



# REPORT

To: Chair and Directors

Report Number: ADM-BRD-197

From: Tyra Henderson, Chief Election Officer

Date: June 10, 2021

**Subject: Assent Voting Ministerial Order – Seniors Aging in Place and Health Related Services**

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## **RECOMMENDATION #1: [Corporate Unweighted]**

That the Regional Board endorse Ministerial Order No. M223 for assent voting proceedings as applicable to Health Related Services Grant-in-Aid Service Establishment Bylaw No. 2445, 2021, and Ministerial Order No. M224 as applicable for assent voting proceedings for Seniors Aging in Place Support Services Establishment Bylaw No. 2444, 2021, which will allow all eligible electors to vote by mail ballot, and in relation to this, permit elector registration to be done in conjunction with mail ballot voting, and permit the Chief Election Officer to establish all necessary procedures for mail ballot voting, including voting, receiving, processing, and securing mail ballot votes in their sole discretion; further, which will allow electors, as directed by the election official responsible, to make an oral declaration that the elector is entitled to vote in the assent voting when obtaining a ballot for voting, in which case the election official responsible must make a record that the elector made an oral declaration; and finally, which will permit the Chief Election Officer to establish or remove one or more special voting opportunities, in their sole discretion, all of which are variations in procedure from those stated in Peace River Regional District Election and Voting Procedures Bylaw No. 1825, 2008, or the Local Government Act which would otherwise apply, and are all measures to enhance the safety of conducting assent voting during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

## **RECOMMENDATION #2: [Corporate Unweighted]**

That the Regional Board rescind its resolution of March 25, 2021 to approve the assent voting question for Bylaw 2444 and approve the amended Assent Voting Question for the Seniors Aging in Place Support Services Establishment Bylaw No. 2444, 2021, as follows: "Are you in favour of the Peace River Regional District adopting "Seniors Aging In Place Support Services Establishment Bylaw No. 2444, 2021", to establish a new service to provide support services, to seniors in Area D and defined portions of Area E, to allow them to remain healthy and safely in their homes, such as provision of healthy meals, housekeeping, and yard maintenance, at a maximum annual tax requisition limit that is the greater of \$1,900,000 or \$.66/\$1,000 on the net taxable value of land and improvements, and assessed on improvements only?"

**RECOMMENDATION #3: [Corporate Unweighted]**

That the Regional Board rescind its resolution of March 25, 2021 to approve the assent voting question for Bylaw 2445 and approve the amended Assent Voting Question for the Health Related Services Grant-in-Aid Service Establishment Bylaw No. 2445, 2021 as follows: “Are you in favour of the Peace River Regional District adopting “Health Related Services Grant-in-Aid Service Establishment Bylaw No. 2445, 2021”, to establish a new service to provide grants in aid to not for profit societies to enhance the quality and availability of health related services, and to provide scholarships to students seeking post secondary education in a health care or medical field, at a maximum annual tax requisition limit that is the greater of \$750,000 or \$0.05/\$1,000 on the net taxable value of land and improvements, and assessed on improvements only?”

**BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:**Recommendation #1:

The Regional Board approved first three readings of Seniors Aging in Place Support Services Establishment Bylaw No. 2444, 2021 and Health Related Services Grant-in-Aid Service Establishment Bylaw No. 2445, 2021 on March 25, 2021. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs has provided formal written approval of the bylaws, and has also provided the PRRD with two Ministerial Orders, one for each bylaw, which will change voting procedures normally observed, such as accepting the declaration of voter eligibility verbally so each voter does not need to ‘touch’ the voting book, and expanding mail ballot voting to anyone who wishes, rather than limiting it to persons further than 50 km from a voting place. The Order will also nullify the requirement in the PRRD ‘Elections and Voting Procedures Bylaw No. 1825, 2008’ to hold special voting opportunities in health care facilities in Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, and Chetwynd to keep elections staff out of health care facilities and away from vulnerable persons. Residents of health care facilities will be eligible to vote by mail ballot vote.

Recommendations #2 & #3:

The Regional Board approved the original Assent Voting Questions for Seniors Aging in Place Support Services Establishment Bylaw No. 2444, 2021 and Health Related Services Grant in Aid Service Establishment Bylaw No. 2445, 2021, on March 25, 2021. The wording of the question has created confusion for electors and elected officials, an unfortunate reality that has also been experienced in previous assent voting proceedings.

