

LCC Salt Spring

Frequently Asked Questions

I have no real understanding of what an LCC is or does. Can you tell me?

Salt Spring voters will have the opportunity to approve Bylaw 4507 on October 15 in the local election. If approved, a Salt Spring Local Community Commission (LCC) will be established to oversee Capital Regional District (CRD) local services. It will be comprised of four elected-at-large Salt Springers in addition to the Electoral Director.

The LCC will have substantial powers, described in the CRD Bylaw. It will have responsibility for 14 local **Capital Regional District** services ranging from parks and transportation to economic development. For 11 of these services, the LCC will have full administrative authority, meaning that it will make virtually all decisions relating to these services up to, but not including, the passage of bylaws and final approval of the annual budget

For the other 3 services (arts, library and Search and Rescue), which are partially funded through CRD tax dollars, the LCC will make recommendations to the CRD board on annual funding.

It will increase transparency and accountability by:

- Replacing many appointed commissioners on four commissions with one council made up of elected representatives who are accountable to voters and taxpayers.
- Adding transparency as decisions affecting all 14 services will be made in public instead of by the CRD Director

(Note: Establishing an LCC will have no effect on the Islands Trust and its **control over how land is used.**)

Just how would an LCC be an improvement on what we have now?

If our community votes to establish a Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission (LCC), local government on Salt Spring will be significantly improved.

It will enhance democratic control by:

- Bringing to Salt Spring decision-making-over most Salt Spring Island services that currently rests with the CRD board in Victoria.
- Broadening democratic representation by having decisions made by four Local Commissioners elected by Salt Spring residents in addition to the Electoral Area Director.

It will increase transparency and accountability by:

- Replacing four current unelected commissions made up of appointed members with one council made up of elected representatives who are accountable to voters and taxpayers.
- Bringing decision-making out into the open by doing its business at well-advertised regular public meetings.

It will streamline service delivery by:

- Encouraging efficient solutions by enabling decision-makers to assess how options will affect a wide range of local government services.
- Providing a forum for Salt Spring residents to bring their ideas for making service delivery as cost-effective as possible.

It will break down decision-making siloes by:

- Allowing one elected council to make decisions for 14 different services rather than separate commissions considering their narrower issues and priorities in isolation.

What do you say to those critics who believe an LCC will just add yet another layer of administration and will further slow down decision making on Salt Spring?

The opposite is true. By replacing four current appointed commissions, each meeting separately with a single elected council, we will reduce layers of government. Decisions will be made by Local Commissioners with broad knowledge of a wide range of services. An LCC will reduce bureaucracy and decision-making delays:

- Instead of the four current appointed commissions, each meeting separately with a limited focus, an LCC will offer a broader focus and the authority to get things done.
- Decision-making will be streamlined as the decisions for 14 different services made by one body at regular scheduled public meetings.
- Efficiency will be enhanced by solutions that provide benefits and/or achieve efficiencies across a range of services rather than just one or two.
- Instead of current commissions that only provide advice to the Electoral Area Director and CRD board, an LCC will make decisions and ensure that its decisions are implemented in a timely and efficient manner.

Isn't this a huge governance gamble? Aren't you asking voters to support something that is completely untested?

While establishing an LCC would be a significant change and a big improvement to local government on Salt Spring, it would not be a radical step or a particularly big gamble:

- It involves services that already exist here on Salt Spring, already have budgets and staff. It is **not** about creating a new set of services; it **is** about improving how we make decisions about the services we already have.
- This is about creating a Salt Spring council with the same level of authority over local services that several other off-island CRD commissions already have. The CRD board has, for many years, delegated a comparable level of authority to its Regional Water Supply Commission, Juan de Fuca Water Distribution Commission, Saanich Peninsula Water Commission, Saanich Peninsula Wastewater Commission and Peninsula Recreation Commission

The establishment of an LCC would not be a big gamble, but it **would** create a locally-elected body well positioned to consider whether major changes to services should be made in the future. And, as with all regional district services, any significant changes to services will always require voter approval, so Salt Springers will always have the ability to decide on any major changes to services in the future.

