DISTRICT OF OKANAGAN FALLS

Candidate Information Session

Serving on the First Council of British Columbia's Newest Municipality

A plain-language guide for anyone thinking about running for Mayor or Councillor in the District’s Inaugural municipal election.

2026

Prepared for prospective candidates for Mayor and Councillor

ORIENTATION

Purpose of Today's Session

This session will help you understand the role of Council before you decide whether to run.

This is not campaign advice. It is here to help you understand the job: the public role, the time it takes, the legal duties, and what is expected of an elected official.

Topic	What We Will Cover
Incorporation basics	How the District is being created, and why this first Council is unique
The role of Council	Governance, policy, budgets, bylaws, and public accountability
Who does what	The Council, the Mayor, Councillors, the Chief Administrative Officer, Corporate Officer, Chief Financial Officer, staff
Legal duties	Conduct, conflict of interest, confidentiality, meetings, and fair process

BACKGROUND

How the District Was Created

OFFICIAL NAME
District of Okanagan Falls

LETTERS PATENT ISSUED
June 24, 2026

FIRST ELECTION
October 17, 2026

INCORPORATION DATE
November 6, 2026

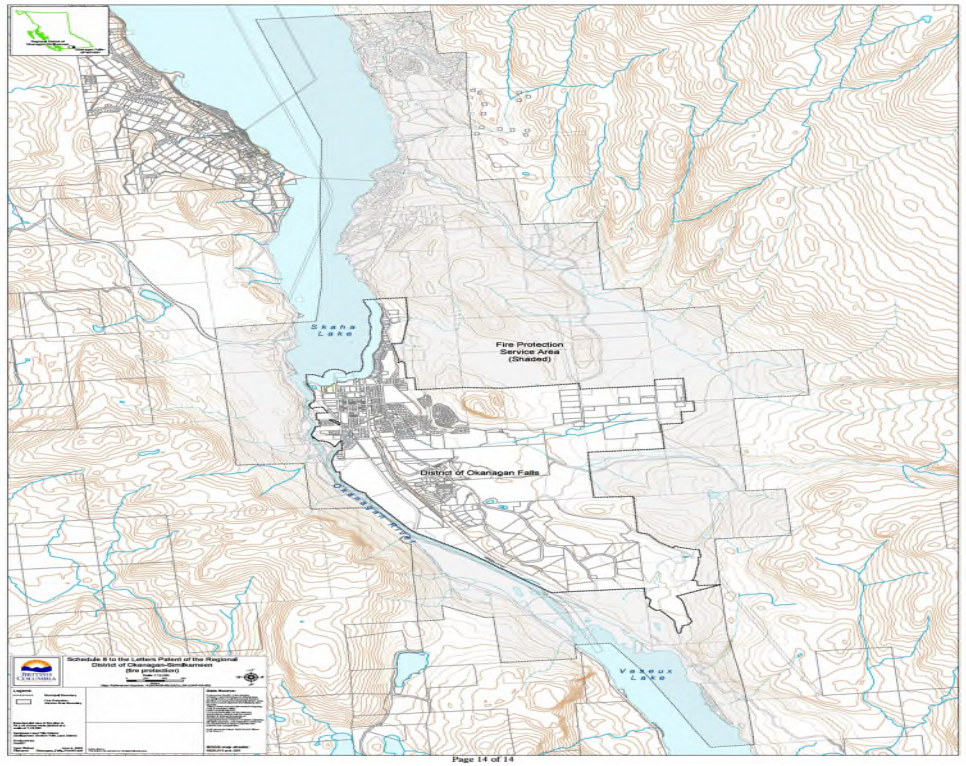
COUNCIL SIZE
1 Mayor, 4 Councillors

What Incorporation Means	What Is Still in Transition
Local decisions move from the RDOS electoral area system to an elected Council.	Some services continue through the RDOS or the Province during the changeover.
Council approves bylaws, financial plans, policies, and services for the District.	The RDOS manages certain transferred services until January 1, 2028.
The District becomes a member municipality of the RDOS.	The Province maintains and funds local roads for the first five years.

BOUNDARY

The District's Boundary

The Letters Patent set out the exact area and classification of the new District.



Source: District of Okanagan Falls Letters Patent, boundary schedule.

Classification

The municipality is classified as a district.

Area

1,110.27 hectares, including foreshore and land covered by water.

Important Note

Incorporation creates a municipal boundary. It does not change who owns private land.

CONTEXT

What Changes When the District Is Created

Understand both the new authority Council will have, and what is still in transition.

BEFORE Incorporation	AFTER Incorporation
One Electoral Area Director represented Electoral Area D.	A five-member Council governs the District.
Local decisions were made through the RDOS and the Province.	Council becomes the main local decision-making body.
The RDOS and Province delivered most local services.	Some services move to the District; others stay regional for now.
The Province collected rural property tax.	Council leads municipal budgeting, spending, and tax decisions.
Regional district bylaws applied.	The District builds its own bylaws and policies over time.

The first Council's job is to carry out this transition responsibly, legally, and transparently.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT 101

How Local Government Works in BC

Municipalities are created by the Province and can only act within powers the law gives them.

A municipality is a legal corporation. Council acts through bylaws and resolutions, but only within its legal authority.

Where Council's Authority Comes From	Why It Matters
Community Charter	Municipal governance, finance, and accountability rules
Local Government Act	Incorporation, elections, planning, and regional districts
Letters Patent	Creates the District and its start-up requirements
Other laws	Privacy, accessibility, emergency plans, and building safety

KEY MESSAGE

Council must act within its legal authority and follow the correct process.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council Governs as One Team

No single Council member can direct the municipality on their own.

A Mayor and four Councillors make up one Council. They only have authority when they act together, at a properly called meeting.

How Council Governs	Examples
Setting direction	Vision, priorities, and choices about service levels
Policy and bylaws	Rules, frameworks, and local laws
Managing money	The financial plan, taxes, fees, reserves, and major projects
Oversight	Watching results, risks, and organizational performance
Representation	The community, RDOS, the Province, and the Osoyoos Indian Band

Individual members bring their own perspective and voice. Council makes decisions collectively.

ROLES

The Mayor and Councillor Roles

Every Council member has an equal vote. The Mayor carries some extra duties as well.

Role	Main Expectations
Mayor	Chairs meetings, leads Council, shares information, and often speaks for the District
Councillor	Prepares for meetings, debates respectfully, votes, and may serve on committees
Acting Mayor	Steps in for the Mayor's duties when needed, within limits set by Council
All members	Follow the law, maintain confidentiality, and make decisions together

CANDIDATE REFLECTION

Serving on Council means making public decisions together with four other elected people, lawfully and respectfully, not individually.

