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Media Release

For Immediate Release

DATE: February 13, 2024

Federal Government turns down \$25m grant for Recreation Centre

SUMMERLAND [February 13, 2024] – The District of Summerland has received notification that its grant application to the federal Green and Inclusive Community Buildings (GICB) Program for \$25 million towards the construction of a net-zero carbon recreation centre was not successful.

The District submitted its request to Infrastructure Canada by the application deadline of February 28, 2023 but wanted to ensure construction could begin as soon as possible given escalating building costs. Council therefore decided to proceed with a referendum on November 4, 2023 with the expectation that a decision on the grant application would be announced in time to provide voters certainty about the cost of the project.

“It’s disappointing we had to wait a year before finding out about the grant,” said Mayor Doug Holmes. “The government imposes tight deadlines on municipalities to submit grant applications yet has no schedule for itself to review and approve those applications.”

Noting the impact of lengthy approval processes on municipalities’ ability to plan projects with certainty and financial accuracy, Summerland Council will be bringing forward a resolution to this year’s Southern Interior Local Government (SILGA) annual convention calling on the federal and provincial governments to establish and adhere to processing timelines and decision dates for their application-based grant programs.

Council has also agreed to put forward a SILGA resolution calling on the provincial government to amend the municipal assent voting process to allow for different options on a ballot beyond a single ‘yes’ or ‘no’ question.

Without clarity from senior governments on funding support, the recreation centre referendum question had to ask voters if they supported borrowing up to \$50 million, the full cost of the recreation centre project. About 58% of the votes cast were opposed to local taxpayers having to foot the whole bill.

With the results of the GICB grant now known, Council will explore options for extending the life of the existing 47-year-old Summerland Aquatic & Fitness Centre. Funding has been approved to repair a section of the facility’s roof and other basic maintenance and repairs while larger time-sensitive upgrades will be considered as part of Council’s 2025-2029 budget deliberations.

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