



# Highlands News

January 2007

The Official Newsletter of the District of Highlands Council  
 RURAL LIFE    NATURAL BEAUTY    STRONG COMMUNITY

## A message from Mayor Mark Cardinal

First of all, I want to thank everyone who participated in the Santa Run in December. A special thank you to all the volunteers and to the Highlands Firefighters Association for organizing a successful event. Not only did we collect a record nine grocery buggies full of food for the Goldstream Food Bank, but many people enjoyed all the other festivities, including the hayride.

Well, we all think we're ready for the storms, but the prolonged electrical outage pointed out the very weak spot of our own municipal hall: no power means no phones, no heat, no staff to be on hand to help citizens. We've found our Achilles heel. Even though the municipal hall is wired to use a generator, we didn't have one. That would, at the very least, have kept the phones going. We had no heat, although most Highlanders have some form of wood heat. This was an enormous inconvenience.

In a real emergency (e.g. wildfire or earthquake), the municipal hall must be self-sufficient so as to be able to act as an emergency center. We are taking steps to ensure that this is so—citizens have even suggested that the Highlands invest in two snowmobiles or quads (one in the east, one in the west) so that emergency response staff can provide emergency evacuation for sick people during these extreme snow events when roads and driveways are impassable. Be assured that we are debriefing from our experience and will be making those changes that will ensure continuous service for

Highlanders.

I want to thank, especially, the Langford Emergency Social Services volunteers for helping Highlanders out when we couldn't help ourselves.

As we begin a New Year on Council I am pleased to report that Council is working proactively with our new Administrator Chris Coates. Chris has been a great asset to our staff this year and has helped all of Council get a good grasp on our priorities for our term in office and for this new calendar year. Council held a brainstorming session on Friday January 26<sup>th</sup> to review our priorities. We were able to prioritize items such as completing our Official Community Plan, moving forward with our Groundwater Study, and keeping our financial house in order, to name a few. We expect to receive a report from staff at our next Council meeting that will allow us to bring everyone in the community up to date on our policies and priorities.

All of Council looks forward to working cohesively together in 2007. We encourage the community to come to Council meetings at any time to learn more about what we are doing. All meeting minutes are posted on the Highlands website. The contact information for the Mayor and all of Council is in this newsletter and on the website.

## Highlands News available on email

If you would like an electronic copy of the *Highlands News*, Official Newsletter of the District of Highlands Council, please email Sandi Chesley at the Municipal Hall at [schesley@district.highlands.bc.ca](mailto:schesley@district.highlands.bc.ca).

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## Storms of 2006

The storms of November and December of 2006 proved challenging for Highlands residents and municipal staff.

During the major snow storm, the District Office activated a level one Emergency Operations Centre. The reason for this resulted from the extended power outage combined with severe winter conditions that left certain roads inaccessible because of downed power lines and excessive snow accumulations. It is important to note that this was not a declared State of Local Emergency.

Through mutual aid assistance from Langford Emergency Social Services (ESS), the Provincial Government provided aid consisting of meals and temporary lodging to those with bona fide need. Such aid was not forthcoming from the government after the windstorm unless a critical need was demonstrated—e.g., a medical care requirement or a home damaged and rendered uninhabitable by a falling tree. ESS is a community-based provincial emergency response program to provide services to people affected by an emergency or disaster, ranging from a single house fire to a mass evacuation from flooding or wildfire.

From the perspective of the District Office, the actions during the snow storm involved coordinating snow removal with the BC Hydro Crews so that all areas could have power restored. Properties without access were identified as Priority One by BC Hydro. During this time it was very important to hear from residents as to the status of their power and access. Even more important is that residents are strongly encouraged to report all power outages to BC Hydro directly at 1-888-769-3766 (POWERON). Only BC Hydro addresses the restoration of hydro service and the public call-in information automatically updates an operational data base used to determine the extent and nature of the outage. Do not

assume that BC Hydro knows that your power is out. You should call to inform them and check on the status of information they have for your address.

The subsequent storms, while causing widespread power outages, were not accompanied by winter conditions requiring action by the District. During these other storms, the District Office received countless calls from residents enduring power outages. In these more typical windstorms there is essentially no real role for the District staff to play. This is again the situation where residents need to contact BC Hydro directly to have their specific circumstances noted and addressed.

