	5	13
Okanagan-Similkameen	90,178	20	1,800	5	58
Strathcona	48,150	14	1,500	5	37
Comox Valley	72,445	10	1,500	5	51
Central Coast	3,582	5	1,500	5	5
Mount Waddington	10,839	9	600	5	22
Northern Rockies	3,947				
Stikine Unincorporated	683				
<b>Grand Totals</b>	<b>4,999,832</b>				

Option 2: Changes to the voting divisor

- The default voting divisor in the *Local Government Act* is five (5).
- There is only ever one electoral area director for each electoral area.
- The voting divisor determines how many municipal directors are appointed to the Board.
- The voting divisor impacts the unweighted corporate vote
- It does not impact the number of weighted corporate or weighted participant votes.
- The voting divisor makes the biggest impact to Board size (number of Directors).
- The calculation is: take the number of weighted votes calculated under the voting unit above and divide it by the divisor (currently 5).

- The *Local Government Act* provides that the divisor can be a different number in the letters patent for the regional district and the Ministry is willing to consider a proposal that includes a change to the divisor.
- The RDN’s current voting divisor is 5. The voting divisor for all other regional districts in British Columbia is also 5. (See “Table: Regional District Voting Formula Statistics” above.)
- The calculation is obtained by taking the municipal weighted vote and dividing it by the divisor to determine the number of directors. The numbers are always rounded up. For the City of Nanaimo, using the 2021 Census, the calculation is:

$$99,863 \div 2,500 = 40 \text{ weighted votes and then } 40 \div 5 = 8 \text{ directors}$$

- The projected population for the City of Nanaimo following the 2026 Census is 116,200. The new calculation would be:

$$116,200 \div 2,500 = 47 \text{ weighted votes and then } 47 \div 5 = 10 \text{ directors}$$

The result is greater than the current size of Nanaimo’s City Council and therefore not possible.

### Option 3: Changes to the voting unit and voting divisor

- Changes to the voting unit and voting divisor will involve a combination of both options 1 and 2 above.
- The Ministry is willing to consider a proposal requesting that the letters patent be amended to include a change to both the voting unit and the divisor.

These broad categories provide a large range of possible voting formulas. This report includes only a small sample of the possible voting formula options (See Attachment No. 3) for the Board’s consideration and is not an exhaustive analysis. The options are presented to seek further direction on what options the Board would like to pursue further to form the basis of a Proposal for a change to the RDN’s voting formula to the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs. Beyond the mathematical formulas are other values-based considerations including but not limited to equity, balance, fairness, reasonableness and inclusive regional governance. Which values are important to the Board, and how is this captured in the option(s) that the Board would like to explore further?

### Weighted Participant Votes – Impact to Services

The Services shaded light grey on the “RDN Services and Participants – Voting Formula Impacts” included as Attachment No. 4 to this report experience impacts to the weighted participant vote in some or all the options, with respect to at least one jurisdiction.

Under each of the example options in Attachment No. 3 to this report, see the +/- column to the right of the Voting Strength column for 2026 and 2041 to view the impact to the weighted vote for each area.

For all participants in a shaded service, even if their jurisdiction’s voting strength does not change, the relationship between the weighted vote and the overall weighted vote of all service participants will change. For example, in option 1b the voting unit is increased from 2,500 to 3,500 and the impacts are as follows for 2027 and 2041 respectively:

