

Mayor's Report – May 5, 2026

Last week I was in Victoria for meetings with provincial government ministers and staff. I was joined by Pitt Meadows Mayor Nicole MacDonald and North Cowichan Mayor Rob Douglas for a meeting with Agriculture Minister Lana Popham and together we discussed our proposal for an Agricultural Municipality Initiative.

The minister was supportive of our efforts and recognized that agricultural municipalities with a small tax base like ours struggled to provide the infrastructure needed to service farm properties. While she could not commit to financial support at this time given the current state of provincial finances, she and her staff will continue to explore opportunities.

From our end, we will continue to work with other municipalities to move the proposal forward. Our strength in numbers at the meeting, with mayors from the Interior, Lower Mainland and the Island, demonstrated that the concern is not isolated to just one or two communities but is province-wide. Minister Popham agreed to meet with us again in September during the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) convention.

I also met with Amna Shah, the Parliamentary Secretary for Mental Health and Addictions, to update her on the work underway in Summerland to address youth mental health and to thank the government for its support for establishing a Summerland Foundry Centre.

And I met with senior Health Ministry staff, and CAO Statt joined us online, to learn more about the Community Paramedic Program and whether Summerland could benefit from it. While it seems a Community Paramedic would certainly help to address some of our community needs, we were told no new positions are currently being added as the program is under review. So we will stay tuned.

April was a busy month and before leaving for Victoria, I attended a number of key community events.

On April 25, I was joined by most of Council at the Grand Opening of Memorial Veterans Square and the celebration to mark the conclusion of the Wharton Street revitalization project. We were joined by project partners FortisBC and the Royal Canadian Legion, as well as District staff, members of the Downtown Neighborhood Action Plan Task Force, and about 50 members of the public, who came out to enjoy the cupcakes and the music being performed on the new buskers' stage.

On the same day, April 25, I joined Councillors Patan and Peake at the Kettle Valley Railway Society's Annual General Meeting where we were treated to an animated presentation from John Cowan, a retired conductor, who shared stories from his 35 years on the railway, including a stint working out of Penticton on the KVR.

On April 24, I attended Summerland Rotary's monthly lunch to give a state-of-the-community address where I focused on progress made on Council's strategic priorities as we enter the final six months of the council term.

On April 18, I was joined by Deputy Mayor Trainer and Councillors Betts and Peake at Living Memorial Park for the upgraded and renamed Field 96. Before the event, we presented Summerland Minor Baseball with a cheque for \$185,000 to match the grant they received through the Toronto Blue Jays Field of Dreams program.

At the same time, we unveiled a new sign to recognize the history of Living Memorial Park and how it was created as a living memorial to honour Summerland's war veterans.

The celebration itself included a parade with all local ball players, from U5 to U18, followed by the obligatory speeches, including one from yours truly, and then a Summerland vs. Summerland U18 game with the opening pitch thrown by Eddie Matsu.

The community demonstrated its support for the project by coming out in huge numbers, and it was all incredibly well organized by Melissa and Jeff Taylor and the Summerland Minor Baseball Association. As Deputy Mayor Trainer told me at the time, they really hit it out of the park. (Proving that even moms can tell dad jokes.)

On April 17, Councillor Barkwill and I attended a Foundry kick-off event organized by OneSky Community Resources. It was an evening of connection and conversation for both youth and caregivers as OneSky gathered community input on bringing Foundry services to Summerland in the coming months.

On April 16, Councillor Barkwill and I attended the regular board meeting of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) where delegations from the BC Fruit Growers' Association and BC Grape Growers' Association highlighted how they share many priorities with local government and offered to explore opportunities to collaborate.

Finally, way back on April 15, all of Council came out literally in the middle of a hail storm to cut the ribbon on the new Peach Orchard Beach playground. I walk along the lakeshore quite often and the playground is always busy... everyone seems to like both the treehouse and sandcastle structures, and especially the zipline.

- Mayor Doug Holmes