

Mayor's Report – March 25, 2026

This week's Council meeting is being held today, on a Wednesday, rather than the usual Tuesday because of the Sylix Water and Climate Forum that was held in Kelowna over the past two days, March 23 and 24. About 300 people attended the conference, including Sylix leaders and other First Nations from across BC, local government officials, academia, water purveyors, provincial representatives, forest industry staff, consultants, sponsors and concerned citizens. Councillors Peake and Barkwill and I were there both days to represent the District of Summerland.

Much of the discussion centred on the current drought situation, and there was one informative presentation from a water policy expert from Spain who spoke about how Spanish municipalities were required to have a drought emergency management plan and how the country had shifted from crisis management to proactive planning for water scarcity.

The forum served to advance the 250-year responsibility vision of the Collaborative Leadership Table of the region's chiefs and mayors, and build momentum in several areas of common concern, including water availability, source water protection, and salmon habitat.

From March 11 to 13, I was in Vancouver for the annual leadership forum organized by the Local Government Leadership Academy (LGLA). This year's forum was largely about governing effectively and staying focused during the final year of the council term. There was an especially good session with a mayor and several regional district chairs whose communities had been severely affected by wildfires or floods and they discussed the leadership that was required during those emergencies.

On March 5 and 19, Councillor Barkwill and I attended the regular board meetings of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS). At the meeting on the 19th, the Board received the 2024 Regional Growth Strategy "Snapshot", which is a set of indicators taken every year to monitor the Growth Strategy's progress. The Snapshot showed that housing starts throughout the South Okanagan increased by 11% over the year and the value of building permits issued have increased by 94%, but median home prices decreased by 6.8% (CPI adjusted). Other indicators included things like the average kilograms of daily landfill waste increasing 1.5% per person and the average daily water consumption decreasing by 36% per person.

At the March 5 meeting, the Board adopted the RDOS budget and five-year financial plan. Summerland residents will see a 5.31 % increase in this year's RDOS requisition, with the largest increases attributed to general government, the 9-1-1 emergency call system, regional trails, and the sterile insect release program.

- Mayor Doug Holmes