

**PARCS UPDATE #51
MAY, 2015**



**VOTING IN
COTTAGE COUNTRY**

1. INTRODUCTION

PARCS has recently learned about proposed changes to the enumeration procedures that will be implemented for the next provincial election. These changes will be potentially beneficial to people who permanently reside in cottage communities. This issues of

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PARCS UPDATE aims to provide an overview review about **all types of elections in Saskatchewan cottage communities**, along with a report on the changes for the upcoming provincial election in **Section 5**.

2. VOTING FOR RESORT VILLAGE COUNCILS

In Saskatchewan there are 289 regular villages and 40 resort villages.¹

Voting for resort village councils differs from voting for regular village councils in the following ways:

- **When** – While elections for regular villages happen in October of election year, elections for resort village are held in July of that year. In 2012, the term of office for both types of village councils was extended from 3 to 4 years. The next year for elections in urban municipalities² will be 2016.
- **Voters** – While voters in regular village elections must have resided in Saskatchewan for 6 months and owned property in the regular village for 3 months, voters in resort village elections are not required to live in the province, but they too must have owned property³ in the resort village for 3 months.
- **Candidates** – While candidates in regular village elections must reside in that village, candidates in resort village elections are required only to be ratepayers (property owners) in the resort village.⁴

¹ The District of Katepwa is considered a resort village for the purpose of elections and other municipal regulations.

² Cities, towns, regular villages and resort villages

³ Or be the spouse of a cottage owner

⁴ Or be the spouse of a cottage owner.

3. VOTING FOR RM COUNCILS

In Saskatchewan:

- There are 296 rural municipalities, located in the central and southern part of the province. Of these, 24 rural municipalities contain Organized Hamlets that are cottage communities. Many other municipalities have non-organized cottage communities (hamlets and subdivisions).
- The rural municipalities with the most cottage communities are:
 - The RM of Mervin
 - The RM of McKillop
 - The RM of Meota
 - The District of Lakeland
- As per the 2011 census, the average population of a Sask rural municipality was 590.
- Each RM is organized into areas called divisions which are numbered (1, 2, 3, etc.) and each division is represented by one councilor elected by the residents of that division. If a ratepayer owns land in more than one division, that ratepayer can only vote in the division in which that ratepayer resides (in other words, each ratepayer can only vote for one councilor). The reeve is elected at large (by all residents in the rural municipality).
- Voting for members of the RM council happens every second year and members serve for 4 years. On even numbered years (example, 2014), voters in even numbered divisions (example, divisions 2, 4, 6) vote for their councilor. On odd numbered years (example, 2015) voters in odd numbered divisions (example, divisions 1, 3, 5) vote for their councilor and all voters vote for their reeve.
- Voting happens on the third Wednesday of October. For cottage owners in rural municipalities (unlike cottage owners in resort villages) this fall date means that most cottage owners are disenfranchised due to distance (they may no longer be residing at the cottage). **Disenfranchisement due to distance** is addressed in **Section 3.1** on page 3.
- The second main issue for cottage owners voting for RM councils is that the councils do not offer representation by population. The issue of **unfair representation on RM councils** is described in **Section 3.2** on page 3.

3.1 DISENFRANCHISEMENT DUE TO DISTANCE

There are three ways the rural municipalities can try to provide an opportunity for their cottage owner ratepayers to vote for their municipal councilor:

Advance polls can offer a means of alleviating the distance factor. The advance poll is held within the 7 days preceding the regular polling day. For example, an RM with many cottage owner ratepayers on Buffalo Pound might choose to set up an advance poll in Moose Jaw. While this option will not likely assist the cottage owner ratepayer who resides in Calgary, it would likely enfranchise more cottage owners than the single option of having the voter travel back to the regular polling location in the RM during October.

The RM Council is required to hold an Advance Poll if at least five voters request the advance poll before Oct. 1st.

Summer elections can be held in lieu of fall elections. To do so, the RM must pass the necessary bylaw before April 15th of the year that the election is to occur.

The District of Lakeland uses this option.

