

DOUG FLEMING'S PLATFORM

AREA D - SPROAT LAKE

Questions & Answers

2026

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1. Responsible Government

1. Do you think Area D residents are getting a fair return for their property taxes?

No. I feel Area D residents are paying high property taxes and aren't getting enough value back for what they're paying. Before asking residents to pay more, the ACRD needs to take a serious look at spending, what services Area D is paying for, and what we're actually receiving in return. I want to see future tax increases kept to a minimum whenever possible while protecting the services residents depend on.

2. How will you keep property tax increases reasonable while maintaining services residents depend on?

I will closely examine spending and question whether new costs are truly necessary before adding them to the tax burden. I also believe the new OCP has become too complex and could add unnecessary administrative and compliance costs. I want to see it simplified and some of those added burdens scaled back. Residents should be able to clearly see what Area D is paying for, what services we're receiving, and why any increase is needed. If more money is being requested from taxpayers, there needs to be a valid reason for it.

3. How should the ACRD determine whether new spending, staffing or services are justified?

I believe the ACRD needs to demonstrate a legitimate need before adding new spending, staff or services. They should consider the demand, the cost, the benefits to residents, and what it's going to mean for taxpayers. If residents are being asked to pay more, there needs to be a clear reason for it and a clear benefit back to the community.

4. Do you believe Area D pays its fair share for regional services, and how should regional costs be allocated?

I believe Area D pays more than its fair share for some regional services. I would like to see costs more closely linked to the services each area is actually receiving. Area D residents should be paying for the services that benefit Area D, and we should be able to clearly see where our tax dollars are going and what we are receiving in return.

5. How will you make ACRD budgets, spending decisions, and Area D taxation easier for residents to understand?

I would like to see the annual Area D budget presentation broken down service by service so residents can clearly see what we're paying for, how those costs affect our taxes, and what we're receiving in return. I would also like to see a simple comparison between the electoral areas so residents can see what each area is paying and the services they receive. I think that would give people a much clearer picture of where Area D stands. The budget should be explained in plain language, with clear answers to questions, so that we can all understand how the decisions being made affect Area D.

2. Governance & Local Control

Do you believe Area D needs greater local control?

Yes. I believe Area D residents should have more say in the decisions that affect our community. Right now, too many decisions are made at the regional level. I want to see more responsibility moved closer to the people who actually live here, especially for services that directly affect Area D.

What is your position on municipal incorporation?

I do not support incorporation. I believe becoming a municipality would create another level of government and may bring a much larger tax burden and more bureaucracy for residents. I think there is a better option that could give us more local control while still remaining part of the ACRD.

What is a Local Community Commission?

A Local Community Commission, or LCC, is a form of local governance already allowed under B.C.'s Local Government Act. It would allow Area D to remain part of the ACRD while giving residents a more direct role in managing certain local services. The commission would include the Area D Director along with either four or six locally elected commissioners. I support six. The ACRD would establish the commission by bylaw and set out what responsibilities and decision-making authority it would have. Residents would also have to approve the proposal through a vote before it could be established.

Why do you believe a Local Community Commission may be a better option for Area D?

To me, the biggest advantage is that an LCC can be operational, not just advisory. I am not interested in creating another committee that can only make recommendations. I would advocate for an LCC that is given real responsibility for local services and the authority to make decisions within the areas that are delegated to it. I believe that could give Area D more local control without creating a whole new municipality and taking on the added costs and bureaucracy of incorporation. I feel it is about smarter local governance and bringing more decisions closer to the people who live here.

What responsibilities would you like an Area D Local Community Commission to have?

I would like to see an LCC given meaningful responsibility for services that directly affect Area D. That could include areas such as fire protection, parks and recreation, local infrastructure and other local services where authority can legally be delegated. The exact responsibilities would have to be worked out with the ACRD and clearly spelled out before residents are asked to vote on the proposal. An LCC can be delegated real operational authority, but some powers—such as making bylaws—must remain with the regional district board.

How would an LCC differ from the current system and from incorporation?

The difference from the current system is that locally elected commissioners could have actual responsibility for certain Area D services instead of simply advising the ACRD Board. The

difference from incorporation is that Area D would still remain part of the ACRD. We would not be creating a separate municipality with an entirely new municipal government. I believe an LCC could give us more local control with less bureaucracy and likely less financial burden than incorporation.

How would a Local Community Commission be created?

This is not something the Area D Director can simply create on their own. The ACRD Board would need to establish the commission through a bylaw. That bylaw would define the area, how the commission would operate, how many commissioners it would have, and the terms and conditions placed on it. The proposal would then have to receive the assent of the electors of our community and approval from the Inspector of Municipalities. Ultimately, residents would have to approve the change before an LCC could be established.