ROLE CLARITY

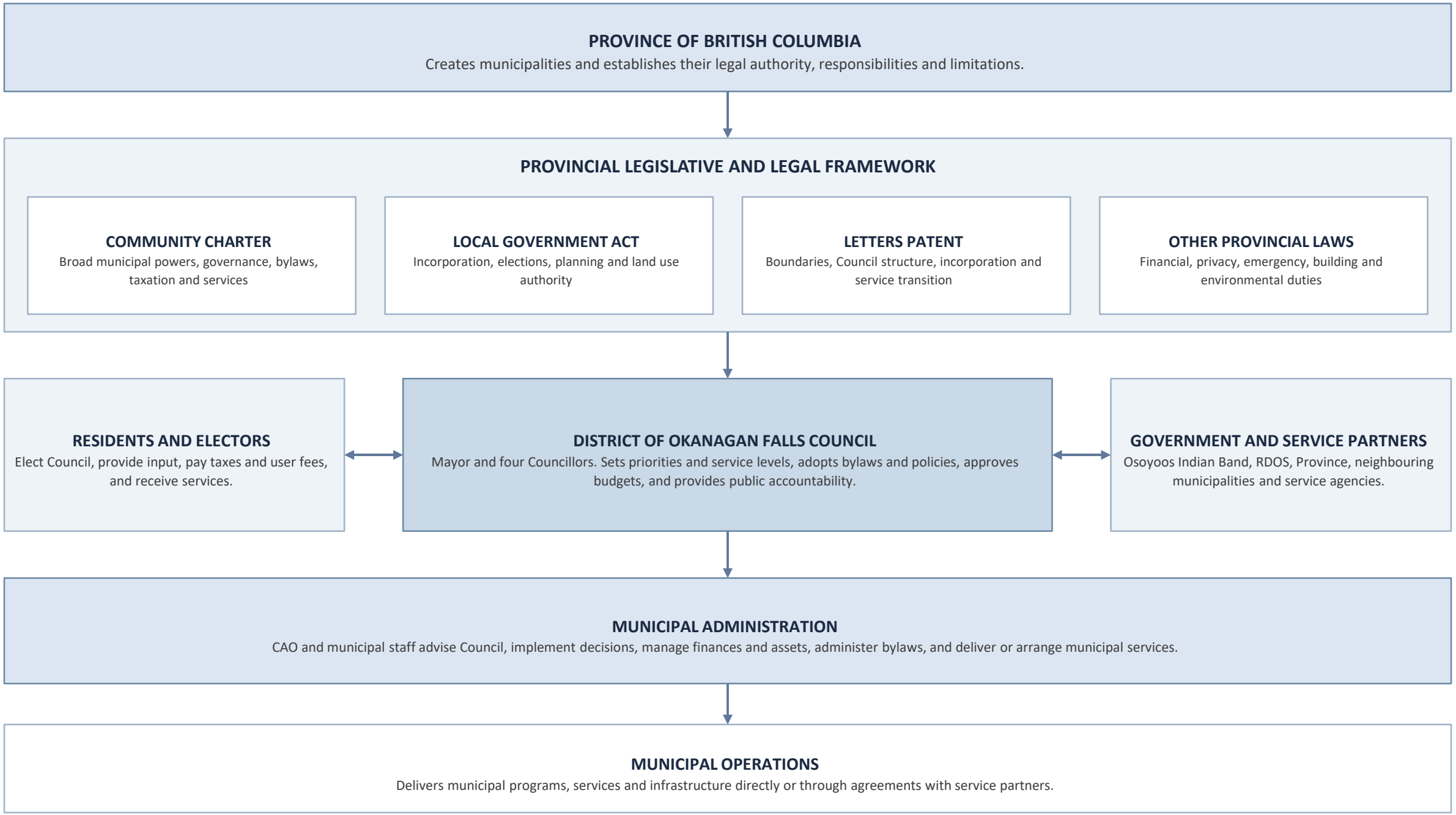
Council and Staff: Who Does What

Strong Councils understand the difference between governing and managing daily operations.

Council Governs	Staff Administer & Implement
Sets priorities and service levels	Give professional advice and carry out direction
Approves financial plans and bylaws	Prepare reports, plans, and options
Hires and reviews the CAO	The CAO leads staff and daily operations
Watches performance and risk	Deliver services and report the results
Represents the public interest	Provide impartial, professional administration

Do: Ask questions, set policy, make decisions, and work through the CAO.

Avoid: Directing staff, managing contractors, or promising services.


PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Creates municipalities and establishes their legal authority, responsibilities and limitations.
PROVINCIAL LEGISLATIVE AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK
COMMUNITY CHARTER
Broad municipal powers, governance, bylaws, taxation and services
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT
Incorporation, elections, planning and land use authority
LETTERS PATENT
Boundaries, Council structure, incorporation and service transition
OTHER PROVINCIAL LAWS
Financial, privacy, emergency, building and environmental duties
RESIDENTS AND ELECTORS
Elect Council, provide input, pay taxes and user fees, and receive services.
DISTRICT OF OKANAGAN FALLS COUNCIL
Mayor and four Councillors. Sets priorities and service levels, adopts bylaws and policies, approves budgets, and provides public accountability.
GOVERNMENT AND SERVICE PARTNERS
Osoyoos Indian Band, RDOS, Province, neighbouring municipalities and service agencies.
MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION
CAO and municipal staff advise Council, implement decisions, manage finances and assets, administer bylaws, and deliver or arrange municipal services.
MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS
Delivers municipal programs, services and infrastructure directly or through agreements with service partners.

COMMITMENT

Time Commitment and Public Expectations

Council work is usually part-time, but the responsibility never really stops.

The first Council will build the municipality while managing the service changeover, finances, and public communication. Expect the first two to three years to be busier than a typical term.

What Takes Time	What to Consider
Council and committee meetings	Evening and daytime meetings, plus occasional special meetings Council Meetings typically occur on a weekday/evening two times a month. Advisory Committee meetings are typically held monthly or bi-monthly
Reading agendas	Reports can be long and must be read before voting
Talking with the public	Residents raise questions in person, by email, and at meetings
Council Orientation & Training	New members learn the law, procedures, finance, and ethics
Outside meetings	RDOS meetings and community partners can add to the workload

MEETINGS

How Council Meetings and Decisions Work

Council decisions must be made openly, fairly, and by following the correct steps.

Meeting Part	What Candidates Should Know
Agendas	Council business is organized through published agendas and staff reports. Council members receive the Agenda the week prior to the meeting.
Motions	Council acts by passing resolutions, policies and bylaws
Debate	Members debate the issue, not each other
Voting	Members vote unless they have a conflict of interest
Minutes	The official written record of what was decided
Closed meetings	Only allowed for specific topics (e.g., land, labour, legal), and must stay confidential

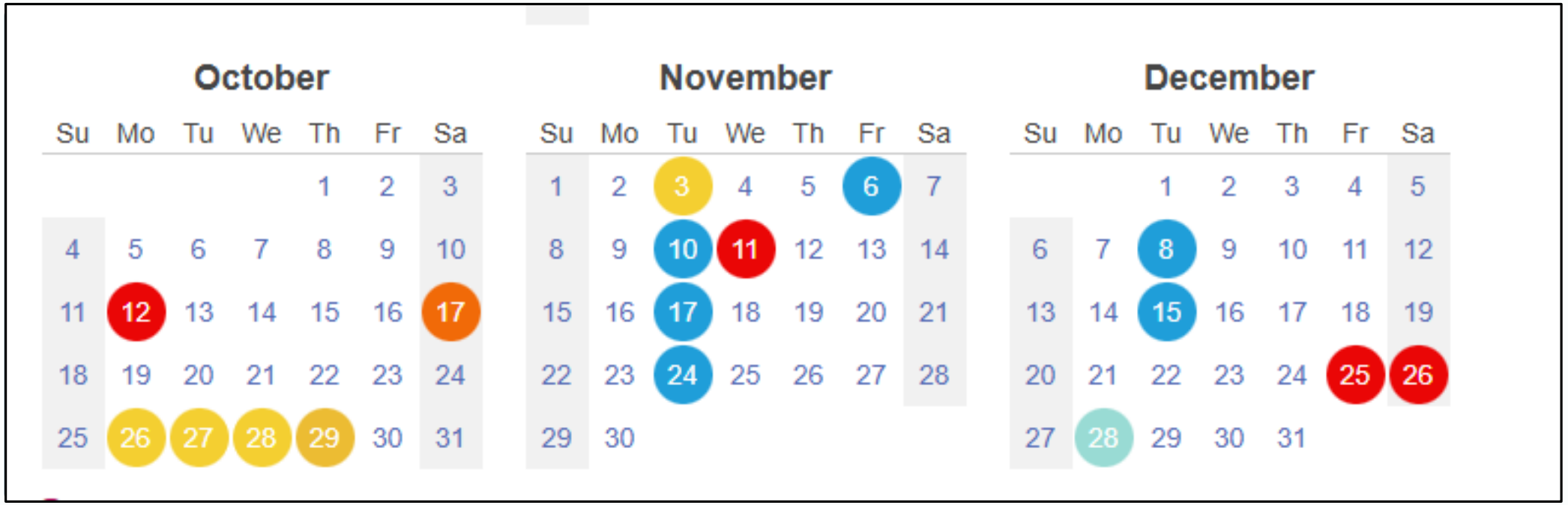
Following proper procedure protects Council, applicants, staff, and the public.

DRAFT SCHEDULE

2026 Council Meeting Schedule

Key dates from General Voting Day through the first Council's early meetings, October–December 2026.

*



General Voting Day

New Council Orientation

Inaugural Meeting (Nov. 6) & Council Meetings

Statutory Holidays

District Hall Closed

LOOKING AHEAD

2027 Council Meeting Schedule (Proposed)

Once the first Council settles in, meetings are expected to follow a consistent monthly rhythm.

PROPOSED MEETING CADENCE

Committee of the Whole, and Regular / Closed Council meetings are proposed for the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month.

Advisory Committees

- Reconciliation, Water Services, and Transportation committees are required under the Letters Patent.
- Meeting dates will be confirmed once the committees are established in early 2027.

2027 Annual Conferences

- **Southern Interior Local Government Association (SILGA)**
  April 28 – May 1, Penticton
- **Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)**
  June 10–13, Nova Scotia
- **Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM)**
  September 20 -24, Whistler

**Exact 2027 meeting dates, statutory holidays, and office closures will be confirmed once the new Council formally adopts a 2027 Meeting Schedule.*

CONDUCT

Responsible Conduct

Public trust depends on how Council members treat each other, staff, and the community.

Integrity
Be honest and act for the public good.

Accountability
Own your decisions and act responsibly.

Respect
Treat people with dignity, always.

Leadership
Model the conduct you expect.

Collaboration
Work well across differences.

Responsible Conduct Means	In Practice
Disagreeing respectfully	Challenge ideas, not people
Keeping confidentiality	Protect closed-meeting and personal information
Avoiding improper influence	Never use your office for personal gain
Following the rules	Follow the law, bylaws, policies, and the Code of Conduct

Bill 17 – Provincial Bill sitting at first reading - establishes a mandatory, province-wide code of conduct for all local government elected officials in BC.

LEGAL DUTIES

Conflicts, Confidentiality, and Records

Serving on Council comes with personal legal and ethical duties.

Duty	What It Means
Conflict of interest*	*When a member of Council has a direct or indirect financial or other interest in a matter (or someone close to them) they must disclose the conflict, leave the meeting, not participate or vote, and not attempt to influence the decision. Some limited statutory exceptions apply.* Declare it, leave the room, and do not vote or try to influence the decision
Confidentiality	Closed-meeting information stays private until it can lawfully be released
Privacy	Personal information can only be collected, used, and shared as the law allows
Records	Council emails, texts, and notes about District business may be considered official District records, and subject to Freedom of Information requests (FOI)
Fair process	Public hearings and some decisions require an open mind and a fair process* (transparency, the right to be heard, everyone receives the same information)

FINANCE

Financial Stewardship

Council sets priorities and approves the financial plan, including taxes, fees, and services.

Per the Letters Patent, the District's first financial plan must be adopted at the first regular Council meeting. It will cover November 6, 2026 to December 31, 2027.

Council Decides	Staff Advise and Carry Out
Strategic priorities	Costed options and budget recommendations
Service levels	The operating and financial impact of choices
Taxes and fees	How rates are calculated, billed, and collected
Capital priorities	Asset information, lifecycle costs, and funding options
Reserves and debt	Financial controls, reporting, and compliance

PLANNING

Planning, Land Use, and Public Hearings

Planning decisions are highly visible to the public and must be handled carefully.

Council's Planning Role	What Candidates Should Know
Official Community Plan	The community's long-term vision and policy framework
Zoning and land use	The rules for how land can be used and developed
Development permits	Site-specific decisions that can affect property rights
Public hearings	Council must listen with an open mind and follow the legal process. The public is provided an opportunity to speak to certain development and other types of land use applications.
Indigenous and heritage matters	Early engagement and cultural awareness matter
Transition period	The RDOS manages transferred planning duties until January 1, 2028 (or otherwise agreed to)

RELATIONSHIPS

Key Relationships for the First Council

The first Council will be building relationships at the same time as it builds the municipality.

RDOS

The District becomes a member municipality of the RDOS. Many services keep running regionally during the changeover.

