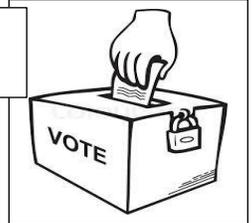


PARCS UPDATE #86

May 15/2018

PARCS speaking on your behalf

Possible changes
for elections 2020



1. SPEAKING ABOUT ELECTIONS

The Ministry of Government Relations typically reviews and amends the **Local Government Elections Act** in the period between general municipal elections; the last municipal elections were held in 2016; the next municipal elections will occur in 2020. These are some of the areas of the Act where changes are being considered, and **the following is a copy of the feedback sent from PARCS.**

Alternatives for public notice - Section 9 of LGEA

In order to ensure maximum voter notification, which should improve voter turnout, **PARCS believes that municipalities should use as many notification methods as possible.** PARCS definitely feels election notification must be done by mail-outs to all voters, either by inclusion along with the property tax notices or by a separate mail-out closer to election date once candidates are announced. Electronic means of communication should only be used if it has been proven to be a method of reaching a large majority of voters in a municipality; it should not be necessary to have mandatory notification in a local paper.

Eligibility of campsite lessees - Section 36 of LGEA

PARCS believes that only people paying property taxes directly to the municipality should be entitled to vote. People paying lease or short term rental fees to private ownership should not be allowed to vote in municipal elections. (See insert from Ron O'Byrne on page 2) An exception might be necessary for people who sign a declaration that they rent property long term and can thus prove full time residency should be allow.

Volunteer firefighting eligibility to hold office - Section 43 of LGEA

PARCS supports that volunteers should not be disqualified from running for municipal council. However, in the case of volunteer firefighters, this could lead to some of "conflict of interest" situations where these volunteers would have to declare a conflict. Example: fire department budget or appointment of a fire chief.

Disclosure statement required as part of nomination papers - Section 67 of LGEA

PARCS supports the proposal that Disclosure Statements should have to accompany nomination papers. Directions would have to be given by the Returning Officer, or Deputy Returning Office, on the requirements of said disclosure statements. **The option here could be** that the current status be continued where disclosure statements are submitted after election. If a Councillor does not submit a disclosure statement that Councillor would not be allowed to sit at the council table until the disclosure statement is submitted

Mandatory advance voting - Section 83 of the LGEA

PARCS believes that to support the concept of maximum voter election participation, **both a mail-in ballot system and an advance poll be mandatory.** With Council being able to make the decision to have either a mail-in ballot or advanced poll, Councillors would be able to determine which would be the best option for supporting their own interests in an election and, as such, a Councillor's way of voting for either a mail-in ballot or advance poll could be perceived as a "conflict of interest".

Consolidating the Controverted Municipal Elections Act into the LGEA – Section 185

PARCS supports this proposal and, as stated in the proposed amendments, all matters related to local elections would be available for reference in one Act.

Additional input provided by PARCS about the LGEA

1. **PARCS supports** that the responsibility be placed on the candidate to ensure that the candidate's nomination form, and potential disclosure statement, be complete and truthful and that this responsibility be taken from the Returning Officer.
2. **PARCS supports** that a candidates **occupation be removed from the ballot.**
3. **PARCS supports** restoring wording in Section 83 (advance polls) that allows advance polls for school elections.
4. **PARCS strongly suggests** that municipalities establish **voters' lists.** Voters' lists eliminate registration forms and, in general, speed up the voting process thereby helping eliminate long line ups. Voters' lists also simplify the mail-in ballot process.
5. **PARCS suggests** that municipalities be instructed to use the **simplest mail-in ballot process possible** while still ensuring voter validation. Many rural or resort village municipal offices are only open for a half to two days per week. These short hours restrict voters who are required to go to the office to verify their eligibility and register for a mail-in ballot.
6. **PARCS questions** why **election dates** in rural municipalities are set in the fall and why on a Wednesday. **PARCS supports** moving the election date in rural municipalities back to the third Wednesday in October. PARCS opposes moving the election date into November. A November election could be affected by inclement weather conditions or numerous people leaving for warmer climates. Both of these situations would not support the concept of maximum voter turnout.
7. **PARCS also questions** why candidates are listed in **alphabetical order** by surname on the ballot. Could candidates not be listed in the order that their nomination papers were submitted? If more than one nomination is submitted on one day, the time of day of submission could be used. Research shows that alphabetical placement of candidates on a ballot affects the way people vote.
8. **PARCS opposes** the proposal that by repealing Section 83(3) (advance polls) **that voters would no longer have the opportunity to petition the municipality to conduct an advance poll.** PARCS feels it is a constitutional right for voters to hold councils responsible through a petition process.
9. **PARCS supports** the proposal that councils adopt a **General Election Bylaw** which would encompass all election matters into one Bylaw. The Bylaw **should be mandatory** and not discretionary.
10. In May 2013 under The Municipalities Amendment Act, Section 89(2) of the Municipalities Act was amended to say "A council may, by bylaw, provide that elections of the members of the council are to be held in accordance with: (a) the election provisions for resort villages as set out in The Local Government Election Act." **PARCS asks:** Does this mean that some of the provisions could be adopted by a rural municipality or would all of the provisions have to be adopted?
11. **PARCS appreciates** that these amendments should improve municipal governance. Unfortunately, the changes are unable to hold municipal councils and administration responsible, or accountable, to uphold the Act. **Responsibility is still on the general public (at substantial court costs),** to launch judicial action against municipal councils and administration that do not uphold the Act.