How should residents be involved in deciding Area D's future governance model?

Residents need to be involved from the beginning. Before anyone is asked to vote, I would want public meetings and open houses where people can see exactly what is being proposed, what responsibilities the LCC would have, what it would cost, and what would remain with the ACRD. People need the opportunity to ask questions and understand both the benefits and the limitations. At the end of the day, this would be a major change in how Area D is governed, and the residents would have the final say.

3. Protecting Our Lakes

What are your priorities for protecting the long-term health and water quality of Sproat Lake?

Protecting our water has to be a priority. We need to keep pollutants out of the lake and watershed, properly manage stormwater and runoff, and continue watching for things that could affect water quality. I also believe the community needs to be involved. The people who live on and around the lake have a lot invested in protecting it, and we should be working together to keep it healthy for future generations.

What role should the ACRD play in water-quality monitoring, and how should the results be communicated to residents?

I believe the ACRD should continue water-quality monitoring and work closely with Island Health and other agencies that have responsibility in this area. The Sproat Lake Marine Patrol already performs regular water testing in all four arms of the lake. I would like to see the results and any concerns made easy for residents to understand so they know what is being tested and what the results are showing.

What role should the ACRD play in addressing aging or failing septic systems and their potential impact on the lake?

Failing septic systems can become a water-quality issue, so I believe we need to know where the risks are before they become bigger problems. I would like to see the ACRD work with Island

Health, property owners and other responsible agencies to identify concerns, provide good information to residents and plan ahead where infrastructure may eventually be needed. The current draft OCP also identifies aging septic systems and monitoring as water-quality issues worth addressing.

How should shoreline and riparian protection be balanced with the rights of waterfront property owners?

We need to protect the lake and fish habitat, but we also need to be reasonable about how we do it. I support protecting sensitive shoreline areas where there is a real environmental need. At the same time, regulations should be clear, practical and based on actual impacts. I don't want to see unnecessary restrictions placed on property owners simply for the sake of adding more regulation.

What is your position on additional ACRD regulation of private docks on Sproat Lake?

I do not want to see the ACRD duplicating rules that are already dealt with by senior levels of government. There are already provincial and federal requirements that can apply to docks and foreshore work. Where the ACRD has a legitimate local role, the rules should be clear and reasonable, but I do not believe we need another layer of unnecessary regulation.

How should existing docks, repairs and replacements be treated if new dock standards are introduced?

My priority is protecting Sproat Lake and making sure docks do not create environmental problems or unreasonably interfere with neighbouring properties. Beyond that, I do not want to see property owners put through unnecessary permitting, expense or red tape simply to maintain or replace an existing dock.

How should dock size, location, environmental impacts and effects on neighbouring properties be balanced?

I believe we should use our common sense. The two main issues at stake are; protecting Sproat Lake and ensuring a dock's location does not interfere with a neighbour's property.

Rules for the docks should be based on real environmental and/or neighbour property issues. I also do not want to see additional Development Permit requirements added if there are no legitimate environmental or encroachment concerns.

What should the ACRD be doing to protect public lake access and prevent invasive aquatic species?

Education and prevention are very important. Once an invasive species becomes established, it can be extremely difficult to deal with. I would like to see a clear management plan focused on public education, prevention, early identification and, where possible, control or removal of invasive species. The ACRD should also work with residents, community groups, First Nations and senior governments rather than trying to handle the issue on its own. The current draft OCP

does call for collaboration and public education around invasive-species prevention and removal.

4. Growth, Development, Housing & the OCP

What is your overall position on the new Sproat Lake Official Community Plan, and do you believe it reflects the priorities of Area D residents?

I do not believe the current draft reflects what a lot of Area D residents want. I have concerns about unnecessary restrictions, added costs, and rules that may duplicate requirements that already exist at other levels of government. I think the OCP needs to be simpler, easier to understand, and more focused on what is actually needed for Area D. I would like to see it scaled back further.

Are there parts of the OCP that you believe should be changed or reconsidered?

Yes. I have concerns about policies that could lead to more restrictions or costs around development permit areas, docks, and new construction, to name a few. I am not against having rules. We need rules that protect the lake, public safety and the character of the community. But those rules also need to be reasonable, practical and clearly justified.

How should the OCP balance growth, environmental protection, property rights and the rural character of Area D?

I think the OCP should give the ACRD a clear framework for managing growth while protecting the things people value about Area D. That means protecting the environment and the lake, respecting private property, and keeping the rural character of the area in mind when new development is considered. Growth is going to happen. The important thing is that it is properly managed and makes sense for the community.

