

REPORT TO GOVERNANCE AND FIRST NATIONS RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2025

SUBJECT Representation on CRD Commissions and non-Board Committees

ISSUE SUMMARY

To consider options to increase representation on CRD Commissions and non-Board Committees to reflect the diversity of the region's population.

BACKGROUND

At the July 10, 2024, CRD Board meeting, the following recommendation from the Governance Committee was approved:

"That staff explore options to support that CRD Commissions and non-Board Committees reflect the diversity of our region's population, including gender diversity, to the greatest extent possible, and report back to the board with recommendations."

Under the CRD's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion framework, diversity refers to the variety of unique dimensions, qualities, characteristics that an individual possesses, and the mix that occurs in a community or a group of people. It extends beyond just visible attributes like race and ethnicity to include factors such as race, ethnicity, language, age, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, culture, religion, belief system, marital and family status, socioeconomic status, physical and intellectual abilities, mental health, work status, life experiences and thinking style.

Membership on CRD Commissions and Committees is prescribed in the bylaw or terms of reference for each body and may consist of one or more of the following types of members:

- elected officials to CRD Board (including Electoral Area Directors)
- elected officials representing a participating municipality
- First Nations representatives
- interested parties (e.g. industry, non-profits, other government bodies)
- public members

The governance structure for the Capital Regional District includes 3 Boards, 15 Board Standing and Select Committees, and over 60 Commissions and non-Board Committees. A visual mapping of the reporting structure of CRD Commissions & Committees is attached as Appendix A. In addition, the CRD Board makes nominations for CRD Representatives to serve on external boards. The opportunity to nominate a public member exists with the following 6 external boards: BC Ferry Authority, CREST Corporation, Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, Island Corridor Foundation, Royal and McPherson Theatres Society and the Victoria Airport Authority.

The focus of this report and staff recommendation excludes those bodies with membership solely comprised of elected officials. This exclusion includes the Boards and its Standing and Select Committees, the Arts Commission, Climate Action Inter-Municipal Task Force, Juan de Fuca Water Distribution Commission, Regional Water Supply Commission, Royal and McPherson Theatres Services Advisory Committee, and Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission.

Increasing diversity on CRD Commissions and non-Board Committees is intended to help strengthen Board decision-making frameworks to include an equity, diversity and inclusion, and lens (Governance Priority 5b) and foster greater civic participation among diverse community members (Governance Priority 5d). Increasing the diversity of perspectives contributing to the decision-making process increases the likelihood that CRD programs and services meet the needs of a broader cross-section of community.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Governance and First Nations Relations Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That a statement welcoming applications from all people including those with diverse backgrounds, abilities and lived experiences be added to all postings seeking new members to CRD Commissions and non-Board Committees.
2. That the CRD Board send a letter asking that Municipal Councils consider diversity when making its municipal appointments to CRD Commissions and non-Board Committees.

Alternative 2

That this report be referred back to staff for additional information.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

At the CRD Board's direction the following diversity and inclusion statement is published on the agenda cover for all 3 Boards and the Board Standing Committees since August 2020:

"The Capital Regional District strives to be a place where inclusion is paramount and all people are treated with dignity. We pledge to make our meetings a place where all feel welcome and respected."

A policy outlining CRD appointments to external boards is already established which ensures the process is inclusive, transparent, and consistently applied. First, the CRD Board receives a letter from the external board requesting that an appointment to fill a vacancy be made. The letter may specify the qualifications or areas of experience the Board is seeking in the preferred nominee. Second, the CRD will advertise the opportunity for appointment and may include a diversity and inclusion statement. For example, the following statement is included in the appointment opportunity to the Royal & McPherson Theatres Society Board (RMTS):

"The RMTS is committed to developing a diverse board of directors that represents the community we serve. We encourage and welcome applications from all people with diverse backgrounds, abilities and lived experiences."

The recommendation is for a similar diversity statement to be included when advertising vacancies on CRD Commissions and non-Board Committees.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Implications

The recommendation provides greater awareness and an immediate and incremental approach to increasing the diversity of members appointed to CRD Commissions and non-Board

Committees. The CRD is currently developing an internal organizational Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy. This strategy is anticipated to include action items designed to support staff in applying an EDI lens to their work, including decision-making.

As an example, prior to posting Commission or non-Board Committee vacancies, CRD staff may identify and communicate a specific gap they are looking to fill with the goal of seeking more diversity in members on the body. This is important to ensure the effort to address diversity is meaningful and effective.

The following is an example of a statement welcoming diverse applicants that may be added to all postings seeking new members to CRD Commissions and non-Board Committees:

“The CRD is committed to having representation on its Commissions and Committees that reflect the diversity of our region’s population, including gender diversity. We welcome applications from all people including those with diverse backgrounds, abilities and lived experiences. The Commission [Committee] is specifically seeking ...”

