

BC municipalities support Summerland with resolution on gravel pit approvals

Delegates to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) annual convention, held Sept 22 – 26 in Victoria, have endorsed a resolution put forward by the District of Summerland calling on the provincial government to work with local governments when applications to approve new gravel pits do not conform to municipal zoning.

The provincial government's own Aggregate Management Principles state that the Ministry of Mining should work with local governments to reduce conflicts when aggregate activities are proposed in urban and populated rural areas. However, consideration of the principles is at the discretion of the Ministry's statutory decision maker and there is no requirement to follow them.

Summerland Council put forward the UBCM resolution in response to the government's approval last year of a gravel pit in an environmentally sensitive area of Garnet Valley within Summerland's municipal boundaries despite widespread opposition. Concerns include threats to the habitat of rare wildlife species, risk of landslides, riparian impacts, cultural importance to First Nations, importance of Garnet Valley as a recreational and tourist destination, safety for hikers and cyclists, and impact to municipal infrastructure.

The property has forest grazing zoning, which is designed to restrict development to preserve the forest environment.

The Ministry of Water, Land & Resource Stewardship (WLRS) also recommended against approval of the pit due to the potential for long-term negative impacts to ecosystems and species at risk, including a high value mule deer winter range that was established through government regulation.

At the UBCM convention, Summerland Mayor Doug Holmes, Deputy Mayor Erin Trainer, Councillor Richard Barkwill, Councillor Adrienne Betts and Councillor Janet Peake met with both Mining Minister Jagrup Brar and WLRS Minister Randene Neill to reiterate community concerns and to question how the government intends to deal with the expected environmental impacts.

Government staff were asked to review the matter and report back, which is typical for issues raised through UBCM resolutions and minister's meetings. The process can take several months however, in this instance, Council is hoping action will be taken sooner.

The UBCM convention brings together close to 2,000 local elected officials from 161 municipalities and 27 regional governments. Convention resolutions provide an opportunity for them to share concerns and take a united position.

QUOTE:

“When the provincial government overrides local zoning and approves gravel pits in areas not designated for such purposes, it shouldn’t be a surprise there will be conflicts. We are really just asking them to follow their own principles.”

~ Mayor Doug Holmes

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2 Photos enclosed:

PHOTO 1 (left to right): Penticton-Summerland MLA Amelia Boulton, Deputy Mayor Erin Trainer, Councillor Adrienne Betts, Mayor Doug Holmes, WLRS Minister Randene Neill, Councillor Richard Barkwill, Councillor Janet Peake.



PHOTO 2 (left to right); Sitting: Deputy Mayor Erin Trainer, Mayor Doug Holmes, Councillor Richard Barkwill, Councillor Adrienne Betts. Standing: Penticton-Summerland MLA Amelia Boulton, Councillor Janet Peake, Mining Minister Jagrup Brar.