Once the OCP is adopted, how closely should the ACRD follow it when considering development and rezoning applications?

If we are going to have an OCP, then it needs to mean something. Development and rezoning applications should generally follow the land-use direction in the plan. If a proposal does not fit, then it should go through the proper process and be reviewed openly rather than simply ignoring the plan. At the same time, the OCP should not be so rigid that common-sense changes become impossible when circumstances change.

What level and type of future development do you believe is appropriate for Area D?

I believe future development should be moderate and carefully managed. We need to consider the environment, the character of our communities, available infrastructure, and what residents want, while also recognizing that there is a need for additional housing. The current draft OCP itself recognizes the need for more housing while trying to preserve the rural character of the area.

How should infrastructure limitations affect development decisions?

Infrastructure has to be part of the decision. Road access, fire protection, septic capacity, water, and emergency access will all affect where development should happen and how much development an area can reasonably support. I don't think we should approve development first and then try to figure out how to provide the necessary services afterward.

What types of additional housing are appropriate for Area D?

I am open to additional housing such as secondary suites and accessory dwelling units where the property, zoning, servicing, and provincial rules allow for it. I think these types of housing can help families and provide more options without changing the character of Area D as dramatically as large-scale development.

What is your position on short-term rentals?

I am concerned but not against short-term rentals. They are part of the local economy and can provide income for property owners, but they need to be managed in a way that respects neighbours and does not create bigger problems for long-term housing. I think we need a reasonable balance between property rights, neighbourhood impacts, and making sure permanent residents can still find housing in Area D.

5. Fire, Wildfire & Emergency Preparedness

Is the Sproat Lake Volunteer Fire Department adequately supported, and what should its future priorities be?

I believe the Sproat Lake Volunteer Fire Department is well supported by our residents, and it needs to stay that way. Fire protection should remain one of Area D's top priorities. We need to make sure our volunteers have the training, equipment and resources they need to do the job safely and effectively, and that we are planning ahead instead of waiting until something becomes a problem.

How should major fire-service equipment, facilities and future costs be planned and funded?

We need to plan for major equipment and facility needs well in advance. Fire protection is too important to deal with one emergency purchase at a time. I want to see long-term planning that tells residents what equipment is going to be needed, when it will need to be replaced, and what it is going to cost. If we establish a Local Community Commission, I would like fire protection to be one of the services where Area D has a much stronger local role in planning and budgeting. The ACRD is already making significant investments in the fire service, including a dedicated fire boat.

Is Area D adequately prepared for wildfire, and what should the ACRD be doing to reduce wildfire risk?

I think we can always do more. We live in a heavily forested area, and wildfire risk is something residents need to take seriously. I would like to see more public education around FireSmart,

fuel reduction and what property owners can do around their own homes. The ACRD should continue working with the fire department, provincial agencies and residents to reduce risk and improve preparedness. The regional emergency program already identifies wildfire resilience, FireSmart and public education as priorities, and I would support continuing that work.

Are Area D's evacuation routes adequate, particularly for neighbourhoods with limited access?

This is an area I want looked at carefully. Some parts of Area D have limited road access, and during a major wildfire or other emergency that can become a serious concern. The ACRD already has evacuation zones and route planning for Sproat Lake, but I want to make sure those plans reflect what would actually happen on the ground if a large number of people had to leave at the same time. We need to know where the problem areas are, what alternatives exist, and what improvements can realistically be made.

How can emergency communications, evacuation planning and coordination with other agencies be improved?

People need clear information quickly when there is an emergency. The ACRD already uses Voyent Alert to send emergency notifications, and I would encourage every Area D resident to sign up. But we also need to make sure people know their evacuation zone, understand their routes, and know where to get reliable information when something happens. I also believe regular coordination between the ACRD, our fire department, provincial agencies and neighbouring communities is important. Emergency plans only work if the people responsible for carrying them out are prepared and residents understand what they are supposed to do.

6. Parks, Recreation & Lake Use

What should the priorities be for Sproat Lake parks, trails, public lake access and recreational facilities?

My priorities would be to protect our natural environment while expanding and improving our network of trails, public access and recreational opportunities. I would like to see these amenities help connect our surrounding communities and provide more opportunities for residents of all ages to enjoy the area.

What should the ACRD's priorities be for Great Central Lake, including the boat launch, parking and public access?

Public safety and improved recreational access should be the priorities. I would like to see improvements to the boat launch and parking, along with meaningful community involvement in planning future projects at Great Central Lake. However, I do not support overspending on the boat launch. I believe we should be looking for a practical, cost-effective solution that improves access without putting an unreasonable burden on taxpayers.

How should recreational use of our lakes be balanced with safety, environmental protection and the interests of nearby residents?

