



REGIONAL  
DISTRICT  
OF NANAIMO

**RDN Board Composition and Voting Strength - Potential Impacts from Projected 2026  
Census Population Figures**

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**RECOMMENDATION**

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.

**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 *Local Government Act (LGA)* establishes that the number of Directors on a regional district board (Board composition) and the voting strength (number of votes) each Director has are based on population and the voting unit in the regional district's letters patent (constituting document). The Regional District of Nanaimo's Board composition and voting strength is determined by dividing the most recent Census population figures (2021) by the voting unit number of the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) which is 2,500. The voting unit is therefore a foundational matter that has a direct impact on how the Board advances the business of the regional district. For information, a voting unit of 3,000 was established for the RDN when it was incorporated in August 1967. Subsequent changes to the voting unit were made as follows: in February of 1973 the voting unit was amended to 2,000; in February of 1975 the voting unit was amended to 1,500; and in November of 1982 the voting unit was amended to 2,500 where it has remained to this day.

For illustration purposes, each Director of the RDN has one vote for every 2,500 people in their respective jurisdiction, with a maximum of 5 votes each (the divisor). For example, a jurisdiction with a population of 10,000 would receive 4 votes for one Director in weighted voting situations ( $10,000 \div 2,500 = 4$ ), and a jurisdiction with a population of 10,025 would receive 5 votes for one Director in weighted voting situations ( $10,025 \div 2,500 = 4.01$ , which rounds up to 5) as provided in the *LGA*. For context, regional districts have 3 voting types – an unweighted vote, a weighted vote, and a weighted stakeholder vote. These voting rules take into account municipal and electoral area participation in regional district services, the corporate structure of the regional district, and the population of jurisdictions of the regional district.

Table 1 below shows the voting strength and number of Directors derived from the 2021 Census as well as the preliminary assessment of the projected 2026 Census population figures calculated by dividing the RDN's voting unit of 2,500.

<b>Voting Unit</b>		<b>2,500</b>			<b>2,500</b>	
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Population - 2021 Census (certified)</b>	<b>Number of Directors</b>	<b>Voting Strength</b>	<b>Population - 2026 Census (projected)*</b>	<b>Number of Directors</b>	<b>Voting Strength</b>
<b>Nanaimo</b>	99,863	8	40	116,200	10	47
<b>Parksville</b>	13,642	2	6	15,653	2	7
<b>Lantzville</b>	3,817	1	2	4,245	1	2
<b>Qualicum Beach</b>	9,303	1	4	10,085	1	5
<b>EA A</b>	7,804	1	4	7,938	1	4
<b>EA B</b>	4,500	1	2	4,952	1	2
<b>EA C</b>	3,730	1	2	3,599	1	2
<b>EA E</b>	7,010	1	3	7,576	1	4
<b>EA F</b>	8,216	1	4	8,731	1	4
<b>EA G</b>	8,109	1	4	8,730	1	4
<b>EA H</b>	4,373	1	2	4,999	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>170,367</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>192,708</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>83</b>

\*Data Sources: For RDN Member Municipalities, BC Stats Population Extrapolation for Organizational Planning with Less Error (P.E.O.P.L.E.) model was used. For Electoral Areas, the RDN Population, Housing and Employment Projections (2021-2041), rev. 2023. Both sources are based on the 2021 Census Data with similar methods used to calculate estimated population projections.

With a voting unit of 2,500 the above projected 2026 Census population figures would result in 2 additional Directors and 10 additional votes at the RDN Board table. The City of Nanaimo would gain 7 votes and 2 Directors, and the City of Parksville, the Town of Qualicum Beach, and Electoral Area E would each gain 1 vote. The City of Nanaimo council currently has 9 members, and barring an increase in that number, the RDN voting unit would need to be increased to enable the 9 members of council to represent the City's projected population growth.

Given the unworkable scenario that the City of Nanaimo would not have enough members of council to represent the City's population at the RDN Board table, staff is seeking direction from the Board to enter into discussions with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to review the voting unit assigned to the RDN to look at options to change the voting unit to alleviate potential impacts on regional governance, and better position the RDN in its responsiveness to regional growth. In review of a voting unit change, additional rational to be considered is the number of City of Nanaimo Directors that would be on the Board, and consideration that if all of council is appointed to the Board, the City would not have an Alternate Director and therefore would not have full representation should any of the City's Directors be unable to attend a meeting.

For context, the RDN previously requested a voting unit change from 2,500 to 2,750. In 2017, pursuant to direction by the Board, the RDN formally requested that the Ministry amend its letters patent as the 2016 Census population figures resulted in a change to the Board's composition by increasing the number of Directors on the RDN Board by two - one additional Director for both the City of Nanaimo and the City of Parksville. The rationale

provided at that time was that amending the voting unit to 2,750 would allow for the least impact on Board composition with the number of Directors on the Board remaining at 17, and a reduction of one vote for the City of Nanaimo resulting in a reduction of one vote for the RDN. The request to change the voting unit was not successful at that time. The Ministry acknowledged the Board's objective of keeping the Board size to 17 Directors but advised that the change to the voting unit would significantly affect the important principle of representation by population underlying the composition and operation of regional districts in British Columbia. If the Board desires to change its voting unit, it is recommended that staff work in collaboration with the Ministry to look at options to change the voting unit that would maintain the principle of representation by population in relation to the operational and governance processes of the RDN.

## **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 2024-2028 Financial Plan includes \$500,000 for Board Chambers/Building Upgrades and Reconfiguration.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**

Planning and Managing for Growth

### **REVIEWED BY:**

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