

## Mayor's Report – July 23, 2024

On July 5, Councillor Van Alphen and I attended the regular board meeting of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) where directors supported a review of the Elected Officials Code of Conduct that was adopted in 2023 by the RDOS, Village of Keremeos, Town of Osoyoos, Town of Princeton, and City of Penticton. (Summerland and Oliver opted to keep the codes we already had in place.) In the past year, the RDOS has spent approximately \$12,000 in legal fees dealing with Code of Conduct complaints, including reimbursement of board members for their costs to respond to complaints. A working group of the region's corporate officers will conduct the review and bring forward proposed amendments as deemed necessary.

The Regional District is also streamlining its corporate structure with four departments headed by a Managing Director to replace 10 departments each headed by a manager. Besides achieving efficiencies, this new structure is meant to help break down departmental silos and enable greater collaboration.

The Board also agreed to apply to the Civil Forfeiture Office for funding to go towards victim services and an RCMP 'bait car'. Under the provincial Civil Forfeiture Act, half the monies that have been forfeited are to be used for crime prevention and remediation, and organizations can apply for one-time funding for various projects.

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July 11 was the official opening of the rebuilt pier and I have to say it was the best attended ribbon cutting event I've ever seen. All members of Council were present as well as MLA Dan Ashton, PIB Councillor Dolly Kruger, members of Summerland Rotary, and other dignitaries. The best part was all the kids patiently listening to the speeches and as soon as I snipped the ribbon and declared the pier open, they sprinted past us all to the end of the pier and jumped into the lake. Many people thought it was staged but in fact it was completely spontaneous. Seeing the kids' enthusiasm and all their smiles make you realize why it was worth rebuilding the pier for the next generation, and why its replacement was a priority for Council.

The pier replacement is part of a larger vision to revitalize the Summerland waterfront. Another part is year-round public washrooms at Peach Orchard Beach Park, which we officially opened along with the pier. Thank you to Deputy Mayor Trainer for handling those proceedings, which included members of the Summerland Community Arts Council and the artist, Larry Hunter, who expanded the existing mural to the new section of the building, maintaining the look of the original artwork of the late Angela Hook.

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On the same evening of July 11, Councillors Peake, Barkwill and I were at the Summerland Community Garden at the Alliance Church for the Chamber of Commerce's "Off the Clock" event, which is the new name for Business After Business. It was impressive to see the Community Garden in full bloom and how the number of plots has increased in such a short time. The Garden provides an important service to the community, not only for the produce grown for the Food Bank but also for making plots available to members of the community who otherwise might not have an opportunity to grow their own food (and pull weeds!).

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On July 13, Councillors Patan, Barkwill, Peake and I joined our local firefighters at the fire hall to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Summerland Fire Department. It was another well attended family event and included the RCMP, BC Ambulance Service, Emergency Support Services, the Animal Lifeline Emergency Response Team (ALERT), FireSmart, and – last but not least – the mascots Sparky and Ember. It is a mayor’s duty to not only cut ribbons but also to cut cakes, and it was an honour to join Fire Chief Robinson to cut the fire department’s birthday cake, which we did using a fire axe!

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Last Thursday, July 18, I attended a BC mayors Zoom call hosted by Bowinn Ma, the provincial minister for emergency management, for an update on the wildfire and drought situation in BC.

With the hot, dry weather continuing, the wildfire risk is currently high or extreme in most of the province. The numbers are changing all the time but as of this moment, there have been 908\* wildfires in B.C. so far this year, about half of them just in the past week. Of those 908, more than 300 were human caused. A province-wide campfire ban is now in effect and here in Summerland, we have closed Giant’s Head Mountain Park Road to vehicle traffic to reduce the risk of fire.

The Summerland Fire Department was called out to several human-caused brush fires in the past week, including a couple to assist BC Wildfire Service on fires towards Peachland. One fire closed Highway 97 and, with work continuing at the landslide, it brought home how we in the Okanagan are dependant on Highway 97 as the only way in and out.

I mentioned this to Minister Ma on the Zoom call and reminded her of the letter signed by all Okanagan mayors last fall calling on the need for an alternate route through the valley. She agreed an all-of-government approach was needed (as opposed to just talking to the Ministry of Transportation), and that we should take it up at UBCM.

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Finally, speaking of the slide, it seems our lobbying efforts have paid off and the Ministry of Transportation has re-established four-lane traffic on Highway 97 south of the slide, from Callan Road to Summerland, for the summertime. Although it will likely revert back to two lanes (one in each direction) later in the year, the reprieve should help with some of the congestion and frustrations during the busy tourist season.

Mayor Doug Holmes

*\* By the end of the day’s meeting, 66 more wildfires had started in B.C., bringing the total for this year so far to 973.*