

PARCS UPDATE #97

January 27, 2019

"The voice of action on behalf of cottage communities"

This Edition:

Pages 1, 2 are intended as a **celebration of two recent PARCS' VICTORIES** in our ongoing quest for a fairer playing field for our cottage communities.

Page 3 is list of current reminders

1. A fair absentee ballot system for our elections

1.1 Background information

- PARCS has been advocating for a fair absentee ballot system for some time. In a Dec.17, 2017 letter to the Director of Policy Planning, Ministry of Government Relations we stated that:

*"Mail-in ballots offer the best potential for allowing absentee resort property owners to vote. Unfortunately, the current process for mail-in ballots requires that the absentee voter come into the municipal office to register. **This registration process is cumbersome and unfairly difficult for ratepayers in resort villages, not all of which have public offices that are open on regular hours and in rural municipalities where there is still the expectation that the ratepayer will travel great distances back to the RM office to register.**"* We urged that regulations be set out: *"such that absentee voters are able to send in a signed witnessed affidavit along with photocopies of ID, either by regular mail or by email, as is currently allowed by both Elections Saskatchewan and Elections Canada"*. These changes were not made at the time.

- On November 8, 2018, PARCS wrote a letter to Warren Kaeding, Minister of Government Relations, as part of PARCS' support for the application of the 2 organized hamlets on Turtle Lake¹ to incorporate into a single resort village. The letter stated that holding the public vote in November would "deny a voice to the majority of the ratepayers who [were] seeking the incorporation" because most would have moved hundreds of miles back home for the season.
- On November 28th, 2018, Minister Kaeding replied that "the RM has a bylaw to allow for mail-in ballots which provides seasonal residents an opportunity to take part in the vote". The reply raised the question about whether **the Minister was aware of the requirement that electors wishing to receive an absentee ballot must present themselves in person at the RM office to apply for the ballot.**
- On January 3, 2019, PARCS wrote again to Minister Kaeding, "hastening to remind [him]" about the requirement that "electors present themselves in person back at the RM to apply for the ballot" was unfair, again stating that **"absentee ballots do not offer a viable voting option for electors who, during the off-season, are located hundreds of kilometers away"**. The letter again asked that **"the Act be changed so that absentee ballots in municipal elections be handled similarly to absentee ballots in our provincial elections"**.²

1.2 Results are on the way

- This week, a letter was received dated January 25th, from the Executive Director of Advisory services indicating that **Minister Kaeding had asked him to reply to PARCS on this matter** (namely, "the requirement that a voter present himself or herself in person to apply for a main-in ballot").
- The letter stated that "this matter can be addressed through **amendments to Regulations.**"
- THE PLAN:** **"These [amendments] will be developed later this year in order to accommodate the proposed amendments to The Local Government Election Act, 2015 coming into force January 2020. PARCS will be consulted on all proposed amendments to the regulations"**.³

¹ The OH of Indian Point Golden Sands and the OH of Turtle Lake Lodge (the vote was ultimately successful for the OHs)

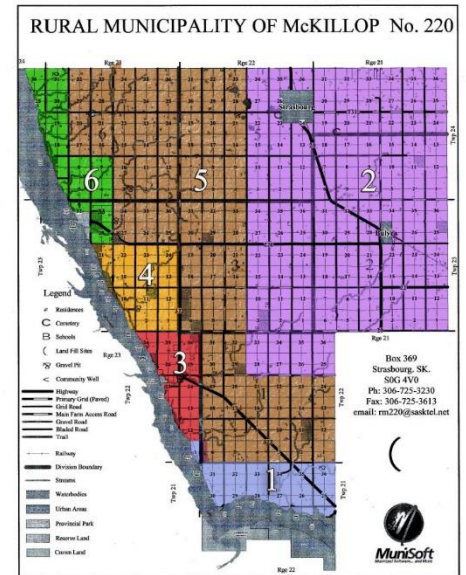
² Also, this past January, cottage community voters in the RM of McKillop who live far from their cottages or who are snow birds, were phoning in to express their frustrations at their lack of access to an absentee ballot!

³ Parcs is impressed with the Minister's prompt reply and promise to address this issue. We are writing to thank him.

