

RIDGE REPORT

September 2009

COUNCIL

By Mayor Larry White

I hope everyone had a very enjoyable summer. The time seemed to fly by as meetings were in abundance and projects were moved forward. Transportation was one issue in the forefront. Our concerns with the road maintenance, signage and hazardous areas were presented to the Ministry. In particular was the section of the road heading south from the 'S' curve before the upper Flatbed Creek bridge, the bridge itself and up the long hill. A passing lane was suggested by Councillor Beale and the Ministry is looking at that option.

The first phase of the Pine Beetle Mitigation Program is completed. We looked at other communities like Prince George and Logan Lake and realized that the only way to attack the problem was aggressively.

If one wants to know what it is like to be confined to a wheel chair in Tumbler Ridge, then the only way is to experience it first hand, as I did. Stacie Gruntman's article in the *Tumbler Ridge News* is an excellent account of the day.

Some initiatives on our agenda are disabled and seniors' housing, biomass, continuation of the fire mitigation and pine beetle fight and gearing up for next year's budget to name a few.

**REMEMBER TO ATTEND THE TOWN HALL
MEETING
OCTOBER 22!**

TOWN HALL

As summer is coming to a close many of us are preparing for the upcoming winter season, however, for many departments in the District we wish we still had several months of summer ahead to complete projects. As many of you may have noticed that there was little done in the way of road and sidewalk repairs this year which is a reflection of the fact that we are waiting on grant funds to help us finance these major projects. While we have been blessed with a wonderfully young and planned community it is to our detriment that our major infrastructure is the same age; and as with any house older than 25 years things need to be replaced. So needless to say our work crews are in place and ready to move ahead on these projects when we receive the funding; unfortunately, due to a short summer

season in all likelihood these projects will not proceed until early 2010. At this time the various departments have applied for a total of 28 grants, 11 of which have been granted and completed which leaves 17 grants and the relevant projects outstanding. The total combined value of these grants is just over 12 million dollars.

Even though we were unable to undertake the upgrades that we had anticipated we were successful in completing and initiating other projects. One of the biggest projects that we initiated was the Forest Fuels Reduction Program. This project has been met with mixed feelings, however, the fact remains that as a municipality we need to ensure the safety of our residents. The "*Community Wildland Fire Protection Plan*" for the District of Tumbler Ridge was

adopted in August of 2006 and as part of that plan a key recommendation was to space trees appropriately and prune to 2.5m height about the perimeter areas of the townsite (within a 2km radius). At the time this plan was adopted we had just started to see the affects of the mountain pine beetle, which we now see has dramatically increased beyond what was initially witnessed. To capitalize from the federal and provincial funding for the mountain pine beetle epidemic the District will continue to work on this project as long as there are funds in place. Alissia Sawicki, Engineering Technician for the District is the team lead on this project and has done an exceptional job. The challenge that we face is being able to balance public safety with our residents' desire for the green space that we have become so accustomed to.

The District received a Trees for Tomorrow grant which assisted in the planting of another 14 trees in our boulevard areas. The greening and beautification of our community is a priority, unfortunately these efforts are often hindered by the ongoing vandalism. In addition to the above projects and our day to day operations the following projects were completed over the last several months:

- Re-opening of the renovated Youth Centre
- Tax Season with a municipal tax revenue of \$6.06m
- Opening of the Seniors Corner
- Strategic Plan
- Hiring of a Community Grant Writer
- Hosting of the Women's Olympic Hockey Team
- Heating & Ventilations System at the Community Centre
- Annual Report

- Initial site selection for Seniors & Disabled Housing project
- Handicap access ramp at Visitor Information Centre
- Northern British Columbia Recreation Association Spring Conference

Last but not least our Community Centre which for many people is the hub of the community will be receiving a much needed face lift. The Community Centre envelope project has now started and will proceed well into 2010.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

First off, you've probably noticed that the Economic Development Department has undergone a name change, and is now referred to as the Community Development Department. This was done to provide some clarity to the outside world as to the nature and function of our activities, which includes both economic development and land use planning. Many other municipalities across Canada are realizing the benefits of bringing their planning and economic development functions closer to together, as both of their core activities have an immense bearing on each other. In some respects, the District is leading the way in our region by creating a single department to accomplish this.

