

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: REFERENDUM ON HOMELESSNESS FUNDING**

On November 28, 2015, voters in Courtenay, Cumberland, area A (excluding Denman and Hornby Islands), and areas B and C will be asked:

“Are you in favour of the Comox Valley Regional District adopting Bylaw No. 389 being “Comox Valley Homelessness Supports Service Establishment Bylaw No. 389, 2015” to establish a service that would provide funds to one or more local non-governmental organizations based on a board approved five-year action plan to address homelessness in the Comox Valley?” Yes or No

**Note:** The CVRD is not promoting a particular outcome of the referendum, nor doing a promotional campaign about the concept of having a service that uses tax dollars to support initiatives to help the homeless in the Comox Valley. These frequently asked questions (FAQs) relate specifically to the process for the referendum and the proposed service.

**Q. The question to be asked mentions a five-year action plan. So does that mean we will be paying for this service for just five years?**

**A.** No, there is no specified end to the service. The Comox Valley “coalition to end homelessness” (coalition of organizations involved in various ways with homelessness in our region) would work with local organizations to develop a five-year plan that includes performance measurements. The CVRD board would annually approve the current-year funding as established in the five-year plan. The coalition may also identify a need within its plan to set aside funds for future activities. The board may also provide input to the coalition on strategic goals that would be important for addressing homelessness in the Comox Valley.

**Q. Who will be paying the tax – is it just residential property owners, or will commercial property owners be taxed, too?**

**A.** All property owners (including residential, commercial, industrial, etc.) in Courtenay, Cumberland, and electoral areas A (excluding Denman and Hornby Islands), B and C will pay the tax. All property owners will pay the homelessness support tax in the same manner that property owners pay for other local government services such as the recreation complexes, parks or building inspection services.

**Q. I am a resident of Comox. Why can't I vote on this?**

**A.** The Town of Comox has opted not to be a participant in the proposed homelessness support service and therefore property owners in the Town of Comox will not pay this tax, and voters in the Town of Comox are not able to vote on the question.

**Q. How much money is going to be raised through taxation?**

**A.** It would be the greater of \$165,000 per year or two cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

**Q. How much will the taxpayer have to pay to raise that amount?**

**A.** At the tax rate of two cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value, the owner of a residential property assessed at \$300,000 would pay a \$6 per year. For a residential property assessed at \$600,000, that owner would pay \$12 per year. The amount collected from commercial and other non-residential properties depends on a tax multiplier that is applied in each jurisdiction in the CVRD. The province sets the multiplier for the rural areas and the municipalities set their own multipliers so the business class tax rate will vary depending on where the property is located. As examples, a commercial property that is in Area A and assessed at \$300,000 would pay \$14.70 per year and a commercial property with the same assessed value of \$300,000 in the City of Courtenay would pay \$16.80 per year. The 5.25 per cent collection fee the provincial government charges for the collection of taxes in the rural areas would be in addition to rural estimates quoted above.

**Q. How much are the CVRD administration fees for the service?**

**A.** The CVRD has a cost allocation and support services policy that determines the administration fees. In 2015, a service with a similar budget as the proposed homelessness supports service paid approximately \$2500 in administration fees. This pays for liability insurance, legal fees (if required), the CVRD staff time to provide funds to the local non-governmental organizations and other administrative costs.

**Q. How will the money get from the CVRD to the homeless?**

**A.** The way the service would be set up is that the Comox Valley coalition to end homelessness would work with local non-profit organizations to develop a five-year plan to address homelessness in the Comox Valley. The CVRD board would review that plan and could approve the current-year funding request from the coalition's plan. Those approved funds would then be issued by the CVRD directly to the local non-profit organization(s) identified in the plan for that year's efforts. The organization(s) would be responsible for delivering the services to address homelessness. The CVRD would not hire staff nor borrow funds to support the service. Further, the CVRD would not purchase or own property under this service.

**Q. Who can vote?**

**A.** You can vote if you are:

- 18 years of age or older
- A Canadian citizen
- A resident of BC for at least six months immediately preceding voting day
- A resident OR registered owner of property in the Comox Valley including the City of Courtenay, Village of Cumberland, Electoral Area A (excluding Denman and Hornby Islands) and Electoral Areas B and C
- Not otherwise disqualified by law from voting

Voters are allowed to cast only one ballot, even if they live in one jurisdiction and own property in another jurisdiction.

**Q. Where can I vote?**

**A.** On November 28, 2015, any eligible voter can vote between 8 am and 8 pm at any of these voting places:

- Union Bay community hall, 5401 Island Highway South, Union Bay
- Royston elementary school, 3830 Warren Ave, Royston
- North Island Distance Education School (NIDES – formerly Tsolum elementary school), 2505 Smith Rd, Courtenay
- Cultural centre Moncrief hall, 2674 Dunsmuir Ave, Cumberland
- Courtenay elementary school, 1540 McPhee Ave, Courtenay (voting day headquarters)
- Queneesh elementary school, 2345 Mission Rd, Courtenay
- Living Waters church, 2222 Regent Rd

Advance voting will be held on November 18 and November 25, between 8 am and 8 pm each day, at the CVRD boardroom at 550B Comox Road, Courtenay.

**Q. When can I vote?**

**A.** You can vote from 8 am to 8 pm on November 28, 2015. There will also be advance voting opportunities, on November 18 and November 25, between 8 am and 8 pm each day, at the CVRD boardroom at 550B Comox Road, Courtenay.

**Q. I'm away on November 28. Is there going to be an advance poll?**

**A.** Two advance voting opportunities will be held on November 18 and November 25, between 8 am and 8 pm each day, at the CVRD boardroom at 550B Comox Road, Courtenay.

**Q. I don't live in the Comox Valley, but I own property there. How can I vote?**

**A.** You may be able to vote as a non-resident property elector. You would have to be 18 years or older, a Canadian citizen, a resident of BC for at least six months before voting day, and the property owner in the proposed service area for at least 30 days before voting day. The property cannot be registered in a corporate name. To make sure you have the required documentation to vote, you should contact the CVRD offices at [elections@comoxvalleyrd.ca](mailto:elections@comoxvalleyrd.ca) for more information about voting as a non-resident property elector before coming to a voting place.

**Q. Can I vote by mail?**

**A.** That may be an option for you. Qualified electors may vote by mail if they:

- have a physical disability, illness or injury that affects their ability to vote at another voting opportunity, OR
- expect to be absent from the CVRD on general voting day and at the times of all advance voting opportunities.

To request a mail ballot package, please contact the CVRD office at 250-334-6000 or by email at [administration@comoxvalleyrd.ca](mailto:administration@comoxvalleyrd.ca) to see if this option is for you.

Mail ballot packages are scheduled to be sent out on or about October 28, 2015. To be counted, your mail ballot must be received by the chief election officer no later than 8 pm on Saturday, November 28, 2015.