



Mayor's Report

July, 2016



We would really like to thank the Federal Government and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities for recognizing the importance of a first class water treatment facility for the Town of Lake Cowichan and the challenges we have faced in finding the capital dollars to construct a system that would meet our needs. On behalf of council, staff and most importantly our residents we truly appreciate the financial assistance you are providing us. It's been ten years since the town was mandated to provide secondary water treatment. The \$5 million Gas Tax Funded grant that was recently approved now provides us the necessary funding to proceed with this important infrastructure project. We are very appreciative of the fact that the federal government of Canada and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities which distributes this funding recognized our pressing need and the value of this project to our town. Prime Minister Trudeau said during his speech at the most recent FCM conference in Winnipeg "Infrastructure is about growing community, a dollar spent on infrastructure is a dollar spent in community". The last couple of years have been disruptive to our way of life as we have had to persevere with the ongoing boil water advisories because of high turbidity levels. These advisories will possibly continue while our new sand-filtration water system is constructed. With the total cost of this new system estimated at 6.3 million it is definitely a sigh of relief to receive such a generous amount of assistance from the federal government. While we began preparing for this important upgrade a few years back by implementing water parcel tax increases, there still remains a shortfall for our portion of the project. We will be working towards the most feasible means of financing this cost on terms that will be the most affordable to our residents. Our members of staff have done admirably work to reduce our residents cost through endless hours of preparing a good grant application and now they along with council will be working to help reduce the borrowing cost to our residents. People must be cognizant that there is a cost that must be attained to complete this vital project. As the water purveyor we are excited that we can now meet the requirements of the Island Health mandate and hence provide the necessary upgrades to our water system that will ensure the best water quality possible and thus protect the health of all of our most deserving citizens. The first timeline for this project was a call for proposals for design proposals for the Water Treatment Plant issued in July, 2016. Once the engineering project is awarded we will keep you informed of the progress of the project.

We are excited with the completed detailed drawings for the Centennial Park upgrades and to finally begin work on these long overdue improvements. On-going drainage issues on the existing field have prevented ball games from being played for the first few months of many ball schedules. This inconvenience has prevented minor ball from registering teams for older players and has also forced slow-pitch teams to travel to other fields in order to play. They have been tremendously understanding for the last few years now as we have tried to convince them that we are seriously trying to achieve a long term fix. We explained that we didn't want to keep sinking money into minor fixes when it would take major capital dollars for the long term project that would provide the ball fields they could be proud to play on again. The \$500,000 grant we have received approval for from the Federal Government last year was the stimulus that has allowed us to begin this project this year. The detailed designs are nearing complete and the project is to be tendered so construction work can begin. While the design which included the two ball diamonds and soccer field, that were always intended for this project, it does result the community garden having to be relocated just so the ball diamonds can fit into the footprint of the land available. In 2014 when the town approved the use of land that the community gardens presently occupies, it was conveyed and understood that if and when the town receives a grant for the new recreation fields, the possibility of the garden having to move certainly was known. Other location options were provided at the time. Unfortunately for the community garden that possibility has become a reality. In order to accommodate two ball fields into the footprint of the available land, the community garden will have to be relocated so we may proceed with the intended and approved design for Centennial Park. I must stress that council has always recognized and appreciated the value of our community garden. While we regret the inconvenience to a group of avid community gardeners, we hope we can work together to satisfy their needs at another location. Jeopardizing the new ball fields is not an option as they have always been the priority and intended use for the Centennial Park location - if we are to adhere to the terms of the grant. Past councils have been attempting to achieve this result for over a decade and now that opportunity is coming to fruition. Provisions for a community gardens was never included in any of the plans provided by any of the consultants working on plans for the Centennial Park upgrades. This includes the original conception design done by Lanarc Consultants in 2008, as well as the Lees and Associates final detailed designs, to be completed in 2016. We will explore all our options to work towards a positive outcome for this endeavour.

The many, many hours dedicated by over a hundred volunteers to ensure our Sunfest visitors have a memorable experience speaks volumes to the great citizens of our community. From the moment the Laketown Ranch property was re-zoned, plans began to ensure the uptick in people visiting our community are made to feel welcome. Our Chamber of Commerce and the newly formed Lake Economic & Activity Development committee have done a tremendous job to organize a festival weekend to coincide with the Sunfest event. Laketown Ranch has been developed into a one of a kind facility that will be enticing people of all demographics to our community for now and well into the future. It is awesome that so many volunteers here in town, (Sunfest welcoming committee) and let me also mention the Youbou volunteers (West of Sunfest), are taking the initiative to ensure that all our guests have a positive experience. Our businesses have been preparing for the positive impact of possibly thousands of people coming into our community and the L.E.A.D. welcoming committee have worked tirelessly with their volunteers to spread events throughout town. Events will be happening at Saywell Park (kids games, activities & vendors), Ts'uubaa-asatx Square (live music, market vendors) and Central Park (live music, beer gardens, & vendors). For over six months the LEAD group pretty much has had weekly meetings to organize and prepare for this long weekend. They have outstanding bands lined up to play Friday, Saturday & Sunday from 10:00 am - 4:00 pm at our two stages to provide a great atmosphere for our locals and guests at no charge. Here is an opportunity to really get into the spirit of a memorable musical experience. The Sunfest Welcoming Committee has over a hundred volunteers who will be strategically located throughout town to help provide helpful information and lend assistance where required. Shuttle busses will be available to lessen the impact on our limited parking but we know there will still be some minor inconveniences. Centennial Park will be a designated parking lot to help get more cars off the streets. Please bear with the problems that will no doubt surface. This is a new experience, hence we are not sure what to expect for numbers as they relate to people and cars. All these generous volunteers are helping to lessen the problems. We will all continue to improve over future years as we become more accustomed to what to expect and learn from this experience. Nobody involved organizing this big weekend has an expectation of perfection but they all have an expectation of making constant improvements. They are all dedicated to helping their community and I am very proud of all their contributions at being good ambassadors for our community. It is hoped that all citizens will be understanding and do their best to welcome visitors to our town as they would welcome visitors to their home.

Thank you, we can all help make this weekend a memorable one for everyone.

Ross Forrest, Mayor