

Mayor's Report – March 25, 2025

Congratulations to the community of Okanagan Falls who voted in favour of incorporation in a referendum held on Saturday. With the referendum complete, the process shifts from the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) to the Province, who will organize an election for mayor and council later this year.

Okanagan Falls will incorporate as a district municipality, which means that Summerland will no longer be the only district municipality in the South Okanagan.

Councillor Barkwill and I attended the regular RDOS board meeting on March 20 where Lisa Scott from the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS) provided a summary of the group's 2024 activities throughout the region. The group treated 29 different species of invasive plants with Himalayan balsam and puncturevine being two of the higher priorities. Ms Scott said it was probably too late to completely eradicate puncturevine from the Oliver and Osoyoos areas but she was hopeful eradication was still possible in Summerland.

The RDOS board also received an update on the Regional District's plans to install water meters to all properties where it supplies water, and discussed the rationale for installing pit meters at or near the property line of each property as opposed to meters inside homes. The RDOS provides water to 3,500 properties, from the Sun Valley system with fewer than 30 connections to Okanagan Falls system with more than 1,400 connections. Currently, the West Bench system, which includes 384 homes, is the only one that's fully metered.

On March 11, 117 mayors and regional district chairs from around the province joined a zoom call with Premier David Eby, Municipal Affairs Minister Ravi Kahlon, and Minister of State Brittney Anderson to share insights on the impacts of both the U.S. tariffs and Canadian counter tariffs on our communities.

The ministers spoke of the need to continue investment in public infrastructure as that is the best way to sustain growth and emerge with stronger local economies. They also spoke of aligning procurement policies across all orders of governments, however neither the provincial or federal governments have yet made changes to their purchasing practices nor have they issued any directives to local government. The District of Summerland is therefore currently holding the line on its existing policies and trade agreement obligations while making every effort to buy Canadian where possible.

We do purchase some goods that are made in the United States – water and sewer pipes are big ones. But these are typically procured through local suppliers, and these companies support other local businesses. In fact, shopping local and buying Canadian is something we can all be doing to help right now.

The tariff situation has been chaotic to say the least – it seems to change daily, sometimes hourly. However, our procurement staff is closely monitoring developments and actively sharing knowledge and discussing approaches with other local governments in the BC Interior so that we may coordinate measures and act together when and if necessary.

- Mayor Doug Holmes