NOTE - Delegates who attended the PARCS convention **LAST OCTOBER** will recall the presentation from Ron O'Byrne about whether campground lessees should be allowed to vote in resort village elections, and the resulting supportive motion passed by delegates.

THIS APRIL, Ron wrote to say:

"Finally I want to thank you for the good work and support that you personally and the PARC group provided to help leverage some immediate action. I just heard from our MLA Fred Bradshaw and he has confirmed that changes to the act are in the hands of the legal people so that the changes will be in place for next spring. I asked for a draft copy but none are ready yet.

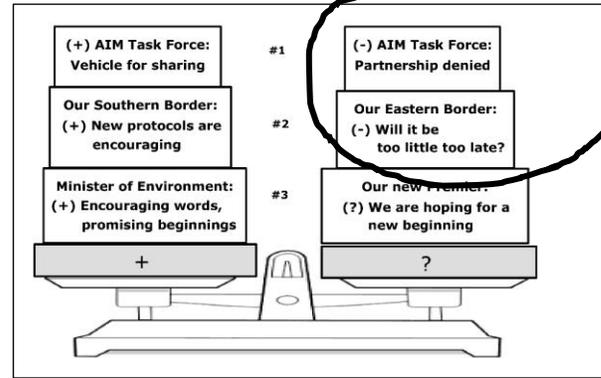
Although optimistic I think there may still be some hurdles. I will keep you informed as things develop.

Wishing you, the PARCS board and its membership a great 2018."

That's what happens when PARCS speaks on behalf of its members! You're welcome, Ron,

2. SPEAKING ABOUT INVASIVE MUSSELS

Do you recognize the sketch on the right from our February 1st edition? In that issue, we talked about our membership in the Provincial Task Force on Aquatic Invasive Mussels as being a source of some disappointment in that the Ministry had refused to take PARCS up on its offer to fund an inspection station. That assessment was born out again at the recent April 30th meeting when the **Task Force chair refused to allow the introduction of a PARCS discussion document** about the locations of the two new inspection stations. Member input was welcome regarding coloring books but not about the locations of inspection stations for protecting our lakes!



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However, stand by for more encouraging news to come. Thwarted in their request to have input about the inspection stations needed to protect their lake, the citizens of Lake Diefenbaker and district are moving forward with a **lake-based protection plan**. Working under the auspices of the Waterwolf Regional Planning Authority, their committee has put together a **multi-faceted plan** for protecting their own lake. As soon as they have released their entire plan, we look forward to sharing it with you.

Also, invitations have gone out to the communities on and around the **Qu'Appelle Lakes** for their **lake-based meeting** about zebra mussels: **Sat., June 16th, 1:00 pm, the Legion Hall at Fort Qu'Appelle**.

Last summer, PARCS asked the chair of the Ministry's Provincial Task Force on Aquatic Mussels about which Saskatchewan lakes were likely the most vulnerable to an infestation of aquatic invasive mussels. Ron Hlasny replied that "while most water bodies south of the Precambrian Shield have suitable habitat and water chemistry for invasive mussels, **Lake Diefenbaker**, Last Mountain and the **Qu'Appelle Lakes** were most likely of invasion because of their of their high watercraft use".

Later last summer, there were two watercraft in Saskatchewan which had been infected with zebra mussels and which were intercepted just as each was about to launch into a Saskatchewan lake. It was only by sheer luck that each boat was caught and required to undergo decontamination. These two boats were stopped at **Lake Diefenbaker** and at **Crooked Lake**.

Hence PARCS' determination to begin by **speaking with the citizens around these two lakes!**

3. SPEAKING WITH THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT

Three weeks ago, on April 26th, the chair of the Waterwolf Committee and the PARCS Coordinator jointly requested a meeting with the Minister of Environment regarding the matters that had been raised at the April 21st Meeting in Elbow about aquatic invasive mussels. Several phone reminders remain unanswered. We continue to keep our fingers crossed.

PARCS Mandate:
THE VOICE OF ACTION
 Strengthening and Supporting
 The Cottage Way of Life
 In Saskatchewan

4. SPEAKING WITH THE MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

PARCS is currently finalizing a date in June to sit down with Allan Laird and other officials to complete our dialogue about elections and to raise other issues.

NOW IS THE TIME FOR MEMBER COMMUNITIES TO SEND IN THEIR ISSUES, CONCERNS, AND QUESTIONS FOR US TO PUT FORWARD ON YOUR BEHALF. Drop Lynne a line by the end of the month!

PARCS REMAINS COMMITTED TO SPEAKING ON YOUR BEHALF!