

## Mayor's Minute - March 12, 2020

On Monday morning I attended an announcement by MLA Ravi Kahlon, Parliamentary Secretary for Forest, Lands and Natural Resources Operations and Rural Development (FLINRORD). MLA Kahlon announced that almost \$8.7 million is available province-wide through the Community Resiliency Investment Program (CRIP). Eighty-nine local governments and First Nations in B.C. are receiving the grant funding for community wildfire protection, including \$140,000 to the Regional District Okanagan Similkameen (RDOS) and \$150,000 to the Penticton Indian Band (PIB).

Initially, the Community Resiliency Investment Program required grant applicants to put forward a percentage of funds, but the program is now funded 100% through the provincial government.

You may have noticed that this grant funding announcement did not include the District of Summerland. However, the grants allocated to both the RDOS and the PIB indirectly provide benefits to Summerland.

While Summerland sits on the unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan People that they share with us, a portion of Penticton Indian Band Reserve lands border the District of Summerland. As Chief Chad Eneas stated at the announcement, "Fuel management supports us to protect the cultural and heritage value of our forests, as well as ensure they can contribute to a sustainable economy for many generations." Wildland fires know no boundaries: The work the PIB undertakes will also protect the outer reaches of the District of Summerland.

The same applies to the upcoming work of the RDOS, although the activities for which they have received funding include education, development, cross-training and FireSmart activities for private land. The District of Summerland is part of the RDOS and, more specifically, Area F—which includes Faulder and Meadow Valley west of Summerland—have been impacted by wildland fire in the last three years.

The District of Summerland has not been left out of CRIP funding. In the fall of 2019, our Fire Department applied for and received a \$100,000 grant from the program. This funding was allocated for fuel mitigation (in the Deer Ridge subdivision located in an interface area); an update of our 2011 Community Wildfire Protection Plan; and working with three Summerland neighbourhoods to reach FireSmart Community status, a certification program of FireSmart Canada.

One other use of the funding was a community FireSmart Wildfire Preparedness session, held last Thursday, March 5, at Centre Stage. The session was well-attended with a robust Q&A session following presentations by host Frontline Operations Group, Summerland Fire Chief Glenn Noble, local ecologist Don Gayton, fire scientist Dr. Kerry Anderson and Brandy Mazlowski, a consultant working with Frontline Operations.

The presentations included the history of fire management and fire ecology. Traditional fuel management "supports us to protect the cultural and heritage value of our forests," said Chief Eneas at Monday's announcement, "as well as ensures they (forests) can contribute to a sustainable economy for many generations." This is in stark contrast to the fire suppression or fire exclusion policies of recent practise although these policies are now being adapted to the current reality of unprecedented wildland fires.

Fire behaviour, the fuel management work recently completed by the Summerland Fire Department, and how to FireSmart your property was also presented at the Preparedness event. One Summerland neighbourhood has received FireSmart certification and two more have been selected—all three neighbourhoods are in interface areas, that is, residences and private properties border or are within a forested area.

Session participants received the *FireSmart Begins at Home Manual* which provides information on how to reduce the potential impacts of a wildland fire on private property. The manual includes a FireSmart Assessment to help homeowners determine the level of risk from wildland fires as well as a Last-Minute

Checklist on protecting your home and property should you be evacuated. We also received a copy of the *FireSmart Guide to Landscaping* that outlines the three FireSmart Priority Zones and how to choose appropriate plants (low water requirements and fire resistant) and surface covers (inorganic mulches, for the most part).

I feel it is important to state that community preparedness for wildland fire (or any potential emergency) requires community participation. Both the education and the FireSmart components of the Community Resiliency Investment Program funding granted to the RDOS and (earlier) the District of Summerland funding are geared to assisting with that participation. I encourage you to participate in an education session when the opportunity arises.