



April 18, 2023

Ref: 272014

Randy Cranston, Chair
Kaleden Community Association
PO Box 136
Kaleden BC V0H 1K0

Dear Randy Cranston:

Thank you for your letter to Minister Anne Kang regarding issues you are facing in the unincorporated community of Kaleden within the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS). I appreciate the background and history you have provided. As the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Local Government Division, I am pleased to respond, and I apologize for the delay.

Citizen representation is important to government, and I appreciate you raising concerns about representation in rural areas and access to funding for improvement districts. I was also interested to learn about the community's efforts to raise the funds needed to purchase and protect the sensitive wetland area on Skaha Lake.

As you may know, regional districts are federations of municipalities, electoral areas, and, in some cases, Treaty First Nations. Regional districts serve as a political and administrative framework to provide region-wide services such as regional parks and emergency services as well as local services that benefit residents in specific areas of unincorporated communities within electoral areas.

Regional districts have the flexibility to establish committees or commissions, such as the Kaleden Parks and Recreation Commission, to provide advice to the regional district board. In some cases, regional district boards will delegate the responsibility for the operation and administration of a particular service to a commission. The structure of a regional district committee or commission may change over time depending on the level of interest from the community and the service provided—any such changes are generally at the discretion of the regional district board.

I appreciate your comments about how decisions have been made in relation to the park, recreation services and the community hall in Kaleden; fortunately, there are number of ways residents can influence or become involved with local government decision-making. As a first step, I would encourage you to contact your elected representative, Subrina Monteith, Director, Electoral Area "I," RDOS, to make them aware of your concerns. Director Monteith can be reached by telephone at: 250 492-0237, or by email at: smonteith@rdos.bc.ca.

Residents can also affect local government decisions by attending board meetings or open houses, requesting to appear as a delegation at a board meeting, or submitting informal petitions to their board to bring attention to matters of interest in the community.

Another way that residents can communicate with more senior levels of government is working with their local government to advance legislative changes. In British Columbia, proposed amendments to local government legislation often come through a process led by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), the organization representing all local governments.

If local governments were to collectively support legislative amendments requesting alternative voting systems, that request would be brought forward through the established UBCM resolution process, or through some other form of direct contact between UBCM and the provincial government. Upon such a request, the provincial government would then consider the proposal with a thorough analysis to examine the implications of any proposed changes, including consideration of the principles supporting the existing framework against arguments in support of change.

Regarding your comments about improvement district funding—improvement districts are currently eligible for capital funding where the improvement district is undergoing conversion to a regional district service area or municipal service. While improvement districts cannot apply directly to obtain capital grants to fund their projects, an application can be submitted by a regional district or municipality on behalf of the organization. This policy encourages improvement districts to convert to a municipal or regional district service area.

Improvement districts are also eligible for the Infrastructure Planning Grant Program if they are sponsored by the regional district or municipality for planning activities, with priority provided to applications that inform a potential conversion to a local government service. In this program, a commitment to conversion is not a requirement. An improvement districts can use the planning activities as a basis for an alternative strategy if it is determined that autonomy is valued more than access to senior government grant funding.

Given the range of concerns you have, I would encourage you and other like-minded residents to continue to bring your concerns about the commission, community consultation, and parks and recreation services in your area to both Director Monteith as well as the RDOS Board. You can reach out to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Bill Newell, to discuss how best to bring your concerns forward at an upcoming Board meeting, should you wish to do so. The CAO can be reached by email at: bnewell@rdos.bc.ca, or by telephone at 250 492-0237.

Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,



Tara Faganello
Assistant Deputy Minister

pc: Subrina Monteith, Electoral Area Director, Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
Bill Newell, CAO, Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen