

Mayor's Minute - July 25, 2019

“In this world, nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes.” — Benjamin Franklin

Summerland residents can breathe a sigh of relief that the 2019 tax season is over: they have claimed the suitable Homeowner's Grant (if eligible) and submitted their payment. Summerlanders can be assured that services will continue for another year; that infrastructure will be maintained, repaired, and/or replaced; and that public facilities and amenities will continue to be operated safely.

But what does this mean? Where do our tax dollars go?

Here is a short list to give you an idea of how the District of Summerland puts your tax dollars to work for you. Starred items (*) are related to Summerland's share of regional district services.

- Okanagan Regional Library, Summerland branch
- Debt financing, both municipal and Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS)*
- Regional transit, including the new route to Kelowna beginning in September*
- 911 emergency service (improvements only)*
- Emergency management, including the Emergency Operations Centre*
- Penticton Regional Hospital, including the David E. Kampe Tower*
- Schools
- South Okanagan Conservation Plan*
- Mosquito control*
- Heritage*
- Illegal dumping*
- Invasive species*
- Regional economic development (Okanagan Film Commission)*
- Regional Growth Strategy*
- Solid Waste Management Plan*
- Okanagan Basin Water Board*
- Regional trails (KVR Trail, for example)*
- RCMP (Summerland detachment and special investigation)
- Summerland Fire Department
- Recreational facilities, including the Aquatic Centre, Arena and Skatepark
- Trails, including Giant's Head, Conkle Mountain, Centennial and others
- Parks, sports fields, and beaches
- Summerland Campground and Rodeo Grounds
- Roads (not including Highway 97)

- Summerland Museum and Summerland Arts and Cultural Centre
- Summerland Chamber of Commerce
- Festival of Lights
- Grants to non-profit groups such as the Summerland Food Bank and Resources, Ryga Arts Festival, Summerland Fall Fair, and others
- Fleet vehicles and equipment, including fire trucks
- Capital projects: plans and designs; upgrades, repairs and maintenance; replacement and new
- Signage
- Downtown Beautification including banners and hanging baskets
- Landscaping and maintenance
- Garbage and recycling collection and landfill management
- Cemetery services
- Operation of municipal hall

The salaries and wages for District staff (operations) and the stipend for the Council (governance) are also funded through taxpayer dollars. Expenditures, including wages, that are related to utilities (water, sewer and electrical) are funded by monthly utility charges.

The front counter finance staff who receive your property tax payment collects it on behalf of the District of Summerland, the RDOS, and others. Timely payment of property taxes, including claiming the Homeowners Grant, is every property owners' responsibility. If you are late making your payment and facing a penalty, take ownership for your decision. Be civil to District staff.

It is easy to grumble about paying taxes—I've done it too—but if those who benefit from the services don't pay for them ... who should?