Osoyoos Indian Band

The Letters Patent recognize that Okanagan Falls lies within the traditional territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) People, represented by the Osoyoos Indian Band, and require a reconciliation advisory body - with members chosen by OIB and Council

Province and Other Agencies

The Province plays a central role in roads, incorporation, and grants. Other agencies support services such as transit, policing, and libraries.

Candidates should be ready to represent the District respectfully at many different tables.

FIRST 100 DAYS

Priorities for the First Council

The first 100 days focus on legal start-up, service continuity, and relationships.

Priority	Why It Matters
Foundational bylaws	Procedures, financial plan, public notice, officers, delegation, indemnity, fees, and core powers
Municipal administration	Hiring management staff – e.g., Chief Administrative Officer, Chief Financial Officer and Corporate Officer
Advisory bodies	Reconciliation, water services, and transportation bodies are required and must be in place by January 30, 2027
RDOS agreements	Service continuity, cost-sharing, records, and transition governance
Osoyoos Indian Band relationship	Government-to-government connection and reconciliation
Public communication	Clear, honest explanations of what is changing, and what is not, and Council business and initiatives
Strategic priorities	Creating shared Council priorities

ELIGIBILITY

Who Can Run for Council

BC's Local Government Act sets out who is eligible to be a candidate.

You can run if you:

- ✓ Are 18 years of age or older on general voting day
- ✓ Are a Canadian citizen
- ✓ Have lived in British Columbia for at least six months before filing your nomination
- ✓ Are not disqualified under the Local Government Act or other provincial law

You cannot run if you:

- ✗ Are currently a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA)
- ✗ Are a judge of the Provincial Court, Supreme Court, or Court of Appeal
- ✗ Have been convicted of an indictable offence and are in custody
- ✗ Have been disqualified from holding office for an election offence
- ✗ Are involuntarily confined to a psychiatric facility

The RDOS Chief Election Officer will confirm the nomination package, key dates, and exact filing requirements for this election.

CANDIDATE REFLECTION

Are You Ready to Serve?

Public office is rewarding, demanding, and highly accountable.

Ask Yourself	Why It Matters
Can I commit the time?	Council work includes preparation, meetings, training, and public contact
Can I work as one member of a team?	Council's authority is shared. No single member governs alone
Can I separate governing from managing?	Council sets direction. Staff manage the day-to-day work
Can I listen with an open mind?	Fairness and public trust depend on respectful and open decision-making
Can I protect confidentiality?	Closed-meeting and personal information must be kept confidential
Can I accept public scrutiny?	Council's decisions and conduct are public and open to comment

The first Council will set the tone for how the District is governed for years to come.

Questions?

Thank you for considering service to the District of Okanagan Falls.

Inaugural Election
District of Okanagan Falls

- Province of BC appointed the Chief Election Officer and Deputy Chief Election Officer to conduct the inaugural election.
- The election will follow current RDOS election bylaws.
- Nomination packages are now available for pickup.
- Nomination period begins on September 1 at 9 a.m. and ends on September 11 at 4 p.m. These dates and times are provincially legislated.
- The election will take place on October 17, 2026. An advance voting day will take place on October 7, 2026. Mail ballots will be available for those who apply for this service. Curbside voting will be available at the advance and on general voting day.
- Chief Election Officer is Tracey Batten, and the Deputy Chief Election Officer is Philippa Harding.

Email: okanaganfallselection@rdos.bc.ca
Website: rdosregionalconnections.ca/district-okanagan-falls/district-okanagan-falls-inaugural-election-2026

Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

- The District of Okanagan Falls Council will appoint one person to sit as the District's representative on the RDOS Board of Directors. The Board will consist of 21 with the incorporation of the District.
- The RDOS Board meets on the first and third Thursday of the month beginning at 9 a.m.
- Similar to the District of Okanagan Falls schedule, additional meetings are scheduled to discuss strategic planning and budget.
- While the District of Okanagan Falls will administer their own services, the District will still participate in regional and sub-regional services that are administered through the RDOS.
- The appointed District representative will become a member of the Okanagan-Similkameen Regional Hospital District and may be appointed to external boards like Sterile Insect Release, Okanagan Basin Water Board, Okanagan Film Commission, Southern Interior Municipal Employers Association or the Economic Trust of the Southern Interior.