

Mayor's Report – December 2, 2025

Congratulations to Destination Summerland for another successful Festival of Lights last Friday. All of Council joined me on stage for the Countdown to switch on the Christmas lights, while not exactly at 7 o'clock but close enough! Light Up is the result of many hours' work by Destination Summerland and District of Summerland staff. They do a great job planning, setting up, operating and cleaning up afterwards, and it demonstrates how by working together we can pull off one of the Okanagan's top attractions year after year. Thank you to everyone who contributed to make the event a success, including the sponsors, performers, vendors, downtown businesses, community groups like the Museum and Arts Council. And to our local wineries who put on Light Up the Vines, which continues this weekend.

On November 27, I opened the second day of the Building Resilient Communities Conference at the Penticton Trade & Convention Centre. This week-long annual conference is attended by emergency management staff from the provincial government, First Nations and local governments from around BC. It's an important forum for emergency response training and for creating a network of support and shared knowledge.

On November 24, Works Director Joe Mitchell and I met with staff from the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MTT) who provided an update on work at the landslide on Highway 97 north of Summerland. While there are once again intermittent closures as work resumes, to help traffic flow we were told as many delineators as possible are being removed from the highway and the speed limit through the work zone has been increased to 70 km/hr. The stabilization work is due to be completed in early 2027 and in the end there will be a large wall at the side of the road.

We also talked about the Highway 97 intersection review through Summerland that Council requested a few years ago. It was pushed off at the time because accurate data couldn't be collected due to the slide, but we were told it is now underway.

On November 21, the chiefs of the Syilx communities and mayors and regional district chairs throughout the Okanagan met at the Lower Similkameen Indian reserve for the fourth Collaborative Leadership Table to discuss the protection of the Okanagan watershed. With a Memorandum of Agreement and Terms of Reference agreed at earlier meetings, we focused this time on establishing two working groups: one to look at watershed and eco-system priorities and one to deal with governance issues and to provide direction for a hybrid model built on Syilx and local government principles.

On November 20, Councillor Barkwill and I attended the regular board meeting of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS), where we received updates from BC Emergency Services and the Okanagan Film Commission. There have also been two Regional District budget sessions, on November 13 and November 27. The draft budget includes a financial contribution of \$80,000 per year for three years to the United Way through the 100 More Homes initiative to develop a regional homelessness and housing strategy. The Board has also tentatively budgeted for a \$50,000 regional grant-in-aid to the Summerland Minor Baseball Association for a scoreboard at Living Memorial Park as part of the Field of Dreams initiative. The proposed budget would require a 4.5% increase to the RDOS levy paid Summerland residents. The budget now makes it way through the approval process, both at upcoming board meetings and through public consultation, and changes to the financial plan are still possible.

- Mayor Doug Holmes