Recent weather events have, once again, alerted residents to the need for personal, family, and neighbourhood emergency preparedness. You should be prepared to take care of yourself and your family for at least 72 hours—as we have seen, 7 days may be a more realistic figure for Highlanders—as emergency workers help those in urgent need first. To assist residents with this task, the Highlands District Community Association (HDCA) in cooperation with the Highlands Emergency Program are establishing neighbourhood emergency preparedness groups. Currently, eleven Highlands Emergency Local Preparedness (HELP) Neighbourhood Groups have been formed with an additional five in the planning stages. The HELP groups are designed to provide the information, training, and skills necessary for individuals, families, and neighbourhoods to be self-sufficient after a disaster. Contact the HDCA Coordinator for HELP, Sigurd Johannesen, at 405-2552 or email [SigurdJ@shaw.ca](mailto:SigurdJ@shaw.ca) for more information.

Please contact our Emergency Coordinator, Val Fletcher, at 479-1725 or email [val.fletcher@shaw.ca](mailto:val.fletcher@shaw.ca) if you wish more information on emergency preparedness in general or can contribute some volunteer time to the program.

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## Community Hall Task Force

Council is reviewing a proposal to revise the Terms of Reference for The Community Hall Task Force, expanding its mandate to study a community centre, rather than just a community hall. The proposed new name for this committee is The Community Centre Task Force, and the committee members remain the same. The committee will assist staff in the preparation of grant applications, if these are deemed appropriate. .

The committee will undertake to reflect the will and wishes of the Highland community when considering a community centre. It will produce a vision based on a review of previous surveys, findings from other community centres, and the identification of potential uses. The vision will be presented to Council and the public for comment.

The Open House originally scheduled for February 25 will be held at a later date.

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## In Brief

### **Policing Costs**

As has been anticipated for some time, the provincial government has announced that all communities will have to pay a portion of their policing costs starting in 2007. Up to now, Highlands, with a population of under 5,000, had been exempt. While the amounts are not yet fixed, it is anticipated that the cost for Highlands will be about \$83,000.00. The cost recovery model is based on recovering 50% of the total provincial policing costs in all the rural and incorporated communities under 5000 population by allocating that cost on an assessment basis. The Province has not yet determined if local governments can recover these costs through anything other than a direct property tax.

### **Piped Water to the South Highlands**

Piped water has been approved by the CRD to the Industrial Park in the South Highlands. This will allow the owners to develop the industrial park as approved by their zoning. Mayor Cardinal has been appointed to the Juan de Fuca Water Commission and the CRD Water Commission to represent the Highlands.

### **Mayor Cardinal Named Chair of the West Shore Parks and Recreation Society**

Mayor Mark Cardinal was recently elected as Chair of the West Shore Parks and Recreation Society. He expects a very exciting year, including hosting the 2007 UCI BMX World Championships in July at the new bike track being prepared at the Juan de Fuca site. The event will draw about 2,500 athletes from over 40 countries. The 2006 championships were held in Sao Paolo, Brazil.

### **New Highlands Weather Station**

Highlands has a second weather station established by Warren Lee on Ross Durrance Road. This station is available through the UVic school weather station network. A great benefit is that the station, called Cal

Revelle Nature Sanctuary, reports in real time, online, so Highlanders can look up the previous 24-hour record of temperature, atmospheric pressure, humidity, wind speed, wind direction, rain, insolation, and UV index at <http://www.victoriaweather.ca/station.php?id=71>. The station performs very well, but was off-line during some of the strongest wind periods. Highlands' first weather station, operated by Kerry Joy on Millstream Lake Road, has been keeping records for decades.

### **Check Your Septic Tank**

Moving into spring is a great time to check your septic tank capacity. If you have not had your tank drained in the past two years, it is highly recommended that you contract someone to drain your tank and ensure that the drainfield is in proper working order. Faulty septic tanks and fields are a primary source of groundwater contamination. Proper and regular maintenance of your system is key to preventing contamination from happening.

