



# Mayor's Report

January, 2017



The year 2017 is well underway and promises to be an exciting year as we move forward. Much needed upgrades have transpired over the past few years with many more improvements that are required which we intend to address this year. We have aging infrastructure and amenities that commonly beset all Canadian municipalities and through good fiscal management and grant opportunities we are continually addressing those deficiencies with the ultimate goal of also trying to enhance our amenities and standard of living. Council continues to recognize the need of keeping tax increases as close as possible to the cost of living increases while still trying to provide the necessary services that our citizens have come to expect. We are endorsing an increase of 3% in our 2017 municipal tax levy. We have almost concluded our meetings to finalize our 2017 budget estimates, with many capital projects being considered and approved. We're cognizant of the fact that our Town is continuing to grow at a steady pace and future needs are certainly being addressed in decisions we render regarding our capacity including our financial ability to meet those future requirements. For some of the projects we are planning, we have thought it prudent to allocate more budget dollars as grants have been approved for those very necessary projects. By undertaking these projects with approved grants, it allows us to move forward on these very necessary capital expenditures by avoiding the need for absorbing unnecessary cost increases in the future without the benefit of funding from senior grants. It makes financial sense to take advantage of grants as they become available.

The more notable planned capital improvements for this year include the following: Water treatment plant upgrades so we may meet Island Health's mandate and which is estimated to cost \$6.3 million with \$5 million grant funding approval coming from the Federal and Provincial governments; and again grants were approved for these projects:

Greendale Road water-main upgrades estimated at \$769,863 with 83% funded though grant moneys from the senior governments; Greendale Trestle water-main upgrades estimated at \$164,204 with 83% of the project to be funded by senior governments; Footbridge water-main costing \$77,550 and financed through grants of 83% of the total cost; Park Road water-main project costing \$235,052 and again to be funded at 83% of the total cost; and Wilson Ave. water-main upgrades totaling \$113,685 with 83% to be funded by the senior governments. The Centennial Park ball fields/soccer upgrades began in 2016 and with \$1,121,400 to be financed this year with the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program providing \$500,000 in grant money towards that project.

Also planned this year are: Upgrades to the Duck Pond washrooms costing \$50,000, if the JCP (Job Creation Project) funding materializes; A ramp to be installed at the boat ramp by the Weir at a cost of \$20,000; Roofing at both the Visitor Centre and the Saywell Park Pavilion at a total cost of \$23,000; The paving of Cowichan Ave. from the King George Round-a-bout to South Shore Rd. is planned at cost of \$70,000; and The Town Hall and Council Chamber Upgrades are planned for this year.

The listed capital projects are those we will be addressing this year. Our protective services, the biggest component of which is our Fire Department are experiencing a steady rise in cost, caused by additional stringent requirements through the Playbook imposed on municipalities. We have two Town Hall meetings held each year and some of the planned projects are a direct result of us listening to our citizens at these meetings.

Volunteer committees and organizations are vital assets to our community. While elected officials often receive credit for decisions rendered, often a good amount of crucial information gathering and recommendations come from the instrumental work provided by those dedicated committees. An example of this is our new Town entrance sign. Our Advisory Planning Committee did an admirable job on this project making council's decision to approve this project easy. The Cowichan Lake Recreation Committee also is an advisory body whose decisions must be endorsed by the CVRD Board. This committee is made up from a member of Town Council, Directors from Areas "I" and "F", and six appointed public directors. They meet monthly regarding Cowichan Lake recreation issues and make difficult decisions.

After many years of volunteering for this committee two long term directors decided to step aside at the end of their 2016 term. Dave Darling, who chaired the committee in recent years, has stepped down after twelve years of service. Thank you Dave for serving your community, your efforts are very much appreciated. Bill Peters is also stepping aside after sitting on the Cowichan Lake Recreation Committee for close to 38 years. Bill was first appointed in 1979 and has been re-appointed over and over to serve consecutively ever since. Bill's giving and dedication is beyond belief; after previously serving over fifty years as a volunteer fireman, there is no questioning of Bill's commitment to his community. Thank you is not enough to express our gratitude to Bill for his endless dedication to making our community a much better place.

Please use our pedestrian activated crosswalks, especially when crossing in the dark. ICBC and the Town partnered to install four activated crosswalks at strategic locations to provide a safer means of crossing our busy road through Town. At times it is difficult for drivers to see pedestrians, so please take the limited time it takes to push the activation button to help ensure you cross streets safely. Visibility is very limited during our winters, and I have heard many concerns of pedestrians putting themselves at risk. Please help reduce the potential for unnecessary accidents and injuries by pushing the activation buttons at crosswalks.

Ross Forrest, Mayor