

Mayor's Report – November 26, 2024

Since we last met, Councillor Barkwill and I attended two regular board meetings of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS). On November 7, the Board reconfirmed Area 'A' Director Mark Pendergraft as its chair and elected Penticton councillor Campbell Watt as vice-chair. It was also agreed to hold an assent vote on April 12, 2025 asking residents of the Vintage Views subdivision in Heritage Hills to approve the Regional District taking over operations of their wastewater and water systems from a private operator, and to borrow \$7m to upgrade the wastewater system and \$13.5m to upgrade the water system. The wastewater system is under a provincial Pollution Prevention Order (PPO) due to ongoing non-compliance with infrastructure repairs, sampling and reporting.

On November 21, the Board received an organizational efficiency review that looked into the RDOS's departmental structures, reporting relationships, inter-departmental cooperation, workload management, corporate culture, use of resources and staffing levels. Recommendations were provided for both the CAO and the Board, with recommended increases to staffing levels to be considered as part of the budget process.

The Board also received the results of the 2024 regional survey that was conducted online between September 10 and October 4. Responses were received from 327 residents from around the region, including 14 from Summerland. Health care, homelessness, water quality, and taxation were identified as the most important issues facing local government.

Back on November 6, I attended a meeting on making Summerland a more dementia friendly community. The meeting was organized by the DB Foundation for Health Research and attended by several residents living with dementia as well as representatives from a range of community organizations, including the District's recreation depart, social services agencies, Penticton Indian Band, Interior Health, Alzheimers Society, medical professionals, business community, and faith-based groups. There was interest to host a so-called Memory Café here in Summerland to act as a catalyst for reducing stigma and isolation, and for determining what needs could be met through policy changes. Memory Cafes have been held successfully in other communities throughout the region with the support of an RDOS grant-in-aid.

On November 11, I had the honour of attending the Legion's Remembrance Day dinner following the public ceremony at Memorial Park. Many thanks to the Royal Canadian Legion Summerland Branch for continuing to organize such a moving and solemn Remembrance Day ceremony. Once again the community came out in numbers to hear the rolls of honour of fallen Summerland soldiers and to pay their respects. It was noted that this year's ceremony could be the last for the cenotaph in its current form and location as it's scheduled to be updated with an additional 31 names and relocated to a more prominent position as part of the Wharton Street and Memorial Park revitalization project.

On November 15 in Penticton, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to protect water (siwłk^w) was signed by Syilx chiefs and Okanagan mayors and regional district chairs. While I was unable to attend the signing ceremony, I have signed the document on behalf of Council and participated in the drafting of the Agreement through the Collaborative Leadership process over the past 18 months. It's my understanding that the Collaborative Leadership tables will continue as it has shown to be a positive forum for elected Syilx and local government leaders to come together to build trust and discuss issues of common concern that transcend jurisdictional boundaries.

Finally, just a reminder – although I don't think anyone needs one – that Light Up is this Friday. The 'Festival of Lights' goes from 5:00PM to 9:00PM in beautiful downtown Summerland. Light Up the Arts starts today and runs until Christmas, and Light Up the Vines is on this weekend and next. The District of Summerland is pleased to support Destination Summerland/ Chamber of Commerce and its partners to put on this marquee event for the community.

- Mayor Doug Holmes