



Media Release

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For immediate release

Borrowing for three new fire trucks goes to referendum

Nelson, BC: The Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) will hold three separate referendums on December 2, 2023 for the approval of a 20-year financing term for the purchase of three new fire engines. The new fire engines will serve the North Shore Fire Service, Slocan Valley Fire Service and Tarrys and Pass Creek Fire Service.

In the past the RDCK has used a combination of short-term financing (which does not need voter consent) and capital reserves to purchase fire engines. However, due to inflation, a new fire engine will cost up to \$750,000. Therefore, the RDCK is recommending long-term financing (needs voter consent) over 20 years to reduce the burden on the tax payer.

Each fire department within the RDCK is required to have a fire engine and water tender, with each apparatus being less than 25 years old and meeting specific National Fire Protection Association, Underwriters Laboratories of Canada and Fire Underwriters requirements. The fire engine for the North Shore Fire Department needs to be replaced in 2024, while the fire engines for the Tarrys Fire Department and Winlaw Fire Department need to be replaced in 2025.

“A group purchasing approach will be utilized when procuring these fire engines to realize cost savings for each service,” said Nora Hannon, RDCK Regional Fire Chief. “Fire Service Staff realize the inflationary pressures facing our communities and are working to reduce the impact by asking residents to approve long term financing rather than pay over a shorter five-year term.”

Assent voting will be held in Electoral Area F for the approval of a 20-year financing term up to \$368,018 for the purchase of a new fire engine for the North Shore Fire Department, within the North Shore Fire Protection Service. Less financing is needed due to contributions from capital reserve (\$237,000) and the [Growing Communities Fund](#) (\$144, 982). For more information go to www.rdck.ca/NSFireEngine.

“These are essential replacements for our local fire departments,” said Tom Newell, RDCK Electoral F Director. “While the long term financing is the ideal course of action, it is important for the community to come out for these referendums and have their voices heard.”

A second referendum will be held in defined portions of Electoral Area I for the approval of a 20-year financing term up to \$623,255 for the purchase of a new fire engine for the Tarrys Fire Department, within the Tarrys and Pass Creek Fire Protection Service. The fire protection service received \$126,745 from the [Growing Communities Fund](#). For more information go to www.rdck.ca/TarrysFireEngine.

“We will continue to strongly advocate for the Province of British Columbia to enact legislation to change the arbitrary insurance industry rules about when fire engines have to be replaced, even if they are in excellent condition and can be upgraded, to reduce the fiscal impact on small and rural local government and our ratepayers,” said Andy Davidoff, RDCK Electoral Area I Director. “Should these referendums fail, our communities may be left without fire protection during a time of increasing risk from wildfires and may also face increased home insurance rates as a result of a lack of fire protection services.”

A third referendum will be held in the Village of Slocan and defined portions of Electoral Area H and I for the approval of a 20-year financing term up to \$750,000 for the purchase of a new fire engine for the Winlaw Fire Department, within the Slocan Valley Fire Protection Service. This service includes the Slocan, Winlaw, Passmore and Crescent Valley Fire Protection Areas. Money received from the [Growing Communities Fund](#) was put towards the purchase of the Crescent Valley fire engine replacement in 2023. For more information go to www.rdck.ca/SVFireEngine.

“I encourage residents to support the referendum for long-term borrowing to replace the Winlaw Fire Engine as the tax implication of short term borrowing will be a significant tax increase for the whole service area from Slocan to South Slocan,” said Walter Popoff, RDCK Electoral Area H Director.

Each fire department will host an open house for residents to stop by, ask questions, and learn more about the referendum and the process.

Winlaw Fire Department
Open House

Tuesday, October 10
6:00 pm to 8:00 pm
5741 Highway 6, Winlaw

Tarrys Fire Department
Open House

Wednesday, October 11
6:00 pm to 8:00 pm
2103 Highway 3A, Castlegar

North Shore Fire Department
Open House

Sunday, October 15
3:00 pm to 5:00 pm
2703 Greenwood Road, Nelson

The Provincial Government’s Growing Communities Fund provided a one-time total of \$1 billion in grants distributed among all of BC’s local governments to support the delivery of infrastructure projects. The RDCK was allocated \$3,925,000 which was dispersed among fire services, community services, environmental services and administration.

Each service has differing capital reserve balances, which are impacted by overall contribution to capital reserves and prior capital purchases. As an example, in the Slocan Valley Fire Service, capital reserve funds were applied over the past two years to required water tender replacements in Slocan and Winlaw and a fire engine replacement for Crescent Valley.

All residents within a fire service area participate in costs for that service. Two of the services - the Slocan Valley Fire Protection Service and Tarrys and Pass Creek Fire Protection Service, operate more than one fire protection area with corresponding fire departments in the service area.

“Should long term financing not be approved for a service, each service will still need to replace their fire engine in order to continue to provide essential fire suppression services in their communities,” said Hannon. “This could be done through short term financing.”

Advance voting will start November 22 and general polls will be open December 2.

Incorporated in 1965, the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) is a local government that serves 60,000 residents in 11 electoral areas and nine member municipalities. The RDCK provides more than 160 services, including community facilities, fire protection and emergency services, grants, planning and land use, regional parks, resource recovery and handling, transit, water services and much more. For more information about the RDCK, visit www.rdck.ca.

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