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A newsletter from the
Black Mountain
Irrigation District
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Voter Responsibility

Federal, Provincial and Municipal elections have now been called. Locally, new City Councilors and Regional District Directors will be elected for a three-year term. The public will be voting for persons



to represent their interests and govern the City of Kelowna and the region. The elected officials at all levels of government will be making decisions that will shape our region and affect our future.

Precedent setting bylaws, new or changed legislation, land use changes and their legal implications, can all create irreversible results. Therefore, decisions must be made wisely with the long term consequences in mind.

It is the responsibility of society to elect intelligent, thoughtful, and effective political representatives, who understand the complexities of the issues, the impact of their decisions, and the implications for the future. There are many issues where the rights of individuals may conflict with the greater needs of the overall community. At the same time, the rights of the individual must be protected. There are many challenges facing the persons serving in public office. Electing the right people for the job is in itself challenging.

ALL-CANDIDATES FORUM on WATER ISSUES

A forum will be held on November 13, 2008 at 7:00 pm at the Ramada Inn at 2170 Harvey Avenue. The public is invited to attend. Check our website at www.bmid.ca for updates.

This newsletter provides insight into current water issues facing the Okanagan Valley. Elected officials at all levels of government must be aware of these issues and understand the weight of their decisions when water and land use is impacted. Many political decisions made can impact society for much longer timelines than a term of office. Please vote with consideration and care.

UPDATE ON REGIONAL WATER ISSUES

Water is a critical resource that is necessary for the health and well being of the region. Presently, water is supplied within the City of Kelowna by five water utilities: the Black Mountain Irrigation District, Glenmore-Ellison Improvement District, Rutland Waterworks District, South East Kelowna Irrigation District, and the City of Kelowna Water Utility. The four Improvement Districts supply 70% of the total annual volume of water that is supplied within the City limits including irrigation water to the majority of the large agricultural parcels, and domestic water to 50,000 citizens.

While the majority of legislation governing water lies with the Provincial Government, there are many issues that the Improvement Districts and the Local Municipal Authority (City of Kelowna) must face together to meet the needs of all residents of the City of Kelowna. Water issues affect every person within the City limits include health of the citizens, health of the environment, water supply security and reliability, governance, and funding that affects water rates throughout the region. Although persons may live and pay for water in one utility, they might work in another, and recreate in yet another. For this reason, water issues in one District can affect the entire City. Decisions made by the Province affect all residents of BC.

The four Water Districts provide an important local service to the customers. Recent customer surveys have shown a high overall level of satisfaction and a desire to maintain current governance structures for these utilities. The surveys have also shown there is a desire to improve water quality, but not with the result of excessive water rate increases. "Water" related issues are important when considering the long term interests of a community. Although water forms only one issue, it is an important one that deserves our attention.



1. There are two key water document that should provide direction for the region. The Provincial "*Living Water Smart*" document was recently released. It provides direction for wise water management and water use in BC. It can be downloaded from the web at the following address. <http://www.livingwatersmart.ca/>
2. The Okanagan Water Stewardship Council, which is the expert panel advising the Okanagan Basin Water Board, has been working hard over the last three years on a "*Sustainable Water Strategy*" for the Okanagan. This strategic policy document will be released at the Canadian Water Resources conference in Kelowna on October 21-23, 2008.

Resource based activities, mountain pine beetle, wildfires, forest management, agriculture, geothermal resource activities, urban land use decisions, and development all affect water. How we manage our riparian areas, protect them, and restore them, is critical to long term water sustainability. Capital spending on source protection and water treatment are both necessary for the provision of safe water to the public. As funding is limited, expenditures must be weighed with health benefits. Water is interrelated with many issues of our community. The provincial, regional and local water issues are presented on the second page of this newsletter.

