



New South Cariboo Recreation & Culture Service - Communications Plan -

BACKGROUND

The South Cariboo Joint Committee (SCJC) and the CRD Board have decided to establish a new South Cariboo Recreation & Culture Service, which will require a referendum.

The consideration of the new service follows a failed referendum in 2018 regarding a South Cariboo Recreation Centre expansion project. That project showed divided sentiment regarding future recreation facilities but indicated the desire to reconsider the service boundary. As a result, the SCJC set a 2019 business plan goal to review the current boundary.

Initially, an expansion of the current service was proposed but following public feedback in Fall/Winter 2019, the SCJC decided to change directions and establish a new service that included the potential for a future recreation project like an aquatic facility.

A referendum on the proposed new service is targeted for June 2022.

SWOT Analysis

An analysis of the existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats surrounding the expansion project will help inform our communication strategies and key messages.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good advance planning • Project has the support of the SCJC and Board • Lots of time for public awareness and education ahead of referendum • Adequate funding available for communications campaign • Includes the potential for an aquatic facility, which is top of mind in the community 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been several changes in direction over the course of communicating a change in the service and boundary • Diversity of opinions depending on where people live in the South Cariboo • This project is not a guarantee of a future pool; that would require another referendum, which may be challenging for people to understand • Explaining the 'up to tax rate' is confusing, especially when initial tax rates may vary
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High public awareness following SCRC expansion referendum • Many like the idea of this as a gateway to future recreation facility projects • Support from many sides of community to expand the boundary 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxpayers not wanting to spend more on taxes as a result of the forestry downturn and other increasing costs • People who live farther from 100 Mile don't see the value in paying for these services

GOAL

Goal: Equip and encourage residents to make an informed vote at the referendum for a new South Cariboo Recreation service.

Our main messages are “be informed” and “vote.” The communications plan is not designed to ensure that voter response is for or against the proposal; rather, it is designed to ensure that voters can make an informed decision on referendum day. Materials will present costs, benefits, and other issues from a balanced perspective.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this communications plan are to build awareness and action towards achieving the organizational goals and objectives of establishing a new South Cariboo Recreation & Culture taxation service. Through our communications, we will also try to raise awareness about local governments and the need for residents to exercise their democratic rights.

- **Objective #1: Increase the level of awareness about the proposed new service over the course of the communications plan.**
- **Objective #2: Maintain or increase voter participation compared to the last South Cariboo recreation referendum held in 2018 (in proportion).** The 2018 referendum saw 2,205 residents vote, which is approximately 25% of the population in the applicable service area.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Our primary audience is taxpayers within the proposed recreation service taxation boundary, which includes new taxpayers to the service and taxpayers already in the current South Cariboo Recreation service. Our influencers are local government elected officials, staff, and media.

KEY MESSAGES

See Referendum FAQ.

SPOKESPERSONS

The spokespersons representing the South Cariboo Joint Committee will be the co-chairs, Margo Wagner, and Mitch Campsall. Darron Campbell, CRD Manager of Community Services, or Alice Johnston, CRD Chief Election Officer, may also conduct interviews to provide technical information. All interview requests will flow through the CRD Manager of Communications.

TACTICS/BUDGET

Timeline

The following timeline is a general guideline for the communication tactics throughout the project’s lifespan. There will be two phases for communications. The first will raise awareness about the proposed new service. The second phase will be in Spring 2022 leading up to the referendum and encouraging residents to get out and vote.

Timeframe	Activities
PHASE ONE: Service Awareness	
Winter 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News release is sent announcing new service & upcoming open houses • Project FAQ is completed – posted online; distributed at CRD offices/libraries/key community locations (ready to go) • CRD Website is updated with project information (link to FAQ is in place) • Four open houses held (virtual or hybrid format) • “Question of the Week” series on Facebook (highlighting Q&As from FAQ over the 2-month period) • Presentations given at targeted community group meetings, if interested • Respond to any media inquiries
PHASE TWO: Referendum	
Spring 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcement of referendum official dates (news release email to public and media) • Create referendum FAQ & make available at key locations • Send referendum mailer • Create and distribute referendum posters
May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook advertising leading up to general election • Newspaper notice of voting ads • Radio ads leading up to advance voting and general voting • Information kept updated on website
June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance voting • General voting • When advance, mail-in, and general voting ballots are all counted, preliminary results are released (media release) • Official results are released (media release)