We need a coordinated approach that puts public safety first while also protecting the lake ecosystem and preserving recreational opportunities. That means working collaboratively with government agencies, First Nations, lake-management organizations, recreational users and local residents to find practical solutions.

Are there recreational facilities, parks or services you believe Area D is currently missing or needs to improve?

I believe the Sproat Lake provincial boat launch needs significant improvement, and we should also consider whether another launch is needed. I would like to see our trail network expanded and made more accessible, as well as more recreation opportunities for young people, including playgrounds and potentially a skate park.

7. Roads, Infrastructure & Regional Services

What are the biggest road and infrastructure concerns facing Area D, and what should be prioritized?

Many of our roads are deteriorating, and I do not feel sufficient funding has been available to keep up with needed maintenance. Drainage and flooding are also concerns in some areas. Identifying and documenting the most serious safety, maintenance and drainage issues should be the first step in establishing clear priorities.

How will you advocate for improvements to roads and infrastructure that fall under provincial rather than ACRD jurisdiction?

The Area D Director needs to be a strong advocate. I would work with regional, provincial and federal governments to clearly document the condition of our infrastructure, identify public-safety concerns and pursue available funding and grant opportunities. Resident complaints and concerns also need to be properly documented so we can make a stronger case for action.

Are Area D residents receiving fair value from the regional services they help fund, and are there services you believe should be reviewed?

I do not believe Area D residents are currently receiving fair value from every regional service they help fund. I would support a formal review of the services Area D pays for, including their costs, benefits and how those costs are allocated.

How should future infrastructure projects and service expansions be prioritized and funded?

Infrastructure decisions should be based on a coordinated long-term plan. Priorities should consider critical local needs, public safety, regional economic benefits, environmental stewardship and opportunities to work collaboratively with First Nations and other partners.

8. Community, Partnerships & Representation

How will you keep Area D residents informed and make sure they have a meaningful voice between elections?

Communication with residents will be a priority for me. I plan to maintain a website where residents can find current information about Area D issues and provide feedback and also sign up for email updates. I would also hold open-house meetings so residents have opportunities to ask questions, raise concerns and discuss issues together.

How should the Area D Director work with local community associations, property-owner groups, volunteer organizations and other community partners?

The Director needs to balance regional responsibilities with strong local engagement. I would work openly and respectfully with community organizations while maintaining transparency about decisions, service costs and the tax implications of proposals being considered.

How should Area D work with First Nations, neighbouring communities and other levels of government on issues that affect our area?

Area D needs strong working relationships with First Nations, neighbouring communities and other levels of government. Many of the issues affecting our residents cross jurisdictional boundaries, so collaboration will be essential to finding practical solutions and advancing Area D priorities.

What role should Area D play in supporting local businesses and the local economy?

I would like to see an increase in the number of small businesses in Area D, as well as an increase in the number of opportunities for local entrepreneurs to succeed.

The ACRD needs to ensure it has policy and regulatory frameworks in place which are realistic and do not impose undue burdens on small businesses, including home-based businesses. The ACRD also needs to explore ways to develop local tourism, recreation, and other types of economic development that align with the values and characteristics of our community.

How would you approach an issue where residents are strongly divided about what should be done?

First, I would bring people together and ensure that all parties involved have a clear and objective view of the issue. I would listen to the varying views from each individual. Should the community remain split on this matter, I will conduct an online survey to obtain a larger number of opinions from residents prior to making a final decision. Whichever decision I eventually make on this matter, I will provide full disclosure regarding the reason for my decision.

9. Candidate & Leadership

What experience from your professional and community background will help you serve as Area D Director?

Throughout my career, I have managed large projects in Canada and internationally, developed and managed budgets, and worked with regulatory boards, including in health and safety. That experience has taught me the importance of planning, accountability, understanding regulations and making informed decisions.

How would you describe your leadership and decision-making style?

I am very fact-focused, and I believe in trusting a fair and transparent process. I want to understand the facts, hear the different perspectives and make decisions based on the best information available.

How accessible will you be to residents, and how will you communicate with them on an ongoing basis?

I intend to be accessible and available to Area D residents. I will use the website to provide regular information and updates, but I also believe in direct conversation. Residents should feel comfortable contacting their Director to ask questions, raise concerns or discuss an issue.

At the end of your first term, what would you hope to have accomplished for Area D?

One of my major goals would be to have a Local Community Commission in place so Area D residents have a stronger voice in decisions affecting their community. I want residents to have greater influence over local priorities and how their tax dollars are spent. Area D makes an important contribution to the Alberni Valley, and I believe it is time for residents to have a stronger voice in shaping the future of area D.

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