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Key issues facing our region related to water are presented on this page:

- Pollution Control:** Pollution control is a primary principle of the *Sustainable Water Strategy*. Water has an enormous potential to transfer pollution through the environment. Intensive runoff from severe storms or slow trickling erosion both have an enormous power to pollute. The best way to minimize this pollution mechanism is to control and contain pollution at its source. Protection of Okanagan Lake from contaminants that may enter via a number of different conveyance paths is vital to the health of the streams and the valley lakes. Effective controls and enforcement are necessary to ensure that the creeks, aquifers and the lake are protected;
- Water Quality and Riparian Corridors:** The City is an active proponent for channel widening and habitat restoration on lower Mission Creek. There has also been substantial work along Kelowna Creek and Brandt's Creek. The natural treatment processes resulting from these restoration activities are desired and responsible, but need to be done in conjunction with upstream works in those catchment areas. Land use is directly tied to these issues as the City and Regional District have the ability to control land use for areas that are within their jurisdiction;
- Land Use Impacts:** Land use impacts both water quality and quantity. Hard surfaces from our paved parking lots and building roofs cause hotter temperatures during the summer and result in faster runoff and higher contamination conveyance to the receiving water bodies. Land use is inextricably linked to water quality and water must be considered in land use planning and implementation;
- Development:** Development impacts water both on the supply side and on the wastewater treatment discharge side. It also affects the natural water resources. A primary goal is to reduce the footprint of activities by man on the environment. By minimizing the impact of growth on the environment and on our natural resources, higher density development must be permitted. Kelowna must densify and grow upwards;
- Agricultural Support:** Presently the Okanagan Valley is in a food deficit position where significantly more food is imported into the region than what is grown locally and exported. There is insufficient agricultural land within the Okanagan Valley to reach a neutral or positive position on agricultural self-sufficiency. However, every effort should be made to maximize what is grown locally. This includes bylaws that support water for agricultural uses and home gardens. Xeriscaping is an objective, however local agriculture results in a sustainability model that is less dependant on imported foods;
- Multiple Level Agency Involvement:** A healthy relationship between our City Councilors and Regional, Provincial and Federal Governments is very important. A strong relationship results in many benefits and grants that can be directed to our region by the higher level governments. At the local level, strong involvement with the Okanagan Basin Water Board, Okanagan Water Stewardship Council and local stewardship groups will result in regional coordination, local stakeholder involvement, and real action. The completion of the Joe Rich Creek Restoration Project and the Mission Creek Water-Use Plan are successful multiple agency partnerships that are a good model to follow for the future;
- Equitable Funding to all Utilities:** The Improvement Districts believes that City Council should respect organization that are providing a high level of service to the residents. Council support of grant funding applications by Improvement Districts would help all persons in the city to receive the full benefits of Regional, Provincial and Federal grant programs. In the last 3 years, the citizens of Kelowna have received excellent benefits from the Okanagan Water Basin Board small water grants program on projects supporting water sustainability;
- Water Governance:** Having too small a utility does not allow economies of scale to benefit the public. Larger organizations are challenged with large service areas, and lesser opportunity to have a personal commitment to the local community. Good governance requires both regional leadership and coordination combined with local stewardship, responsibility and action;
- Climate Change:** Our climate continues to change. Contingency plans are necessary to address possible extended drought cycles. If a drought of the order of magnitude experienced in the 1930s were to reoccur, the valley lake levels would lower and the impact on transportation and water supply could be substantial. Awareness of these issues and coordinated contingency planning is necessary to reduce impacts to the region.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER DURING THE ELECTIONS

- Are the broader regional issues on water, air and transportation understood, and are they being addressed?
- Are **all** citizens being represented fairly and equitably?
- Are the platforms and policies for the term of office or do they apply for a much longer time frame?
- Is there understanding of the financial magnitude of the regional water issues so that reasonable, affordable and beneficial steps are taken in a practical manner?
- Is there a will to work with and improve relationships with other agencies so there is mutual respect, cooperation, and greater support to local community associations and stewardship groups?
- Is there concern and empathy for the persons with lower incomes that will be impacted the most from tax and toll rate increases?
- Is there distinction between which issues are real and important and must be addressed versus those issues that are dramatic and garner media attention, but have minimal benefit to the community?