



## Exercise Your Right to Vote

Last Saturday, September 15th was International Day of Democracy while September 14th was the closing of the nominations for the 2018 General Local Elections in BC. As Canadians, we are fortunate to live in a democracy, with the opportunity to contribute and participate in the governance of our local communities.

While voter turnout in local government elections has been in decline in recent years, it is generally higher in our region compared to the province. In 2014, average voter turnout across the Columbia Basin-Boundary region was 41%, compared to only 33% for municipalities and 23% for regional district electoral (unincorporated) areas across BC. The highest voter turnout in our region in the 2014 election was in Greenwood, where 70% of eligible voters cast a ballot. The lowest was in East Kootenay Area C at 17%. In 2014, 14 Area Directors and three municipal councils were elected by acclamation (no other candidates ran for the positions). For full details on community-level voter turnout in past local government elections, check out the [2017 State of the Basin report](#).

For the 2018 local government elections, there are 341 candidates running for positions across the municipalities and regional district electoral areas of the Columbia Basin-Boundary region. That's up from 319 candidates who ran in the

2014 election. A village or town will elect a mayor and four councillors, while a city or district in our region will elect a mayor and six councillors. Each regional district electoral area elects one Director. Civic Info BC provides a [list of candidates](#) for all local governments.

Elections are the basic democratic practice for selecting the people who will make decisions on our behalf – affecting the well-being of residents, businesses, and community groups. Voter turnout is the most common and easily measured indicator of political participation and level of civic mindedness in a community. Studies generally show that voter turnout is lower among younger people, those with lower levels of education, and those that experience lower levels of economic well-being. These findings suggest that key population groups are inadequately represented in the political process and the policies that stem from it. Further, there are important social and economic barriers (e.g., available time, transportation) that affect some people's level of civic engagement.

This fall, exercise your right to vote with the local government elections, and take time to learn about the [Referendum on Electoral Reform](#). The referendum is being held by mail from October 22 to November 30. All registered voters can participate in this important decision that will impact the voting system for future provincial elections.

## **Transitioning to the New Rural Cannabis Economy**

Recreational cannabis will officially be legal to cultivate, produce, distribute, retail and consume on October 17, 2018. Join this free [Rural Policy Learning Commons webinar](#) on September 27 to explore current research related to the socio-economic impacts of this momentous policy change.

## **Canadian Rural & Remote Housing & Homelessness Symposium**

Being held October 24-26 in Canmore, Alberta, this [symposium](#) is the first of its kind in Canada. Topics will include research, policy, and best practices related to rural and remote housing and homelessness.

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