

Written by JAMES MILLER

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If Penticton Mayor Dan Ashton makes another bid to chair the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen board, he could face a challenger in Stu Wells.

Wells, the mayor of Osoyoos, said he may take a run at the RDOS chair's job when it comes up at a meeting Dec. 6.

"I'm definitely considering it," Wells said in an interview. "I may run. I may be looking for someone else to run (against Ashton)."

The position has been held by Ashton for the past nine years. However, Ashton recently won the B.C. Liberal nomination in the Penticton riding and plans on taking a leave of absence from his mayor's job once the election writ is dropped next spring. He would resign as mayor if elected MLA.

The RDOS chair is chosen by the 18 members of the regional board on an annual basis. Ashton won it uncontested in 2011.

"Dan's been a good chair, and he's represented the regional district very well," Wells said. "However, with all things being equal, he's going to be leaving us in four months to campaign for the Liberals, and with Penticton's track record (on voting), the odds are he will be going to Victoria after that."

Contacted Saturday, Ashton said he hasn't yet decided if he will allow his name to stand for the job of RDOS chair.

"There's lots of discussion that's taking place right now with the other directors. What do they want me to do and do I have the support?" said Ashton. "I have not ruled it out."

"The board has to make darn sure that the chair of the regional district is regionally oriented. In order for the RDOS to work, you need someone who is regionally minded."

As for possibly running against Wells, who also serves as vice-chair of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, Ashton replied, "Competition is always a good thing, and it's good to have choices available."