This statement is recommended over a written application format with checkboxes asking candidates to report on personal information such as gender, socio-economic or marital status, as examples. The statement provides an invitation for candidates to give consent by self-declaring their diverse background, abilities and lived experience as they deem relevant to the body. CRD staff or the decision-making body making the recommendation to appoint to the CRD Board will decide what type of representation and diversity is important when making its selection.

First Nations Implications

The opportunity for First Nations representation on CRD Board Standing Committees as ex-officio exists; unfortunately, there has not been any uptake from the local nations during this Board’s term. This is in part due to a preference by some First Nations to be in a decision-making capacity on the CRD Board instead. The provincial government is currently exploring opportunities for more inclusive governance on regional district boards.

While welcome on all CRD Commissions and Committees, First Nations representation is prescribed in the membership criteria for the following bodies:

- East Sooke Fire Protection and Emergency Response Service Commission
- Port Renfrew Fire Protection and Emergency Response Service Commission
- Port Renfrew Utility Services Committee
- Reaching Home Community Advisory Body
- Saanich Peninsula Water Commission
- Solid Waste Advisory Committee
- Water Advisory Committee

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications by adding a statement welcoming diverse applicants to apply when advertising vacancies on CRD Commissions and non-Board Committees. CRD staff are to continue posting notices using the same communication channels as previously used. The opportunities will be posted to the CRD website under Notices and on the Commission and Committee webpage.

Intergovernmental Implications

Diversity on the CRD Board is limited to the elected officials from the 13 municipal participants. Currently, all 13 Mayors are appointed to the CRD Board. In accordance with section 197 of the *Local Government Act*, 3 municipal participants (Langford, Saanich and Victoria) have more than one elected official on the CRD Board. Currently, each have at least one Director who is female and one new Director who is on their first term.

While the CRD Board makes the final appointment of members to CRD Commissions and Committees, it is up to each Municipal Council to forward their selected nominees for appointment as municipal and public member representatives. Municipal elected officials are appointed to 12 bodies and public members representing a municipal participant are made to 6 bodies.

The recommendation is for CRD to request that municipal councils consider their own community's diverse population when making appointments to CRD Commissions and Committees.

Service Delivery Implications

The CRD recruits to fill vacancies for the next calendar year beginning in September. CRD staff can include the new diversity statement when advertising upcoming vacancies for 2026.

To meaningfully gauge current diversity on CRD Commissions and non-Board Committees, or track changes in membership diversity over time, it would be necessary to create a baseline or inventory of the current state. CRD does not have a system with which to track this information, nor does it have the necessary consent from current members to collect demographic information, which would be required under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. The CRD's Appointments Information System (AIS) was developed in-house by CRD staff to track membership on all CRD Commissions and Committees. Currently, AIS only tracks name, home address, and telephone and email contact information. If the CRD Board wishes to implement an application form which allows tracking of demographic information of members, AIS would need to be redesigned which would require dedicated project funds from the Legislative and General budget requisition. In addition, staff would need to undertake a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) to assess potential privacy risks and to develop a comprehensive personal information collection statement. Any collection of demographic information would be implemented on an opt in basis, rather than being mandatory, and while it may provide more information than we currently have, not all committee and commission applicants would choose to disclose their personal information.

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

The 2023-2026 Board Priority Initiatives include the following directives related to equity, diversity and inclusion:

- Governance 5c: *Develop an understanding of, and accountability for, equity, diversity and inclusion across CRD decision-making bodies*
- Governance 5d: *Foster greater civic participation among diverse community members*

The 2023-2026 Corporate Plan Initiatives related around equity, diversity and inclusion include:

- 11a-2: *Develop understanding of, and accountability for, equity, diversity and inclusion across CRD decision-making bodies*

- 12b-1: *Enhance the public participation and engagement practices and framework to foster trust and understanding, informed by input from residents and equity, diversity and inclusion principles*

CONCLUSION

The CRD Board directed staff to consider options to increase representation on CRD Commissions and non-Board Committees to reflect the diversity of the region's population. Under the CRD's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion framework, diversity refers to the variety of unique dimensions, qualities, characteristics that an individual possesses, and the mix that occurs in a community or a group of people. Membership on CRD Commissions and Committees is prescribed in the bylaw or terms of reference for each body and may consist of elected officials, First Nations representative, interested parties, and public members. Every Fall the CRD recruits to fill vacancies for the next calendar year. The recommendation is to include a statement welcoming applications from people with diverse backgrounds, abilities and lived experiences to all postings seeking new members to CRD Commissions and non-Board Committees. Furthermore, the CRD Board will request that municipal councils consider their own community's diverse population when making appointments to CRD Commissions and non-Board Committees.

RECOMMENDATION

The Governance and First Nations Relations Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That a statement welcoming applications from all people including those with diverse backgrounds, abilities and lived experiences be added to all postings seeking new members to CRD Commissions and non-Board Committees.
2. That the CRD Board send a letter asking that municipal councils consider diversity when making its municipal appointments to CRD Commissions and non-Board Committees.

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ATTACHMENT(S)

Appendix A: CRD Commissions & Committees Reporting Structure