

## Mayor's Minute - October 8, 2019

This Mayor's Minute is the second of two about the 2019 Union of B.C. Municipalities (UBCM) Convention held in Vancouver the last week of September. The Convention provides opportunity for elected officials and senior staff to attend educational sessions and workshops on matters pertinent to local government. It also provides a chance to meet one-on-one with provincial ministers and staff on topics specific to Summerland, and to network with colleagues throughout the Province.

Summerland Council met with three provincial cabinet ministers (Education, Municipal Affairs and Housing, and State for Child Care) and the CEO of Interior Health about the Summerland Community Health and Wellness Centre proposal. Council requested the meetings to introduce the relevant Ministries to the concept and to gain support in principle for the collaboration.

Representatives from School District 67, Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen, South Okanagan-Similkameen Division of Family Practice, and M.L.A. Dan Ashton either attended the meetings or provided written support for the proposal.

The next steps are to undertake a robust community engagement process to establish how the proposed Centre can best meet community needs; determine the scope of the project; and explore financial considerations.

The District also met with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy regarding climate change adaption initiatives. We also requested that climate data be released more frequently to assist local governments with climate action planning.

The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO) met with Council about forming a pilot partnership to help streamline restoration work for private property owners along Eneas Creek. The initiative would see the municipality contracting with a qualified environmental professional (approved by the Province) to organize a coordinated flood mitigation and restoration effort.

At a meeting with staff from the Minister of Agriculture, Council spoke about their proposal to facilitate a regional South Okanagan Food Innovation Hub in Summerland and requested support for funding from the Province. This initiative is a Council priority. Although the District was invited by the Ministry to submit a proposal in early September, the decision was made to use the time before the next intake (early 2020) to solidify commitments from existing partners and seek potential new partnering opportunities.

Related to the Food Innovation Hub, while in Vancouver Chief Administrative Officer Anthony Haddad and I joined the District's project manager for an on-site tour of a small food processing facility. It was valuable to have a firsthand look at what the food processing component of the Hub could look like and to hear how the equipment can be adapted to best suit the regional agri-food start-ups and businesses that will use the facility.

Both Councillor Holmes and I are part of the Climate Caucus, an initiative of FCM (Federation of Canadian Municipalities). During the week of UBCM we were each able to take in a Climate Caucus meeting. This ability to have a 'tag team' approach adds further value to Council's time at the Convention. One could not possibly attend all the offerings, as many are run concurrently. Where possible, Council attended different sessions and will report back to the rest of Council with highlights and takeaways.

As mentioned earlier, there are many networking opportunities at the UBCM Convention: at delegate luncheons, evening receptions, the trade show, and even at coffee breaks during sessions. Very often it is these settings that provide helpful and interesting discussions. For example, although our meeting request with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure was not accepted, I had the chance to speak briefly about Council's topics with Minister Trevana at an evening reception.

A second example: Early in the week, Councillor Barkwill invited me to an impromptu discussion with developers and facilitators for affordable housing. Our almost two-hour chat has already led to further communication and a significant expression of interest by them to work with the District and other local non-profits.

Thirdly, at the trade show, I learned of new B.C. Healthy Communities Plan H funding that will assist the District in the public engagement component of the proposed Summerland Community Health and Wellness Centre. (Plan H, a Ministry of Health grants program, has also funded a series of presentations undertaken by the Summerland Healthy Living Initiative.)

Personally, the pace of UBCM is exhausting. Maintaining and strengthening new relationships; exploring best practises presented at sessions; and simply processing all the new information is hard work. Like many things, “you get out of it what you put into it” and, speaking on behalf of Council and CAO Haddad, UBCM 2019 was worth every minute.