

**From:** PARCS <parcs@sasktel.net>  
**Sent:** May 20, 2020 6:18 PM  
**To:** rvofpelicanpointe@xplornet.ca  
**Subject:** How will elections changes as a result of Covid=19? Will the use of ABSENTEE BALLOTS become more viable?

## PARCS UPDATE #121 - May 19, 2020



In this newsletter: we look ahead to the array of election opportunities offered to our communities in the upcoming months and ask "Can we be assured that all of our ratepayers have the opportunity to vote?"

### ELECTIONS & COVID-19

As we look ahead to the upcoming occasions where we may be casting our ballots, we cannot help but consider how the vestiges of the pandemic will affect these elections. Certainly there will be impacts on how the elections will be conducted.

**Saturday, Aug. 29 – Resort Village Elections**

**Monday, Oct. 26 – Provincial Election**

**Monday, Nov. 9 – RM Elections**

- For Reeve and odd # subdivisions

There have ***already been changes for the 2020 Resort Village elections***, namely:

**1) THE DATE** has been postponed by 5 weeks - *presumably to provide more time for the pandemic to diminish.*

**2) THE VOTING HOURS on election day** have been extended from 11 hours to 13 hours, (now from 8:00 am to 9:00 pm) - *presumably to allow more hours for spreading out the processing of all the voters.*

**3) THE ADVANCE POLL** which formerly could not be scheduled any closer than 3 days before the election, can now be scheduled the day immediately before the election (*not sure as to the rationale - perhaps for those RVs that decide to locate their advance poll in a different location from the regular poll*).

**4) THE MAIL-IN BALLOT SYSTEM** has been enhanced so that the voter ***NO LONGER has to go to the RV office in person prior to the election to sign the necessary forms.***

These absentee voter can now phone or email the office to request that an ***application package (containing the necessary forms, blank ballot and envelopes)*** be mailed to them at their permanent residence. Upon receipt, the voters take the enclosed Form C and Form R ***to sign in front of any appropriate official*** in or near their permanent residence (a notary public or commissioner of oaths, for example). The voter then marks the ballot, inserts it first into the privacy envelope, and then into the pre-addressed return envelope ***that must be received by the resort village no later than the close of polls on election day.***

**5) NOTE - PARCS lobbied for this change so that voters did not have to return to the lake from their permanent residence in order to pick up a mail-in ballot.**

**6) REMEMBER, HOWEVER -** If a municipality intends to use mail-in ballots, the municipality must pass a **MAIL-IN BALLOT BYLAW** [see samples on the website of Municipal Affairs or a sample behind the button at the bottom of this newsletter].

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## **THE COVID-19 IMPLICATIONS FOR THIS ELECTIONS**

The **1st task** facing the RO (Returning Officer) and Council for these 2020 Resort Village Elections will be to make, adopt, and follow a **comprehensive list of adaptations for voting** with the lingering threat of a voter carrying the Covid-19 virus. The list will address issues like masks and gloves, the disinfecting of workspaces, providing for suitable distancing in the voting space, allowing for suitable space in the area where voters

wait to access the voting area, the safe handling of ballots, and many other factors.

**Resort Village Administrators:**

**Please watch for a memo that follows this newsletter and tells you about possible ZOOM SHARING SESSIONS for ADMINISTRATORS in preparation for the upcoming Resort Village Election.**

The **2nd task** facing the RO and RV Council for these 2020 Elections will be to **find the POLITICAL COURAGE TO IMPLEMENT MAIL-IN BALLOTS**. The Local Government Elections Act only requires ONE OF: an Advance Poll or Mail-In Ballots. The former is easier than the latter. **The best plan is to provide both.**

***Consider these 2 examples:***

**#1** - John and Joanne Doe own a cottage in a resort village on Last Mountain Lake and a home in Moose Jaw. They prefer not to be at the lake on Saturday, August 29th because that is the day when the family is planning an 80th birthday party for Grandpa who lives in Winnipeg. John and Joanne make plans to drive to the lake to vote in the Advance Poll on Friday, August 28 and then continue driving to Winnipeg to arrive the evening before Grandpa's birthday. ***Advance poll works great for John & Joanne!***

**#2** - Ernie and Emily Example lived in Saskatchewan and built a cottage in a resort village on Lake Diefenbaker. A decade later, Ernie was transferred to Calgary. Although Calgary is their new home, they have continued to make Lake Diefenbaker their go-to place for their month-long summer holiday. This year, Ernie's holiday falls during the month of July (when they plan to be at the lake). They will not make a

14 hour round-trip back to the lake to vote on the weekend just before the kids start school in Calgary. But they do hope to be able to vote by way of a pair of mail-in ballots!

***Mail-in ballots are the only option for Ernie & Emily!***

Mail-in ballots would also be super for any resident who was self-isolating after an infection. [Providing that the Returning Officer has made suitable provisions for safe handling of these ballots!]

**IF EVER THERE WAS EVER A CASE TO BE MADE FOR MAIL-IN BALLOTS - IT IS DURING THESE COVID-19 TIMES!**

**READERS - To learn more about PARCS, visit our website by clicking on the logo at the top left of the newsletter. To see a sample MAIL-IN BALLOT BYLAW click on the button below.**

See a sample bylaw for mail-in ballots

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