Mail-in ballots⁵ can be offered to all of the ratepayers in the rural municipality. Absentee voters in provincial elections can apply by phone or mail to have their applications sent out by mail⁶. However, in order for voters in an RM election to receive a mail-in ballot, they must register at the RM office (likely during the summer prior to the fall, when they are at the lake).

In 2012 in the RM of Big River, 1/3 of the ballots cast came in by mail-in ballots.

3.2 UNFAIR REPRESENTATION ON RM COUNCILS

However, even if all of the cottage owner ratepayers are able to vote, it may be unlikely that their votes will provide them with a fair representation on the RM Council (because RM Councils are set up with 1 councilor per division and because cottage communities tend to cluster in one or two divisions). For example, in the RM of McKillop which has approximately 1,200 property owners, the 984 cottage owners⁷ will be represented by 2 of the 6 councilors⁸. Rate-payers can petition their RM Councils to hold a referendum on redrawing their RM boundaries. Unfortunately, “rep by pop” is not currently typical of many RM councils with cottage communities.

To learn more about how RM can redraw their boundaries visit:

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/municipal-administration/community-planning-land-use-and-development/resources/municipal-status-and-boundary-changes>

⁵ Also known as absentee voting.

⁶ Mailing in their applications along with photocopies of necessary identification.

⁷ In 19 organized hamlets or other cottage communities.

⁸ Because they are clustered in the 2 sub-divisions along the lakeshore.

4. VOTING FOR ORGANIZED HAMLET BOARDS

Voting for the three members of the organized hamlet board occurs at their annual meeting⁹. The new rules that came into effect after the end of May 2013 specify that each member is elected for a four year term. The elections are staggered such that the person elected in 2012 holds office until 2016, the person elected in 2013 holds office until 2017, etc.¹⁰ The three-person Organized Hamlet Board selects their own chair and secretary.

5. VOTING IN PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

Elections Saskatchewan takes great care to ensure that every eligible voter¹¹ votes only in the constituency in which the voter is an ordinary resident. **Ordinary residency** is defined as the place to which we typically return at the end of the day. For cottage owners who have a home in another location (where they work, get their mail, etc.), their cottage is NOT their ordinary residence.

However there are many voters who live in cottage communities and do not have another residence elsewhere. Examples include:

- The cottage owners at the Resort Village of Shields who live there year-round and commute daily to work in Saskatoon.
- The cottage owners who have retired to their cottage and no longer maintain another dwelling place.
- The cottage owners who live at the lake but go south for the winter. Saskatchewan snowbirds are eligible to vote.¹²

In past provincial elections, enumerators have struggled to enumerate those cottage owners who are ordinarily resident in cottage communities. Trudging door to door in September, it was hard for enumerators to differentiate between cottages that had been vacated for the season versus cottages whose year-round residents had gone shopping in town, for example.

Changes to enumeration procedures in the upcoming provincial elections will make it easier for permanent residents in cottage communities to get their names on the voters list. Except for a few new or highly transient communities¹³, **traditional enumeration is being replaced by mail out letters to every potential**

⁹ The minutes of OH Annual Meetings are filed at the RM office.

¹⁰ If the person elected in 2013 was elected prior to the end of May, that person was elected under the old rules for a 3 year term.

¹¹ The voter must be a Canadian citizen, 18 years of age on Election Day or earlier, and have resided in the province for 6 months.

¹² Typically via mail-in ballots through the absentee voting process (see 3.1 above).

¹³ Such as Stonebridge in Saskatoon or Harbour Landing in Regina, for example.

voter in the province. These letters will list all of the pertinent information (name, residency address, mailing address, date of birth, etc.). The data in the letters will be based on the National Voters Registry and other data-bases to which Elections Saskatchewan has been provided access.

Permanent residents in cottage communities should watch for their letter which will arrive in late May or during June. If the information is correct, the voter need not reply. If there are corrections required, the voter should dial the toll-free Call Centre to update their information on the new Saskatchewan Voters List. If the permanent residents fail to receive a letter, they should call in.

