



Mayor's Report

February, 2018



Lake Cowichan is saddened by the loss of another pioneer with the passing of former Mayor Jean Brown. Jean had a strong political will and was deeply respected in and out of the community. Jean's many years of public service, as chairman of the school board, Town Councillor, and Mayor were most appreciated. She gave a lot to make her community a better place and we certainly benefited from her strong commitment to the good of the community. Our sincere condolences to Jean's family and friends on their loss.

The Island Coastal Economic Trust is supporting three Island communities with funding to implement recently completed strategies. The "Quick Start" stream of the Economic Development Readiness Program can provide up to \$15,000 to help communities with limited resources to "jump start" new economic strategies. As the name implies, the goal of the program stream is to move plans to action, as quickly as possible. The Cowichan Lake Region is one of the three communities receiving funding with an allocation of \$10,000. This will support the development of action-focused plans to grow the region's tourism sector and amenities. The process will be led by Community Futures Cowichan in partnership with Economic Development Cowichan and other community and First Nations stakeholders.

"The region's tourism potential has grown exponentially in the past few years, thanks to the thousands of visitors who have been attracted to the newly built Laketown Ranch outdoor entertainment venue and the Pacific Marine Circle Route," explained Cathy Robertson, General Manager of Community Futures Cowichan. She stated "This increased visibility has created a unique opportunity to leverage our natural assets into new tourism amenities which will help keep these short-term visitors in the region longer, and entice them to return."

Council is very cognizant of the fact that cannabis will be legalized this coming July. As a community there will have to be much public consultation for us to get an understanding of how and if the Town is to allow the sale of cannabis and finds ways on how to regulate it if allowed as a use in Lake Cowichan.

EXCHANGE is a quarterly magazine published by the Local Government Management Association. It is about sharing information, exchanging ideas on best practices, enhancing professional development and building networks. The latest edition is The Cannabis Quandary. I will attempt to condense the valuable information distributed in this magazine so we can begin the process leading up to July. There is no doubt that with the legalization of recreational cannabis this July we are going to be inundated with concerns around this emotional topic. Our municipality is going to be extremely challenged by the impact of introducing legalized cannabis to our community. It's going to be important to stay informed about what is happening federally and provincially and The Cannabis Quandary offers some sound advice around the steps that local governments can take to be as prepared as possible for the new legislation to permit cannabis. The Planning component is essential as every community likely has distinct priorities related to how they want retail cannabis sales managed, as well as where they want to restrict its use. It will be interesting to see how the financial model is managed as there will be significant costs incurred in managing the regulatory requirements at the local level. There will be a lot of talk about how local and provincial governments will control, restrict, license, zone and manage the effects of this new legislation affecting cannabis. We will have to focus on education. What is the federal government doing? What is the province doing? What are local governments doing to inform the citizens in their communities about cannabis use through education and awareness campaigns? As local government we can help by encouraging our community members to be informed and to join the conversation to help understand the risks and be aware of responsible use of cannabis. I encourage everyone to share the link to this "talking about drugs" site hosted by Health Canada: Let's start the conversation with:

www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-abuse/talking-about-drugs/talking-with-teenagers-about-drugs.html.

Local governments will have no direct control over how the federal and provincial governments will legislate the management of cannabis sales and distribution. We must address how the impending legislation will impact our community and operation and we have a short window of opportunity to address some key areas for zoning, licensing and enforcement before legalization of cannabis becomes law. We have to make sure that when we do have legalized recreational marijuana that it's handled in a responsible manner. Discussions should start now so we can get a sense of what our community wants to see accomplished now and in the future in terms of how the cannabis industry is to be managed.

The Town and more specifically our Fire Department received congratulations from the Strategic Wildfire Prevention Working Group for their completion of the FireSmart project. Our department had a \$10,000 grant to work from and the project was completed at a cost of \$9,225.83. Projects such as this are tremendously beneficial for lowering the risks associated with wild fires. Thank you Lake Cowichan Fire Department for your continued efforts to protect our community.

Ross Forrest, Mayor