



Saanich MATTERS

Saanich Civic League E-Bulletin



September 12, 2008

Do you know what your municipal government does?

Municipal government

provides services to residents and businesses,
collects property taxes,
manages municipal growth and development,
plans and determines community land use, and transportation services.

Next E-Bulletin –
What Does the CRD Do?

The majority of council's work this term was on development issues:

zoning by-laws, development permits, subdivision bylaw amendments, the Official Community Plan, etc

Watch for **upcoming E-bulletin on agricultural lands and local food supply – is Saanich doing a good job?**

What does Saanich Council do?

As Saanich Civic League volunteers go door to door with the Saanich Citizen Survey, this is what we hear:

I don't know what Saanich Council does. I don't understand the jurisdictional differences between Council and the CRD.

As a simple backgrounder, here are some answers to what municipal government can do.

Municipal is the level of government that most directly affects our daily lives. Decisions made by the people we elect to Council directly impact our quality of life, and Saanich's future. They determine how much green space there is, what lands remain in forest cover, whether our municipality is sprawling or compact, and whether or not we protect or develop agricultural and rural lands. Saanich municipality provides parks and trails for active living. It builds and maintains local roads, bridges, crosswalks, seniors' centres, rec centres and libraries. It provides fire and police protection, drinking water, sewage and waste water removal, garbage collection, recycling, and more. Council also has the authority to affect heritage preservation and support arts and culture. And, contrary to what some citizens think, climate change **is** a municipal matter.

Is preservation of agricultural land a municipal responsibility?

Survey respondents are pegging preservation of **Saanich agricultural land as a lead concern this election.** Municipal government's land-use planning power gives it a direct say over protection of agricultural and rural land. Saanich has an urban containment boundary (UCB) that designates where subdivisions stop and the countryside begins. Planning rules such as rural minimum lot size and requirements for onsite water supply and sewage disposal reinforce this power, which is buttressed by agricultural land reserve designation on some farmlands. Because rural lands are vulnerable to gentrification (hobby farms/development) and with farming vulnerable to changing provincial tax assessments, it is even more important for our municipal government to take a lead role in protecting agricultural lands and making farming / local food supply sustainable.

Financing. Of each tax dollar collected by all governments combined, 92 cents goes to provincial and federal coffers. Municipalities operate on the remainder, most of it sourced through property tax. Reform of urban finances is becoming a hot topic especially with the downloading of services to the local level, and increased investment needed at the local level to address issues like transit /climate change.

Are you eligible to vote municipally?

Are you on the voters list?

Won't be in town Nov 15? Vote at an advance poll.

Find out how

District of Saanich website
Municipal Election
Information

<http://www.gov.saanich.bc.ca/municipal/clerks/election.html>

Useful links

Is transportation a municipal responsibility?

Some survey respondents think transportation is solely a provincial issue. However, municipal governments build and maintain roads, sidewalks, bike lanes, and mixed-used trails. They are responsible for residential streets, collector roads, and many major roads (e.g., Quadra, Interurban, etc.) Regional transportation decision-making (including rapid transit and other means to reduce our reliance on automobiles) is part of the Regional Growth Strategy, a CRD jurisdiction.. Saanich Council is represented on the CRD.

Municipal representatives work with provincial appointees on the regional transit board to oversee our transit systems. They have a say in choosing levels of transit service, but they need provincial approval to commit new revenues to improved services. Municipal governments do co-finance some transit infrastructures, like bus exchanges, and provide shelters at bus stops.

Yes, municipal governments can lead on climate change.

Whatever policies senior governments put in place to address climate change, nothing will happen unless municipalities adopt sustainable practices --- and encourage citizens to do the same. This means moving to energy efficiency, changing existing policies that cause environmental damage, and reducing carbon emissions. Action on land-use and transportation planning to reduce our reliance on automobiles, which produce more than half of Greater Victoria's total carbon emissions, involve change at the municipal level. District of Saanich on-line Carbon Emissions Calculator <http://saanich.ca:8443/webapp/cop/>

YOU have the power November 15.

Saanich voters elect eight councillors and a mayor every three years. Our next election is November 15. Candidates to Saanich Council want not only your trust – they are applying for a job. We pay them to represent us. The mayor's base salary \$78,184. Councillors earn \$27,135. Those selected to serve as CRD directors receive \$8,368 in addition to their council salary.

We Vote for CRD too

When you mark your council ballot November 15 you are expected to also select four councillors to represent Saanich on the Capital Regional District. Whomever is elected mayor becomes Saanich's fifth CRD representative. Because Saanich is the most populated municipality in the region we have more CRD directors than any other municipality. Saanich voters wield tremendous potential influence on quality of life throughout the region.

NEXT Saanich Matters E-Bulletin What Does the CRD Do?

Smart Growth Guide to Local Government Law and Advocacy
<http://www.wcel.org/wcelpub/2001/13300.pdf>

Green Bylaws Toolkit <http://www.greenbylaws.ca/>

What's Happening in Your Neighbourhood?

<http://www.gov.saanich.bc.ca/business/development/plan/ocp.html>