CURRENT - Voting Unit: 2,500; divisor 5				2027 - Voting Unit: 3,500; divisor 5					2041 Voting Unit: 3,500 population; divisor 5				
	Currnet based on 2021 Census	Number of Directors	Voting Strength	2027 projected population	Number of Directors +/-		Voting Strength +/-		2041 projected population	Number of Directors +/-		Voting Strength +/-	
Nanaimo	99,863	8	40	116,200	7	-1	34	-6	136,922	8	9	40	6
Parksville	13,642	2	6	15,653	1	-1	5	-1	17,535	2	3	8	3
Lantzville	3,817	1	2	4,245	1	0	2	0	5,002	1	1	3	1
Qualicum Beach	9,303	1	4	10,085	1	0	3	-1	11,882	1	1	5	2
A	7,804	1	4	7,938	1	0	3	-1	9,351	1	1	4	1
B	4,500	1	2	4,952	1	0	2	0	5,834	1	1	3	1
C	3,730	1	2	3,599	1	0	2	0	4,241	1	1	2	0
E	7,010	1	3	7,576	1	0	3	0	8,926	1	1	4	1
F	8,216	1	4	8,731	1	0	3	-1	10,288	1	1	5	2
G	8,109	1	4	8,730	1	0	3	-1	10,286	1	1	5	2
H	4,373	1	2	4,999	1	0	2	0	5,890	1	1	3	1
Totals:	170,367	19	73	192,708	17	-2	62	-11	226,157	19	21	82	20

In looking at the service “Administration” as an example:

- Nanaimo, Parksville, Qualicum Beach, and Electoral Areas A, F, and G all lose voting strength in 2027.
- Lantzville and Electoral Areas B, C, E, and H do not change but their voting strength is a higher percentage with the overall service’s voting strength being reduced to 62 (versus the current overall voting strength of 73).
- Electoral Areas A, F, and G have still lost voting strength in 2041 based on current projections; Nanaimo, Parksville and Qualicum Beach all regain the voting strength that they currently have.
- Nanaimo, Parksville, Lantzville, Qualicum Beach and Electoral Areas B, C, E, and H do not change in 2041, but their voting strength is still a higher percentage with the overall service’s voting strength being reduced to 70 (versus the current 73).

This same rationale can be applied to each service listed in Attachment No. 4 for each example option presented, and for all other options not presented that the Board may wish to consider.

#### Subsequent Process to amend Voting Formula

Should the Board identify a voting formula or options for a voting formula to move forward with, the process is proposed to be:

- Letters sent to the City of Nanaimo, the City of Parksville, the District of Lantzville and the Town of Qualicum Beach seeking their input;
- Letters sent to Qualicum Beach First Nation, Snaw-Naw-As First Nation, and Snuneymuxw First Nation informing them of the proposed change in voting formula and inviting their comments;
- News Release informing the public of the matter being considered;
- Get Involved RDN project page to inform the public of what the Board is considering;
- Summary of engagement prepared and presented for the Board’s consideration before making a final decision;
- Submit proposal package to the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs outlining the Board’s request to amend the voting formula in the RDN’s letters patent and including Board and Committee reports and resolutions; letters to and responses from municipalities and First Nations; and Engagement Summary;
- Letters patent are amended;
- New Voting Formula implemented.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The RDN Board Chambers, in its current configuration, accommodates seating for 19 Directors in the raised horseshoe area and is therefore fully utilized. With an anticipated increase in RDN Directors resulting from the 2026 Census, the Board Chambers would need to be reconfigured to accommodate growth in Director representation, and additionally, for providing inclusive participation of First Nations at the Board table. The Financial Plan includes \$500,000 for Board Chambers/Building Upgrades and Reconfiguration.

The base remuneration as of January 1, 2026, is \$25,456 for Municipal Directors and \$50,911 for Electoral Area Directors, and the additional meeting amount is \$150 for meetings in addition to four Board or Committee of the Whole meetings per month.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**

Planning and Managing for Growth

### **REVIEWED BY:**

- T. Moore, Chief Financial Officer
- C. Crabtree, General Manager, Corporate and Transportation Services
- D. Holmes, Chief Administrative Officer

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Report to the Board entitled “RDN Board Composition and Voting Strength – Potential Impacts from Projected 2026 Census Population Figures” dated May 14, 2024
2. Voting Formula Engagement Plan Highlights
3. Voting Formula Options
4. RDN Services and Participants – Voting Formula Impacts