

Mayor's Report – April 15, 2025

Earlier this afternoon (April 15), all of Council assisted Fire Chief Robinson and his crew to push our new fire engine into the fire hall. This is a tradition that began in the 19th century when firefighters had to push horse-drawn pumps into the firehouse. Today it continues as a symbolic ceremony to welcome the delivery of new fire trucks.

Our new truck, Engine 232, replaces the old Engine 232, which had served us faithfully for over 34 years but had lost much of its pumping capacity to the point where it no longer met the necessary Fire Underwriter's rating which directly affects the community's insurance rates. The new engine isn't just a replacement, it's an upgrade that is designed to not only handle structure fires but also wildland interface fires, which are becoming a growing challenge for us.

Yesterday, on April 14, I organized and participated in a Zoom meeting between Agriculture Minister Lana Popham and the mayors of 13 municipalities that have a large amount of their land within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). The meeting was a follow-up to the meeting of mayors and councillors that we organized last year during the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) convention in Vancouver. Included on yesterday's call were the mayors of: Chilliwack, Delta, Kent, Lake Country, Lillooet, Merritt, North Cowichan, Oliver, Osoyoos, Pitt Meadows, Prince George, Summerland, and Vanderhoof.

The mayors spoke of how their communities see themselves as partners in protecting farmland and ensuring food security in BC, however, as incorporated municipalities, we face some significant growth and other pressures on our farmland and we need better recognition and support from the Provincial Government to ensure food is being produced on farmland. It was noted that our ability to adequately provide infrastructure to agricultural land within our municipal boundaries is dependant on taxation from other ratepayers, that the burden of enforcing ALC regulations and rulings is too often downloaded to local government, that there is too much ALR land not in production, and that the price of farmland has become too expensive for a new generation of farmers.

The Minister was receptive to most of our concerns and she asked to meet with us as a group again, and agreed to attend a get-together at this year's UBCM if we organized one.

On Friday April 11, I had the honour of presenting the annual snow angel award to Arjin Curry, who is a Summerland youth. When I presented him with his award, Arjin told me how he would shovel his neighbour's driveway at times when they were out so that they wouldn't know he was the one doing it. But one day the neighbours came home while he was shovelling and caught him in the act, and in turn they nominated him for the snow angel award.

On April 3, Councillor Barkwill and I attended the regular board meeting of the Regional District of South Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) where we discussed the need for a regional Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability Analysis (HRVA) to identify potential hazards in the area, including those resulting from extreme weather events due to climate change. The work will be undertaken in partnership with the RDOS's member municipalities, including Summerland, and the four Sylix band councils, and is entirely grant funded by the Province. Last year, the District of Summerland completed an updated HRVA specifically for Summerland.

On April 2, Councillors Barkwill, Peake and I attended a full-day agricultural tour organized by the Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project, which is a partnership of the BC Fruit Growers' Association, BC Cherry Association, BC Grapegrowers' Association, BC Wine Grape Council, and Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program. The tour brought together farmers and elected officials from local governments throughout the Okanagan to talk about various issues and to help build relations with the farming community. We toured an orchard in Summerland and a vineyard/winery on the Naramata Bench and were given demonstrations from the Sterile Insect Release program and the Starling Control program.

- Mayor Doug Holmes