### **Emergency Preparedness for the Summer**

With the recent snow and rain storms fresh in our minds, we might not be thinking about forest fire hazards this summer, But the storms are not only a reminder that we should be prepared to look after ourselves for a minimum of one week, but the storms have also been a significant source of tinder for potential forest fires. The next two to three months offer a good opportunity, before we are under burn restrictions, to reassess your firebreak around your home. Removing the numerous boughs that are now all over the forest floor, especially within 30 meters of your home, is highly recommended. Take the opportunity to clean your eaves troughs, too. Eaves troughs are a potentially high risk of tinder for forest fires, as well.

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## **Committee Members Named—Two More Needed**

Council has filled the vacant positions on the two Highlands Select Committees—except for two more spots that are open on the Community Infrastructure Select Committee. Deadline for applications is the end of February, to go to Council at the first meeting in March. Give back to your community by putting your application in to the municipal hall. Below are the members of the committees:

**Community Infrastructure Select Committee:** Bob Flitton, Elaine Limbrick, Libby McMinn, Laurain Mills, Tara Parkinson, Evelyn Samuel, Fred York, with

Councillor Ken Brotherston as liaison. This committee may review and provide advice to Council on trails, roads and parks; special events and issues of public safety and fire protection, to name a few items.

**Fiscal and Environment Select Committee:** Karen Burns, Ken Faris, Vicky Husband, Warren Lee, Marcie McLean, Bob McMinn, Hans Waelti, Paul Weyer, Bev York, with Councillor Jane Mendum as liaison. This committee may review and provide advice to Council on such items as fiscal sustainability, environmental sustainability (for instance during new development).

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## Update on Groundwater Study

The Groundwater Task Force, which consists of community members Eric Bonham and Warren Lee, DOH Planner Laura Beckett, and Councillor Michelle Mahovlich, continue to meet on a regular basis. Golder & Associates, who were contracted to develop a Terms of Reference for our Comprehensive Groundwater Study, presented the draft Terms of Reference to the Task Force in the first week of January. The Task Force reviewed the draft and requested that Golder return with a cost estimate for potentially completing the work for the District.

The study has been divided into three phases: Phase 1—Data Compilation & Water Balance Analysis; Phase 2—Contaminant Inventory and Preliminary Groundwater Protection Plan; and Phase 3—Groundwater Monitoring and Detailed Groundwater Protection Plan. The Task Force recommended to Council, on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, that we proceed with two different grant applications through

two provincial funding initiatives to help fund at least the first two phases and, hopefully, the third phase of this study. It is our hope that this study can be completed in a timely fashion, that the community can continue to be informed through our Task Force, and that, in the end, we develop a good sustainable planning tool to aid in our District planning and to help all of us move toward good groundwater conservation initiatives. We expect to elaborate on details of each of the abovementioned three phases in further issues of the Council newsletter. Remember, if you have any quality or quantity problems with your drinking water wells, please contact the District office. Any information will aid in our study work and will provide a more comprehensive analysis for our study.

The Groundwater Task Force Group

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## Some Grant Opportunities for DoH

The provincial government has announced three new grant programs which the District of Highlands will be pursuing for help with our infrastructure improvements.

The three new programs are:

**BC Spirit Square Program**—This grant is intended to help municipalities create or improve an outdoor open space that is accessible to as many people as possible, regardless of age, ability, or situation. This grant may be of help with our community hall space. The grant offers 50% funding as a cost-share with municipalities.

Available are a maximum of \$50,000 for planning and \$500,000 for construction. Mayor Cardinal is meeting with Ministry officials to confirm availability for Highlands initiatives such as the groundwater monitoring program, the community hall building and grounds, road improvements, and roadside trails.

**Local Motion Program**—This grant is intended to help with the construction of roadside trails—a natural for the

Highlands. It offers 50% funding. Total grant available for BC is \$10 million for each of the next four years.

**Towns for Tomorrow**—This grant is for municipalities with populations of 5,000 or less. It is intended to improve the infrastructure of small communities, including new and upgrades to buildings and roads. The funding is an 80% grant to a maximum provincial contribution of \$400,000. There is \$7 million available each year for a three year period.

Two other programs have been identified by the Highland Parks and Recreation Association. These are **The Rural Infrastructure Program** and the **Olympic Live Sites Program**. The latter grant program would apply to Twinflower Park upgrading.

Staff are preparing grant applications for the appropriate programs above.

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### *The Highlands News*

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