What makes you so convinced that service delivery will be more efficient and cost effective with an LCC?

If we establish a Salt Spring LCC, we will – for the first time – have more than one locally-elected person responsible for making sure CRD services are delivered efficiently and are cost-effective.

Under our current system, each of several unelected commissions has a narrow focus, with only the Electoral Area Director and CRD staff in a position to take a broad view across a range of services. By creating a Salt Spring council with five elected members who have broad responsibilities and meaningful authority, this situation will change fundamentally.

The elected commissioners will have a mandate to direct local government services well and will be held accountable for this at the ballot box.

What safeguards will be in place to ensure fiscal responsibility among the commissioners?

Fiscal responsibility will be significantly increased because budget recommendations currently made by the Electoral Area Director – without any requirement for consultation with Salt Spring taxpayers -- will come before the LCC in open public meetings.

- Currently, unelected commissions review individual budgets for particular services without even seeing the budgets for other Salt Spring CRD services. With an LCC, the elected council will review the budgets for all 14 services covered by the LCC and will be in a much better position to weigh priorities and assess the costs to taxpayers.
- Currently, final budget recommendations are prepared by the Electoral Area Director without any requirement for consultation with Salt Spring taxpayers. With an LCC, the budgets will always be discussed and approved at open public meetings before being sent to the CRD board for final approval.
- Currently, it can be difficult for taxpayers to keep track of the various service budgets and some are not even discussed by any of our current commissions. Under an LCC, the budgets for all 14 of the services overseen by the LCC must come before the council at open public meetings, allowing taxpayers to monitor spending decisions.
- Currently, every commissioner other than the Electoral Area Director is appointed rather than elected, so is effectively accountable to nobody. Under an

LCC, everyone at the table will be elected and can be defeated at the next election if taxpayers believe their decisions are fiscally irresponsible.

Can you give me any examples of where this form of governance has been successful?

While a Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission will be a unique *Made-on-Salt-Spring* solution, there are numerous examples of regional districts in B.C. delegating decision-making authority to commissions.

The CRD has delegated this authority to five commissions that are currently operating with similar delegated authority and have been doing so for many years. They are:

- Regional Water Supply Commission
- Juan de Fuca Water Distribution Commission
- Saanich Peninsula Water Commission
- Saanich Peninsula Wastewater Commission
- Peninsula Recreation Commission

What makes this LCC proposal unique is the range of services that are included, allowing the LCC to set overall priorities, better coordinate services and achieve efficiencies compared to our current fractured system.

While this proposal isn't perfect and doesn't include every CRD service on Salt Spring, it marks a big step forward for local government on our island and sets the stage for further enhancements in the future. These can only happen if we take the step of establishing a Salt Spring LCC by approving Bylaw 4507 on October 15.

Why do you personally believe this will be good for Salt Spring **By Brian Webster, lead author of the LCC Discussion Paper**

I recently completed seven years as a commissioner on one of our appointed advisory commissions and, while we made a sincere effort to encourage good decisions, I found that our current system lacks democratic representation, decision-making power, coordination across services, the ability to set overall priorities, transparency and accountability to Salt Spring taxpayers. I am confident an LCC will improve decision-making in all of these areas:

- **Democratic representation**, because – except for the Electoral Area Director – we were all appointed rather than elected and, at times, were far from representing the diversity of our community.
- **Decision-making power**, as our current commissions are purely advisory, so the Electoral Area Director, staff and CRD board can do pretty much whatever they want, regardless of what the commissions say.
- **Coordination across services**, as each commission works largely in isolation and members don't even know what other commissions are working on.
- **Ability to set overall priorities** because only staff and the Electoral Area Director are involved with more than a narrow range of services.
- **Transparency**, as the Electoral Area Director can choose to ignore the advice of our appointed advisory commissions and is not required to share information until they bring decisions for sign-off by the CRD board in Victoria.
- **Accountability to Salt Spring taxpayers** because appointed commissioners never need to explain or justify their positions, let alone come up for re-election.

While it won't instantly solve all of our problems, an elected LCC with significant delegated authority will address all of these weaknesses and bring major improvements to local government decision-making on Salt Spring.