Harkening back to a project mentioned in the first edition of the 2009 Ridge Report, the District is still making progress towards facilitating the development of new housing. Following our focus group sessions and open house that took place in March we have been able to generate a series of design principles that people felt would reflect our community's values, including maintaining high standards of aesthetics and smart planning. Conceptual plans for new subdivisions were drawn up using these principles and these are being refined for use in marketing specific opportunities to investors. In addition to this process we issued a community-wide survey in April/May to gather raw data regarding the demand for new housing. This is the kind of information that investors require before they make their decisions on whether to move forward or not. Despite the fact that we only received 41 completed surveys, the information we received gave us a good start on helping to articulate what people are looking for in new housing options and why. A little over half of the respondents stated that, if the right options were available, they would purchase a new home with the next 2-3 years. Approximately 2/3 of those respondents stated that they are looking for a larger home on a larger lot. These results are in line with the anecdotal comments shared during March's focus group session

and will be incorporated into our marketing efforts as work to highlight these development opportunities to the investment community.

In addition to completing this foundational work for attracting new housing investment, we are also working with the local mining companies to explore innovative partnerships to help to lower the risk for residential housing developers. As the economy turns around (as we're starting to experience already) there will be significant increases in employment in the Tumbler Ridge area over the next few years due to expansion of the mines. For the long term health of the community it would be beneficial for us to capitalize on the opportunities that this would present by having suitable housing for employees and hopefully entice them to move permanently to Tumbler Ridge. Exploratory discussions took place over the last part of June through to mid-July, and we received positive indications that there was a willingness to discuss what partnerships could be forged to facilitate new housing developments in the community. From there we have scheduled a working session with the local mining companies on September 15th in Vancouver to determine what specific courses of action can be taken.

As many people are already aware, since the fall of 2008 we have been in discussions with a group of local dentists from Vancouver Island wishing to establish a full time, full service clinic here in Tumbler Ridge. A handful of them are pilots with their own planes, so the idea would be to fly different people here on a rotational schedule, including specialists such as orthodontists and periodontists. They have identified suitable space in the existing Health Clinic building, drawn up their plans and determined their costs for construction. It is at this point that the District was approached to assist with the costs of installing the leasehold improvements or, in other words, the basic clinic space. This has been given a price tag of \$150,000 to \$200,000. Admittedly, this is a somewhat unusual position for the District to be placed in, but due to the importance of this service to the community Council and I have decided that it is worth trying to raise these funds through corporate sources, including the local mines. It must be stated however, that we feel this money should be repaid, and that is how we have framed the requests. Ultimately, our aim is to help establish the clinic space and seek a minimum commitment of 10 years from the dentists. After this period, the space would be paid for and we would have a permanent clinic for any practice to move into. To this date we have approached 15 different companies and will continue to follow up until, good or bad, we get a final answer from them.

One last thing that we'd like to mention in this edition of the Ridge Report is the exciting initiative we've undertaken to help change the image of Tumbler Ridge in the eyes of the outside world. During the time of the infamous housing sale the District and the housing vendor worked with a PR firm to highlight the opportunity to purchase a low-priced home in a beautiful northern town. It is obvious that the effort worked because we sold all of the homes and attracted a great deal of new residents to town from all over the world. In fact, it worked too well, because it seems that in other parts of the BC and Canada, people still see Tumbler Ridge as the dying town with cheap homes. This has proved to be a limiting factor in our efforts to attract outside investment into the community. As a result we have engaged the Tartan Group, an immensely respected PR firm out of Victoria, to work with us and other community members to help redefine TR's image to people outside of Northern BC. Not only are we aiming to showcase ourselves as an active, thriving community, we will at the same time highlight business and investment opportunities for people that want to become part of the excitement. Tartan came to TR in July to familiarize themselves with our town, and to meet with businesses, representatives from local organizations and residents. They were extremely impressed with TR, its features and its people, so a great deal of story ideas were generated for distribution. As these roll out we will make sure to highlight any significant exposure we receive over the course of the next year.

In closing we would like to remind members of our local business community to make sure to tap into our business information network via email or fax in order to stay on top of news and events that may be of interest to you. We would also like to encourage you to become an active member in our local Chamber of Commerce. Each addition to the organization makes the entire business community stronger, thereby strengthening each individual that is a part of it.

