Mayor Doug Holmes
Inaugural address
November 3, 2026

Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of democracy and voting is one of the most important ways for citizens to advocate for their community.

So thank you to every resident of Summerland who navigated the confusion of overlapping elections to vote for both local and provincial representatives, all the while recovering from the impacts of the Bald Range wildfire.

There is no election if there are no candidates, so thank you also to everyone who put their name on the ballot for either mayor, councillor, or school board trustee. Or MLA. Summerland is a better place for your participation in the democratic process.

I'd also like to acknowledge the families and friends of all the candidates. We couldn't have hiked the campaign trail without your support.

As we embark upon a new term, I'd like to acknowledge the previous Council, and take a moment to recognize out-going councillors Marty Van Alphen and Janet Peake for their many years of service. Marty served on Council from 2011 to 2014 and again from 2018 to this year. Janet served from 2014 to 2018 and again from 2022 to this year.

Congratulations are in order to Linda Van Alphen and Manpreet Brar who were elected as Summerland's trustees on the school board.

And congratulations to each of you here who were elected or re-elected as councillor: Doug Patan, Taryn Davis, Erin Trainer, Richard Barkwill, Amie Harbor, and Adrienne Betts.

Three of us are returning for a fourth term on Council, one for a third term, and one for a second. To balance that experience, we have two first-time councillors who will bring new energy and fresh perspectives.

According to political scientists and governance experts, two-thirds incumbents and one-third rookie councillors is the ideal combination to blend stability and positive change.

So Summerland nailed it, and in fact we bucked the provincial trend where the average in this election was more than 50% turnover on councils.

We also bucked the trend by electing more women than men.

We're a diverse council with varying backgrounds, skills, accomplishments and – dare I say – ages. Together, we mirror the community we represent.

And just as our community members don't always see eye-to-eye, we on Council won't agree on every issue.

Over the next four years, we can expect some lively debate and at times there will be split votes. That's okay, that's democracy. As long as we remember to remain respectful, be open and honest with each other, and work in a spirit of co-operation.

The objective at Council meetings should not be to grandstand, score points and win the debate. Rather, it should be to shed light on an issue, learn from different viewpoints, problem-solve, reach mutual understanding, and respect the fact we don't all think alike.

The beauty of local government is that the councillor who didn't agree with you on one vote might be your biggest ally on the next.

In our non-partisan system, we are truly free to represent our constituents and vote our conscience. We don't toe a party line and our decisions don't have absolute, pre-determined 'aye' or 'nay' outcomes like in Parliament and provincial legislatures.

That can be confusing for people more accustomed to ideological and adversarial partisan chambers like the House of Commons, and we saw some of that confusion during the election, especially at the all-candidates forums.

You may have heard the adage that local government is where left and right meet. That means we focus on practical, immediate community needs rather than wallow in ideological discourse. Or, as someone once told me, there's no left or right way to fix a pothole.

Therefore, unlike other levels government, coming to the table with an open mind is a positive trait for members of a municipal council.

One of my favourite memories on Council – I think from my first term – was when Councillor Barkwill and I disagreed about something – I don't remember what – and after we both explained our reasoning we ended up changing each other's minds. He voted the way I was arguing and I voted the way he was arguing.

You would never see that in Parliament.

Local government is more nuanced. Our decisions often come with conditions and compromises, after open discussion and respectful debate. That's what non-partisan, collective decision-making is all about.

And the people of Summerland have given our Council a clear mandate to make decisions collectively and to govern in the interests of the whole community.

Expectations are high.

We have work to do and I can't wait for us to get started.

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