The next Saskatchewan Election is scheduled for November 2, 2015. Should a Federal Election be called for this fall, however, the Saskatchewan provincial election will be postponed to April of 2016. **BUT THE ENUMERATION LETTERS WILL STILL BE COMING OUT THIS MAY/JUNE.** Watch your PARCS Newsletter for more information, along with the Call Centre Phone Number, to pass along to the permanent residents in your cottage communities.

WHAT HAS PARCS BEEN UP TO THIS WINTER?

Thurs, January 22 10:00 - 11:00 am	Meeting with SSBA Executive	Their office at 400, 2222 13 th Ave, Regina	GARRY DIXON, 1 st Vice President
Thurs, January 22 10:00 - 11:00 am	Ministry of Environment Planning Workshop	Their Field Office at 112 Innovation Place, Saskatoon	LYNNE SAAS
Fri, January 30 11:00 a.m.	Advance Planning for 2015 Position Paper	Saskatoon	SHERRY JIMMY, President LYNNE SAAS
Sat, February 28 10:00 am	PARCS Board of Directors Mtg.	Saskatoon, Willows	PARCS BOARD OF DIRECTORS
February 1 – 4 Sun. to Wed.	SUMA Annual Convention	Saskatoon	JOHN QUINN. 2 nd Vice Pres. LOUISE TARASIUK, Director, N.E
Thurs, February 12 8:30 am – 4:00 pm	Workshop on Aquatic Invasive Species	Cabela's at Harbour Landing in Regina	JOE JOZSA, Director, South West
March 9 – 11	SARM Annual Convention	Saskatoon	SHERRY JIMMY, President
April 14 – 15	Annual Convention of Sask Watersheds	Melfort - " <i>Watershed Management</i> "	SHERRY JIMMY, Convention Speaker
April 18	Provincial Fisheries Advisory Committee	As called by the Min. of Environment	LOUISE TARASIUK, Director North East
Other OUR NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR SAT. MAY 2nd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletters • Development of a Position Paper on the Environment • Lobby letters to the Premier and Minister of Environment re invasive aquatic species and the need for a full time coordinator • Lobby letters to the Premier and Community Initiative Fund re exclusion of Resort Villages for grant eligibility (see last page) 		



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PROVINCIAL ASSOCIATION of RESORT COMMUNITIES of SASKATCHEWAN



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March 25, 2015

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Dear Premier Brad Wall and Tracy Mann, Canadian Initiative Fund:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Provincial Association of Resort Communities of Saskatchewan (PARCS) and our concerns regarding access of our member communities to CIF Grants.

Suppose for a moment, that I am a senior who owns and resides year round in my own home in the Village of Grand Coulee, Saskatchewan. By Census Canada statistics, there are approximately 90 persons for whom Grand Coulee is their primary / only residence. Suppose that my Seniors Group submits an application to the Canadian Initiative Fund for a grant to assist in renovating its Seniors Centre to make the washroom handicapped accessible.

Now suppose for a moment, that I am a senior who owns and resides year round in my own home in the Resort Village of Mistusinne, Saskatchewan. By Census Canada statistics, there are approximately 90 persons for whom Mistusinne is their primary / only residence. Suppose that my seniors group submits an application to the Canadian Initiative Fund for a grant to assist in renovating its Seniors Centre to make the washroom handicapped accessible.

It is the understanding of PARCS (The Provincial Association of Resort Communities of Saskatchewan) that the application from the Village of Grand Coulee will be considered but the application from the Resort Village of Mistusinne WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.

Please understand that we realize that there are no guarantees that either application will be successful. But we fail to understand why an application for a CIF grant on behalf of the permanent residents of Mistusinne will be automatically disqualified.

At the February 28, 2015, regular meeting of the Board of Directors of PARCS (The Provincial Association of Resort Communities of Saskatchewan), our directors were bewildered to learn about the change in criteria to exclude resort villages from consideration for CIF grants and passed the following motion:

"That the Premier of the province and the Canadian Initiative Fund be urged to accept applications from Resort Villages based on the number for year-round residents (as per stats Canada) just as is currently the case for other Villages in the province."

We await your early response to our request.

Yours truly
Sherry Jimmy, President, PARCS