

Mayor’s Report – August 13, 2024

Yesterday, August 12, CAO Statt and I met with SD67 Chair James Palanio and Superintendent Todd Manuel to plan for a joint Council-School Board meeting to be held in the fall, likely the end of October. Foremost on that meeting’s agenda will be a discussion on the future of the Giant’s Head School property after the school closes in 2025. This fall we can also expect to receive an invitation for the grand opening and a tour of the new gymnasium at Summerland Secondary School, which we were told is nearing completion.

In the past couple of weeks, I’ve been speaking to many people in the community about the closure of BC Tree Fruits. On August 1st I spoke with the provincial minister of agriculture, Pam Alexis, about the impact the closure will have on Summerland.

I told the Minister that while the closure wasn’t entirely unexpected, the timing right in the middle of the growing season is a big problem for many apple growers, especially the smaller orchards. Just as their fruit is starting to ripen, they have no bins for collecting their harvest, no cold storage to take their harvest to, and no way to package and sell their apples.

Minister Alexis said she was hearing a consistent message from everyone she spoke, especially in regards to the urgency for this year’s crop. She told me the Ministry was speaking with private packing houses about increasing their capacity to accept fruit from co-op members.

She also gave me a head’s up on the announcement that was made the next day, on Friday the 2nd, that she was convening an emergency working group to identify what short-term actions can be taken.

The announcement is encouraging but it’s imperative some way is found for farmers to get this year’s crop to market, and that they are paid for the fruit they have already shipped, both this year and last.

Apple production is vital to Summerland’s economy and to our cultural identity. I will continue to encourage the government to do everything it can to help the fruit industry the same way it helped the other industry that’s important to our economy and cultural identity and is also struggling this year – namely the wine industry.

Finally, six Summerland youth participated in the 2024 BC Summer Games held July 17 to 21 in Maple Ridge, competing in box lacrosse, swimming, girls soccer, and boys volleyball. Two of the competitors, Kiley Lund and Grace Wasnik, were members of the Thomson-Okanagan girls soccer team that brought home the silver medal. Congratulations to all six athletes for doing Summerland proud and representing the community at the Games.

Mayor Doug Holmes