

Mayor's Report – January 20, 2026

I would like to wish everyone a happy new year. As we step into 2026 and the final months of our term, we can look forward to the completion of some exciting projects, and the realization of our key Council priorities.

Most of those projects and priorities were on display at the Budget Open House on January 14, which was attended by all members of Council and District of Summerland senior management. This year, the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS), School District 67 and Okanagan Regional Library also participated in the open house, providing a complete picture of all aspects of local government operations within Summerland.

It had to be one the best attended open houses we've had, with more than 100 people in attendance. I would like to thank all members of the public who came out to learn and ask questions about how our tax dollars are being invested in the community. Following public feedback, which we continue to receive, the budget will return to Council at our next meeting on February 10 for consideration of third reading.

Progress is also being made on the Regional District budget and first reading was passed at the January 8 board meeting that was attended by Councillor Barkwill and myself.

At that meeting the Board also approved a request from the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS) to ask the provincial Ministry of Forests to list an additional ten species to the B.C. Weed Control Regulation Schedule A, including the Tree of Heaven, Siberian Elm, and Russian Olive. The Province has not updated the list of noxious weeds since 2012 but a detailed review of the regulation is currently underway. This presents an opportunity to make submissions for additions to the list, which would mean provincial funding would be available to help control them.

The RDOS board also discussed formulating an Artificial Intelligence (AI) usage policy following a one-month pilot to evaluate the usefulness of Microsoft 365 Copilot. The pilot of Copilot concluded that productivity gains could be realized using AI and the Board has asked staff to bring back a draft usage policy to its January 22 meeting.

The Board also received a summary of Freedom of Information requests received by the RDOS during 2025. In total, there were 62 formal requests to access RDOS records, which is double than previous years. Many of the requests were in respect to neighbour disputes, and there were 10 requests regarding the Sage Mesa water system.

On January 12, Deputy Mayor Trainer, CAO Statt and I attended an inter-organizational meeting for the purpose of creating a youth suicide prevention and response plan for Summerland. Meeting participants included representatives from the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Child and Youth Mental Health division of the Ministry of Health, Interior Health, RCMP, School District 67, Summerland Secondary School PAC, the Summerland Child & Youth Committee, OneSky Community Resources, and the District of Summerland. I'd like to thank the Deputy Mayor for chairing this important discussion.

Finally, this past Friday, January 16, the District hosted a 'town hall' style open house on farming that was attended by most of Council and most District of Summerland senior management, and about 50 local farmers. I shared a few opening remarks about the Food and Innovation Hub and about our proposal to the Province for an Agricultural Municipalities Initiative, and our Director of Utilities Jeremy Storvold addressed the current drought situation. But primarily the open house was an opportunity to hear directly from farmers and have an open and frank discussion on all things agricultural in Summerland.

- Mayor Doug Holmes