

Mayor's Report – February 11, 2025

This past Friday, February 7, Councillors Peake and Barkwill joined me at a visioning workshop organized by our Development Services Department to kick off the updating of our Official Community Plan (OCP). About 25 local residents participated in the workshop representing various community groups, council advisory committees, local schools, and churches. The group considered some of the trends and developments that have occurred in Summerland over the past 10 years and envisioned the challenges and opportunities for the next 20 years. The public engagement phase of the OCP update is now underway with an Open House scheduled for February 18 from 12 noon to 8 pm at the Georga Ryga Arts and Cultural Centre. Residents can also complete a Community Visioning Survey available on the summerland.ca website or paper copies are available at Municipal Hall.

Councillor Barkwill and I attended the regular board meetings of the Regional District of the Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) on February 6 and January 23. Under the Local Government Act, regional districts must monitor and report out each year on the progress they're making on the objectives set out in their regional growth strategy. On Feb 6, the Board received the annual report showing the 2023 data for 16 performance indicators used to track progress in the RDOS growth strategy. The report showed, for example, that housing starts throughout the South Okanagan were down by 7% in 2023 compared to 2022, and of those new builds only 36% were single family dwellings compared to an historic average of 67%. One of the goals in the regional growth strategy is to support an accessible multi-modal transportation network and the performance indicator for that is the number of bus passengers in the region. The rural Okanagan transit routes saw ridership increase by 5.2% during 2023, Penticton increased by 17%, Osoyoos had an expansion of its local service and saw a 38.4% increase, while the Summerland Route 30 bus had a 45.6% increase in ridership. And, incidentally, Route 30 ridership increased another 12.8% in 2024. Since the introduction of our free fare program, ridership on Route 30 has almost doubled since pre-pandemic levels.

At the January 23 RDOS meeting, the Okanagan-Similkameen Hospital District board, which is the same as the RDOS board, authorized a contribution of 30% of Interior Health's 2025 capital project costs rather than the 40% that the Health Authority had requested. A letter will be written to the Ministry of Health asking for the government to make up any resulting shortfall. This year's requisition will total \$8 million, about \$1 million more than last year. That represents a 14.75% increase and will mean that the average residential property in the South Okanagan will pay an additional \$14 (up from \$124 to \$138) for hospital projects.

On January 29, Peachland Mayor Patrick Van Minsel and I met with six Opposition MLA's to discuss challenges with the Highway 97 corridor and the need for a year-round secondary road between Summerland and Peachland. In attendance were Harman Bhangu, the Shadow Minister of Transportation, Misty Van Popta, the Shadow Minister of Infrastructure, and four Okanagan MLAs: Amelia Boulton, Macklin McCall, Kristina Loewen, and Tara Armstrong.

Finally, on January 28, Councillors Barkwill, Patan, and Peake joined me at the Summerland Legion for a ceremony hosted by Member of Parliament Dan Albas to present the King Charles III Coronation Medal to three Summerland residents. John Dorn, Cathie Lauer, and Susan McIver were recognized for their outstanding contributions to the community and country. Each recipient has helped to develop non-profit organizations that provide vital services to vulnerable members of society.

- Mayor Doug Holmes