Detailed Description of Tactics

Information Handouts

An FAQ will be developed with information about the proposed new service. Closer to the referendum, a referendum specific handout (FAQ) will be developed. These will be posted on the CRD and District of 100 Mile House and websites and social media accounts and will be made available in paper form at the offices, at the South Cariboo Recreation Centre, CRD South Cariboo libraries and at key community locations.

Mailers

A full-colour mail-out focused on the referendum process will be mailed to every home and business within the proposed service area. Efforts will be made to drop off paper copies at key rural locations, like the general stores, etc.

Regular Publications

Articles highlighting the project will be included in the CRD’s UpFront newsletters and the South Cariboo Active Living Guide, as appropriate.

Website

The CRD website will be used with information updated regularly on the South Cariboo Recreation page (<http://www.cariboord.ca/southcariboorec>).

Information Displays

Information panels will be displayed at the South Cariboo Recreation Centre, 100 Mile House library and any key rural locations (e.g. Forest Grove store, Interlakes store, Lac La Hache store or library, etc.). The panels will provide project and referendum details.

Posters

Staff will create posters advertising about the upcoming referendum to be posted in the expansion areas.

Social Media

The CRD's Facebook page and Twitter feed will be utilized to provide two-way communication with affected residents, user groups, and businesses.

A short 'Question of the Week' campaign will be used during Phase One (2022) of communications to raise awareness of questions in the FAQ document. Social media posts and ads will also be used during Phase Two (2022) to remind people to vote in the referendum.

Open Houses

Four virtual or hybrid open houses (depending on current COVID-19 limits) will be held to raise awareness about the project and answer questions. In the case of completely virtual meetings, voters will be invited to participate via online question and answer sessions.

If open houses are possible, they will be a drop-in format, to encourage residents to stop by and ask their questions. We will likely have some information panels to display along with a map and the FAQ handouts. Potential locations could be Lac La Hache, 108 Mile Ranch, Forest Grove, 100 Mile House, Watch Lake (or Lone Butte) and Interlakes.

Community Group Presentations & Events

Staff will connect with key community groups and see if they would like a presentation at one of their regular meetings. CRD staff will also bring referendum information to any relevant CRD events.

Email Blasts

Information updates will be emailed via the CRD's email distribution list throughout the project as deemed necessary. People can subscribe or unsubscribe through the website or conventional email.

Media Relations

News releases will be sent to the media to announce important updates and media interview requests will be accommodated as quickly as possible. Pitched media articles may be used to provide further information to the public as well.

Advertising

Print, radio, and Facebook advertising will be used leading up to the referendum to encourage residents to get out and vote. Advertising will be coordinated with the legislated referendum advertising to keep information consistent.

Tactic	Estimated Cost	Final Cost
Info Handouts (FAQs) (internal printing costs)	\$0	
Mailer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printing • Postage 	\$2,000	
Regular publications	\$0	
Website	\$0	
Information displays	\$200	
Posters (internal printing costs)	\$0	
Social Media	\$0	
Community Group presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff travel 	\$450	
Open Houses (budgeted for 4 events) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hall rentals • Refreshments • Staff travel • Advertising 	\$8,500	
Email Blasts/Media Relations	\$0	
Advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print (awareness & referendum) • Radio (primarily used for “Get Out and Vote”) • Facebook (“Get Out and Vote” message) 	\$3,800	
Contingency	\$550	
Total	\$15,500 (plus other admin referendum costs)	

EVALUATION

Objective	Measure
Increase the level of awareness about the proposed new service over the course of the communications plan.	Did the level of awareness about the proposed new service increase over the course of the communications plan?
Maintain or increase voter participation compared to the last South Cariboo recreation referendum held in 2018 (in proportion).	Did voter participation stay the same or increase compared to the last South Cariboo recreation referendum?