The *Local Government Act*, s. 339 (1)(e)(ii) requires the maximum tax rate to be stated as a property value tax rate that, when applied to the net taxable value of land and improvements in the service area, will yield the maximum amount. (ie: 1.9M for Seniors Aging equates to a tax rate of \$0.66/\$1,000 using current assessed values in the service area). However, both the Seniors Aging in Place Service Bylaw, and the Health Related Services Grant in Aid bylaw were written to specify that the tax for the services would be applied on the value of improvements ONLY, as authorized by the Local Government Act S. 384. The question has been slightly re-worded, to clarify that while the rate for both land and improvements, it will be assessed on improvements only. As has been customary in previous PRRD assent voting proceedings, an explanatory note will also be printed on the ballots, and included in information materials, and presentations, as per the following example:

**Note:** *The property tax limit of \$0.66/\$1,000 is an average of rates on all classes, on land and improvements to determine the maximum amount that may be raised in any one year based on that year’s net taxable*

*assessment. The estimated residential tax rate for the first year is \$0.283 per \$1,000. The tax rate is applicable to improvements only.*

The tax rate applies to improvements only, as specified in the cost recovery section of both bylaws. A change in the voting question will make it clearer to voters that the rate is expressed as land and improvements but they will be taxed on the value of their improvements (buildings) only.

### **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

1. That the Regional Board provide further direction.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN RELEVANCE:**

- ☒ New and Emerging Issues - Embracing Future Opportunities

### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION(S):**

#### **Seniors Aging in Place Support Services Establishment Bylaw No. 2444, 2021:**

The rate of \$0.66/\$1,000 is an average of rates on all classes, on land and improvements to determine the maximum amount that may be raised in any one year based on that year's net taxable assessment. The estimated residential tax rate for the first year is **\$0.283 per \$1,000**. The tax rate is applicable to improvements only, as specified in the cost recovery section of the bylaw.

The financial impact of this service is illustrated below:

House Value (improvements only)	Estimated Cost for Seniors Aging in Place Service
\$150,000	\$42.45
\$250,000	\$70.75
\$400,000	\$113.20

#### **Health Related Services Grant in Aid Service Establishment Bylaw No. 2445, 2021:**

The rate of \$.05/\$1,000 is an average of rates on all classes, on land and improvements to determine the maximum amount that may be raised in any one year based on that year's net taxable assessment. The estimated residential tax rate for the first year is **\$0.0288 per \$1,000**. The tax rate is applicable to improvements only, as specified in the cost recovery section of the bylaw.

The financial impact of this service is illustrated below:

House Value (improvements only)	Estimated Cost for Health Related Services Grants-in-Aid
\$150,000	\$4.32
\$250,000	\$7.20
\$400,000	\$11.52

**COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATION(S):**

The amended assent voting questions, and the accompanying explanatory notes will be printed on information materials and ballots, which will be ordered immediately so they can be professionally printed and bound in time for issuing mail ballot packages, and for the advance voting days July 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, and the general voting day July 17<sup>th</sup>.

**OTHER CONSIDERATION(S):**

Statutory approval of the bylaws was received on June 11<sup>th</sup>, at which time the ongoing discussions regarding ministerial orders that would be sought to alter 'standard' voting practices were formalized into requests. Despite Dr. Bonnie Henry and Premier Horgan making some encouraging announcements on May 24 regarding the four step Covid Restart Plan in the Province starting May 25<sup>th</sup> and progressing over the summer months toward decreased restrictions on social interactions, Ministry staff encouraged the PRRD to consider safety plans and measures to reduce high touch points and interactions (oral declarations, stay out of hospitals, and offer universal access to mail ballot voting).

Erring on the side of caution and encouraging widespread mail ballot voting is a responsible approach, and will serve the PRRD well going forward, as the Province introduced legislative amendments via Bill 10 – *Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2021* on May 13<sup>th</sup> that will make mail ballot voting provisions enabled by Ministerial Orders for numerous by-election and other voting proceedings over the past year permanently available to local governments. Expansion of mail ballot voting, an adaptive measure resulting from COVID-19, will demonstrate the PRRD commitment to 'Embracing Future Opportunities' now identified in the New and Emerging Issues section of the Strategic Plan.

**Attachments:**

1. Statutory Approval - Seniors Aging in Place Support Services Establishment Bylaw No. 2444, 2021.
2. Statutory Approval - Health Related Services Grant-in-Aid Service Establishment Bylaw No. 2445, 2021.
3. Ministerial Order No. M223
4. Ministerial Order No. M224