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Media Release

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Red Tape Reductions and Process Improvement Changes for Development Industry

SUMMERLAND – Summerland Council is reducing red tape, lowering costs, and making process improvements to support the development industry’s efforts to address housing supply.

On March 13, Council adopted bylaw changes that authorize staff to approve minor development variance applications, reducing the time to approve variances from up to two months to as little as one or two weeks.

As an example of a previous simple variance that required a Council report generated by staff, and Council deliberation and decision (a two-month process), was the approval of the replacement of drive thru signage for Tim Hortons, in its current location. Now this type of variance can be easily reviewed by staff internally, and if no concerns, issued within a one-to-two-week period.

Along with the delegation of variance permits to staff, Council has adopted fee changes to reduce the application fee for simple, minor variances. The reduced application fee ranges from \$250 - \$500, depending on the scale of variance, from the current \$750 variance application fee.

These changes follows the recommendations of the Province of B.C.’s [Development Approvals Process Review](#) to reduce development approval timelines to help address the provincial housing crises.

Council also adopted bylaw changes to remove the requirement to install a new meter and electrical service for secondary suites and carriage homes. Developers and homeowners will now have a choice to have their secondary dwelling connected to the same meter as the main dwelling or to have separate meters for each dwelling.

This will save approximately \$2,500 in installation costs for a carriage house or secondary suite. The change aims to encourage existing homeowners to create new attainable housing units in existing low density residential and agricultural areas of Summerland.

“The Municipal approvals process has a major impact on the construction of new housing. By achieving efficiencies and streamlining processes, we can not only provide better customer service, but we can accelerate the construction of new homes which the community so badly needs,” says Summerland Mayor Doug Holmes.

“We know that we need to build more homes for people even faster,” said Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing. “It’s great to see Summerland taking this initiative and responding to the Development Process Approval Review. We will keep working with all our local government partners to deliver the housing that people need across B.C.”

These recent changes build upon the momentum of other efforts over the past year to improve development processes and services to builders, developers, and homeowners.

A new [Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw](#) provides modernized design standards, and a new [building bylaw](#) creates timeline targets for staff review of building projects, with applicants receiving a 20% discount on their application fee if those targets are not achieved.

Finally, with grant funding from [UBCM Local Government Development Approvals program](#), the District of Summerland is implementing an innovative software platform that will allow for the online submission of development applications and improve process efficiency, records management and application tracking – from application to permit issuance. This new software is in the early stages of implementation and is expected to go live to the public in the Spring of 2024.

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