

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF CENTRAL KOOTENAY



2009 BUDGET – AN OVERVIEW

The RDCK provides important local services to nearly 60,000 people living within its 23,000 sq.km. boundary. Most of those services have been established and had their taxation limit set by popular vote. Others have been provincially legislated.

District programs provide a way for our rural areas and municipalities to cooperatively and efficiently manage and pay for our community complexes, parks and recreation, rural fire protection, waste management (including recycling), land use planning, economic development, general government, much of our public transit and a host of other services – nearly 200 in all.

District residents only pay for services they either asked for or are entitled to use. As a result, both services and individual requisition rates vary widely from one part of the District to another.

Overall, this year's budget of \$45.2 million is up \$6.7 million from last year.

- A record \$6.6 million in grants from the Provincial Government, the Federal Government, and Columbia Basin Trust are included in the budget. They will enable us to take important steps to reduce the District's operational "carbon footprint", improve the water quality of some of our small water systems, develop our network of regional parks, underwrite improvements to our recreation complexes, and help to provide our volunteer firefighters and emergency services personnel with better equipment and training.
- We agree with our senior governments that the economic health of our District would be well served by undertaking as many projects as possible this year, with even more than usual consideration given to those which will benefit our local economy.
- Inter-service transfers have increased. There is no taxation or fee for these "paper" transactions; they are necessary to make certain that each of our services pays its fair share of administrative and general costs.
- Costs for Information Systems, equipment, vehicle operation, staff salaries and Directors' remuneration have increased.

Overall taxation will increase by \$2.0 million, slightly less than last year.

- RDCK has only two services that are tax-supported by all property owners: (1) General Administration and (2) Development Services. Thanks to internal financial policy reforms, District ratepayers will pay less for these services in 2009 than they did in 2008.
- The actual impact of increased costs varies widely from one area/municipality to another. The owner of a \$250,000 property in Castlegar, for example, will pay a total of \$24.92 more this year than last for the 12 District services he/she receives. The largest single service increase in Castlegar is for the Aquatic Centre. On the other hand, the owner of a \$250,000 property in Electoral Area D will see a total increase (over last year) of \$76.16 for the 18 services in that area. Like much of the District, Area D's biggest requisition increase is to support higher refuse and recycling costs.
- The most serious financial issues facing the District involve our recycling programs and our Building Inspection service. We are planning for our recycling costs to increase substantially in the face of the worldwide economic downturn and virtual collapse of recycling markets. Our residents are telling their Regional District Directors that they nonetheless remain committed to the principle of recycling. Our goal for our Building Inspection service has long been to make it self-supporting through user fees. We achieved that goal last year. This year, anticipating a downturn in building construction, the Board has chosen to subsidize the service through partial taxation rather than reduce services and/or lay off valued professional staff.

Gary Wright,
Board Chair