



# REPORT

To: Chair and Directors

Report Number: ADM-BRD-207

From: Tyra Henderson, Corporate Officer

Date: June 24, 2021

**Subject: Election Official Pay Rates****RECOMMENDATION #1: [Corporate Weighted]**

That the Regional Board authorize the following election official voting day pay rates for the 2021 Assent Voting proceedings:

Chief Election Officer	\$750
Deputy Chief Election Officer	\$600
Presiding Election Official	\$400
Election Official	\$320

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

That the Regional Board receive a report prior to the 2022 General Local Government Elections regarding election official pay rates in comparison communities that includes recommendations for election official pay rates and policies for Peace River Regional District elections and assent voting.

**BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:**

Peace River Regional District election official pay rates have not changed since 2008, when they were approved as follows:

Position	PRRD (2008)	<a href="#">Dawson Creek</a> (2015)	Fort St John (2021)
Chief Election Officer (CEO)	\$750	\$1675	\$1700
Deputy Chief Election Officer (DCEO)	\$600	\$1000	\$1200
Presiding Election Official	\$275	\$250 + \$20/hr	
Election Official (poll clerk)	\$225 (\$14.06/hr)	\$20/hr	\$20/hr

Current PRRD election official pay rates do not meet the minimum wage threshold in BC, nor are they comparable with those paid by the two largest member municipalities, as shown in the table above. PRRD election officials are spread widely across the region at a number of polling stations, and do not have the luxury of relying on either the Chief Election Officer or Deputy Chief Election Officer when unusual or challenging questions arise, such as challenge of elector eligibility, or a person who may have already voted by mail ballot presenting at a polling station to cast a second ballot. Depending on their location, they may have internet or telephone access to the PRRD and the Chief Election Officer.

Election rates in 2008 and their relative value to minimum wage was also examined. For context, in 2008 minimum wage was \$8.38. Today minimum wage is \$15.20, almost double, yet the election official pay rate remains the same.

Election officials work at minimum 14 hours on voting day, and they are required to attend a mandatory training session in advance of voting day which typically lasts two hours. They are also provided with paid meals as they do not leave the polling station on voting day, and are paid mileage if they are asked to pick up or deliver election materials from a PRRD office.

The current rate of \$225, when you consider the minimum number of hours is 16, equates to \$14.06 per hour, which is not even minimum wage.

The proposed rate of \$400 for a presiding election official, equates to \$25 per hour. The presiding election official bears additional responsibilities at the voting place absent the on-site support of the CEO or Deputy CEO, who cannot be in all polling stations simultaneously (municipalities typically operate only a single polling station). The proposed rate of \$300 for an election official, or poll clerk, equates to \$20 per hour. The proposed new day rates approach but do not match the 2008 rate structure as compared to minimum wage then, and minimum wage today, as illustrated in the table below.

	<b>Minimum wage/hr</b>	<b>Election wage/hr</b>	<b>Comparison</b>
2008	\$8.38	\$14.06 (election official)	1.6X minimum wage
2021 (proposed)	\$15.20	\$20.00 (election official)	1.3X minimum wage
2008	\$8.38	\$17.18 (presiding election official)	2.05X minimum wage
2021 (proposed)	\$15.20	\$25.00 (presiding election official)	1.6x minimum wage

It is hoped that these rates will assist staff to attract potential candidates to give up a Saturday in July to work the assent voting polling stations, as to date, response has been low. All persons who have worked prior elections for the PRRD have been approached, and PRRD staff have also been approached regarding the 'opportunity'.

The Health Related Services Grant in Aid Service is region wide, and election organizers strive to provide a variety of voting locations across the vast Peace River Regional District for residents to cast their ballot. The most recent region wide voting opportunity was the 2018 general local government election; when 32 voting places were secured, until all candidates were declared acclaimed and no polling stations were required. In comparison, for the July 17 Health Services Grants in Aid assent voting, a total of sixteen (16) polling stations were identified, based on a 25 km radius (as the crow flies) for each voting location providing almost universal coverage of the region (with a few exceptions, and with the realization that in some areas, road access would require a drive of up to 45 minutes to reach a voting location; mail ballot voting is also available to all eligible voters, regardless of their proximity to a voting place). On July 17, the thirty day deadline for the notice of voting to be available, only twelve voting locations were staffed (minimally, not with a full complement required under COVID safety plans) and therefore only twelve locations were advertised. If additional staff can be secured, the additional voting places will be added to the list, and re-advertised in local papers, the PRRD website, radio ads, and via social media channels and roadside signage where available. Election officials must remain neutral

regarding the outcome, though all Chief Election Officer are united in a desire to see a reasonable voter turnout, which is often a challenge.

Unless additional election officials can be secured, no additional voting locations will be added; luckily mail ballot voting is being made available to all residents in these assent voting proceedings. An alternative that may be considered is to pay PRRD staff overtime rates to man the voting locations to ensure minimum staffing levels for adherence to safety plans, rather than having to cancel some of the twelve currently confirmed locations, further limiting the voting locations available for the assent voting proceedings.

Staff will access survey results from Civic Info BC for election official pay rates across BC prior to the next assent voting or general local election, to assess comparable rates across the province, including those paid to Chief Election Officers and Deputy Chief Election Officers, as the rates in the local member municipalities far exceed those paid in the PRRD as well.

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

1. That the Regional Board provide further direction.

**STRATEGIC PLAN RELEVANCE:**

- ☒ Organizational Effectiveness
- ☒ Comprehensive Policy Review

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION(S):**

Additional funds for assent voting processes were allocated from the COVID 19 funding, in recognition of the additional staff that would be required as part of assent voting safety plans, and to facilitate creative public engagement processes and additional advertising, in lieu of in person public meetings. Funding for general local elections is maintained on an annual basis, in preparation for the four year general local government election cycle. Increased advertising costs (since the last general election in 2018) and increased staffing costs, if approved, will be incorporated into 2022 budget planning for elections and assent voting. The increased election official pay rates are not expected to create a deficit in the Administration - Function 100 and Legislative - Function 110 budgets due to election costs.

**COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATION(S):**

If approved, election officials that have already been secured will be advised of the increased rates, and the rates will be shared while recruiting additional staff.

**OTHER CONSIDERATION(S):** None at this time.