

Mayor's Report – April 29, 2024

Last Friday, April 25, I attended the annual general meeting of the Southern Interior Municipal Employers Association (SIMEA), along with our HR manager Marnie Manders. SIMEA acts as an agent for securing benefit plan coverage and related services for its members, which includes the City of Kelowna, City of Penticton, City of Revelstoke, District of Summerland, Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen, Town of Princeton, and recently the Town of Oliver has also joined. With revisions to the SIMEA New Member Policy, there was discussion at the AGM on the continuing focus to recruit more local governments to the group.

On Thursday, April 24, the chiefs of the syilx communities and mayors and regional district chairs throughout the Okanagan met in Vernon for the second Collaborative Leadership Table to discuss the protection of the Okanagan Lake watershed. It was agreed to draft a Memorandum of Agreement on a number of priority focus areas including water source protection, water governance, and the protection of salmon habitat. We will review a draft memorandum at our next get-together, which is scheduled for September, and if we're able to reach an agreement in principle, it will be brought back to each of our municipal and band councils and regional boards for endorsement.

Finally, Councillor Van Alphen and I attended the Regional District (RDOS) board meeting on April 18 where Archie MacDonald, a retired forester, gave a presentation on actions required to mitigate the frequency and intensity of wildfires. He said the provincial budget allocates funds for wildfire suppression and wildfire recovery, but not for wildfire mitigation. He said all the mitigation work that local governments are doing, such as FireSmart, will be for nought if the provincial government doesn't also do its part on Crown land. He said forests in the Interior today are old and unhealthy and we have to return them to the more unevenly aged and less dense forests of 100 years ago, which we can do through better forest management.

- Mayor Doug Holmes