2. “Rep by pop” for cottage communities

2.1 Background information

- PARCS Update #95 (Dec. 18, 2018) was devoted entirely to ‘Rep by Pop’ and to the McKillop story.
- Perhaps the most newsworthy part of the story was that the **province set precedence by approving the new boundaries of the subdivisions.** (see map on right)
- A group of ratepayers played a significant role in this breakthrough. They designed the new map and put it forward to the electors who were kept up to date with press releases and an excellent web site.
- On October 23, 2018, 73% of the electors voted to approve the new division boundaries.
- On December 13, 2018, the province announced their approval of the new boundaries and called for a vote in the 6 new subdivisions on February 27, 2019. Note: The office of the Reeve was not affected by the new subdivisions; the current reeve remains in office.
- In addition to the supervisor appointed by the province (in the all of 2018) to oversee the work of the McKillop council, the province also appointed a returning officer to conduct the election.
- Only 6 candidates submitted nomination forms, one for each of the 6 subdivisions. No other candidates came forward.
- On January 23, 2019, the Returning Officer announced the closing of nominations and on January 24, 2019, declared these 6 candidates elected by acclamation.⁴
- These 6 councillors will make history in that they each be **representing subdivisions re-drawn to reflect “rep by pop”.**



2.2 Results are on the way to embed ‘rep by pop’ into provincial practice

- Subsequent to PARCS’ October Convention and annual meeting, on November 7th, Parcs forwarded resolutions (A through J, passed by convention delegates) to Allan Laird, Senior Legislative Analyst, Policy and Planning Services, Ministry of Government Relations. Resolution H stated: *Be it resolved that PARCS lobby the provincial government to review rural municipal division boundaries every 10 years.*
- **THE PROPOSAL:** On November 30, 2018, the Policy Planning Branch of the Ministry of Government Relations issued a 56-page document titled **DRAFTING INSTRUCTIONS FOR The Municipalities Act.**
 - Page 16 proposes to add section 49.1 with 3 subsections explaining that: *“These amendments will require RMs to establish a policy to review their division boundaries at least once every 12 years (or 3 election terms) to ensure divisions have the same population as nearly as is practicable.”*
 - *“If RMs do not choose to review division boundaries, there is also the option to hold elections at large, so that disparity in division populations do not affect the election results. In this case, regulations would be needed to determine if all council members are elected at once every four years or if staggered elections continue by electing half of the council every two years.” [...]*
 - **“The key requirements are that a review be done and the results be made public. Council must apply to the Minister to alter division boundaries if the population variance is shown to be greater 25%. This will be mandatory for RMs with a population greater than 1,000 people.”**

⁴ Hence there will be no election in February. These 6 new councillors will likely meet as soon as they are sworn in.

3. New Year Reminders from PARCS



- **Membership letters gone out**

Individual letters have been emailed to every resort village, OH cottage community, and RM with cottage communities (both members and non-members). Part 1 of the letter is either an invoice for current members or an invitation-to-join for non-members.

Your memberships indicates your support for the work that PARCS is doing on behalf of cottage communities!

- **Upcoming PARCS Community Leadership Survey**

In early February, an email will go out to all of our members and to the non-member cottage communities in our address book⁵. The email will feature **a link**. A click on the link will take you to the survey. The survey is brief; to reply, you just click on your choices. In some cases, a space will be provided for you to add more information if you desire. You do not have to identify yourself.

We invite replies from the councillors, mayor and administrator of resort villages, from any of the three members of the OH Board for organized hamlet cottage communities, or from the councillors, reeve and administrator of the rural municipalities containing cottage communities.

You need not provide your name. At the end of the survey, a click on the final button will close the survey and send it directly to us.

Please take time to reply to this **brief but important** survey.

- **CIF February 1st Deadline**

Reminder: **February 1st** is the deadline to apply for a CIF summer grant⁶. "Summer Grants support activities for children and youth that occur between May 1 & August 31. The types of projects typically supported include summer camps and day programming during the summer months that offer positive recreation, arts, culture and learning opportunities".

- **Efforts to communicate with the Minister of Environment and the Premier**

While we are able to report positively on pages 1-2 of this newsletter about our efforts to communicate with the Minister of Government Relations, such is not the case with our efforts to communicate with the Minister of Environment and with the Premier. Note the following:

- On November 12, 2018, PARCS emailed a joint letter to Environment Minister Duncan and Premier Moe asking for them to meet with a PARCS delegation anytime from Dec. 5 to Jan. 31st. Attached to our letter were the 4 resolutions about zebra mussel prevention from our PARCS October convention.
- Both offices confirmed receipt of the request; **no replies were received for more than 2 months!**
- At our Jan.18 meeting of our Board of Directors it was decided to issue a press release expressing our disappointment in the lack of reply.⁷
- On Jan. 23, we heard from the Executive Administrative Assistant to the Ministry of Environment inviting us to a meeting with Ministry officials.
- On Friday, Feb. 8th, President Garry and Coordinator Lynne will meet with Kevin Murphy, Assistant Deputy Minister of Environment and Brant Kirychuk, Exec. Director of the Fish and Wildlife Branch.
- We will keep you updated.

⁵ PLEASE - The individual letters that went out last week **reminded Organized Hamlets to update their email contacts** with the correct 3 email addresses of the 3 persons on their OH Board.

⁶ Community Initiatives Fund

⁷ The Press Release has been held back, pending the February 8th meeting.