

Mayor's Report – April 9, 2023

Last Friday, April 5, I was pleased to participate as one of the community panelists for the Summerland Secondary School grad presentations. Through their presentations, the grade 12 students shared their high school learning journeys and their future plans and aspirations. The presentations were inspiring and motivating, and it was obvious the students put a lot of effort into them.

Since our last council meeting, there have been two Regional District (RDOS) board meetings, on April 4 and March 21, that Councillor Van Alphen and I attended. The regulation of short-term rentals was discussed at length at both meetings.

Given that the new provincial legislation has shifted the parameters, the Board agreed last week to abandon a vacation rental policy review that had previously been identified as a strategic priority. Unlike larger municipalities like Summerland, communities in rural areas have a choice of whether to “opt-in” to the principal residence requirement under the Short-Term Rental Accommodations Act. The board gave approval for rural areas D (Okanagan Fall), E (Kaleden), and F (West Bench) to opt in.

At last week's Board meeting, the board also appointed me as an alternate to the Economic Trust of the Southern Interior Regional Advisory Committee, in case one of the regular representatives is unable to attend a meeting. The mayors of Penticton, Oliver and Osoyoos are the region's regular representatives.

Finally, there are now four Ukrainian families and two single Ukrainians living in Summerland, all of them on visas giving them temporary residence in Canada for up to three years. As the war in their homeland continues, there is increasing concern over what will happen once their visas expire. The owners of the Sunflower Café, for example, have started a successful business but do not know whether to invest in it or not, given the uncertainty of their status.

I have connected with our Member of Parliament, Dan Albas, who has also been hearing from Ukrainians throughout his constituency. He has raised the issue in the House of Commons and has organized a Roundtable in West Kelowna for this Sunday to hear directly from those affected. I have arranged for the Summerland Ukrainians to attend the Roundtable and will be joining them myself.

- Mayor Doug Holmes