COMMUNITY CENTRE

Community Centre Envelope Project

The Community Centre will receive a new face lift over the next few months due to the increasing deterioration in the envelope. The envelope includes the exterior walls, windows, doors, and roofing. Apex Engineering Ltd was hired last fall to complete an engineering assessment on the envelope building components. Some of the on-site assessment details that were observed that have contributed to moisture egress issues are:

- high moisture content locations were found in various areas around the building primarily at the

street entrance area around penetrations and near interfaces;

- water staining is noted in several locations;
- multiple cracks and buckling were observed;
- inadequate back wrapping of EFIS reinforcing mesh and stucco finish at building interfaces was observed. This condition presents a fire hazard in that the flammable rigid insulation is not protected in case of fire and from such items as cigarettes. There is also a greater chance of water wicking its way up behind the cladding at the base of the walls;
- physical impact damage was observed in high traffic areas and the rear of the building;
- the EFIS finish coat was found to be spalling in several areas;
- the architectural wood structures accenting the recreation centre at the main entrance near the library and child care areas were badly deteriorated. These structures were removed last fall for safety reasons;
- the exterior walls are highly susceptible to moisture egress due to wind driven rain particularly at other components such as windows doors, flashings, etc;
- cracks were noted in the EFIS cladding at some window frames;
- seam failures were noted at some skylight seams;
- ballast is not evenly distributed in some areas leaving the rigid insulation vulnerable to bird damage;
- there has been significant water leakage from the roof into the building causing damage to ceilings, cross beams, etc.

The engineer found that the moisture test results combined with the visual observations of the complex indicate that the exterior cladding is in need of repairs or replacement.

The engineer's report is available on the District website – www.tumbleridge.ca or the front desk at Town Hall and the Community Centre.

PROTECTIVE SERVICES

October 4 – 10, 2009 is Fire Prevention Week, an annual, national event that takes place in October. The theme for this year is "Stay Fire Smart! Don't Get Burned". Despite the fact that fewer fire losses are reported in Canada, still, on average, eight Canadians die from fire every week. Most of these fires are preventable and caused by careless behaviour. That is why it is critical to educate Canadians and incite them to act. During this week, fire departments across the nation will promote public awareness of the dangers of fire and the ways we can protect ourselves from fire.

Here in Tumbler Ridge the Fire Chief will be visiting the Elementary School classrooms and encouraging students to submit a well designed home fire escape plan. One lucky student will be awarded a new bike and a ride to and from school in a fire truck. The Fire Department is also looking forward to a visit from the Children Centre preschoolers as they tour the Fire Hall and apparatus.

Fire Safety starts at home. Take the time to talk to your family about fire prevention and practice your home fire escape plan. For more fire prevention information visit www.fiprecan.ca.

NATURAL GAS SAFETY

Natural gas is one of the safest fuels. Composed mostly of methane, it is naturally colourless and odourless. For safety sake, an odour is added – a smell like rotten eggs or sulphur – so you can detect it. When natural gas leaks it will mix with air and can cause a fire if there is a source of ignition (or explosion if it accumulates in a confined space). Natural gas is not poisonous but can cause unconsciousness in high concentrations when it displaces air. Smell gas – act fast. If you think that you smell natural gas indoors:

- ✓ Open doors and windows
- ✓ Do not smoke, light matches, operate electrical switches or create any other source of ignition
- ✓ Leave the premises
- ✓ Go to a nearby phone and call your natural gas utility or 911

If you hear the flow of escaping gas, or if gas is leaking from a broken or disconnected gas pipe, do the following:

- ✓ Leave the premises
- ✓ Go to a nearby phone and call your natural gas utility or 911

If you or a member of your family has concerns about your ability to smell natural gas, consider the purchase of a methane gas alarm. But remember, while an alarm may provide an extra measure of warning, they should never be relied upon as a substitute for regular inspection and maintenance of natural gas appliances.

SMOKE DETECTORS

You can minimize your family's risk of fire-related injury by installing the right number of smoke detectors in the right places in your home, and by keeping them all in good

working order. Follow the manufacturer's directions for testing and cleaning your smoke detectors. Change the batteries regularly and replace any smoke detector that is more than ten years old.

Smoke detectors are your family's first line of defense. They give you an early warning that danger is present, and could give your family time to reach safety.

BYLAW ENFORCEMENT

The District of Tumbler Ridge Bylaw Enforcement Officer, with the cooperation of the RCMP, has been diligently working to better identify marked ATV trails. A bylaw enforcement officer may remove, detain or impound any Off-Road Vehicle unlawfully occupying a portion of a highway or public place within the restricted areas. Please remember that a public place includes down town, parks, school grounds and the golf course. Be a safe rider and insist that those you ride with are as well. Keep noise levels down low and always wear an approved helmet.

Any properties with an accumulation of discarded materials, rubbish, and/or derelict vehicles are asked to remove these items before the snow flies.

During the winter months, please make sure all vehicles are removed from roadways, sidewalks and boulevard areas to allow for proper snow removal.

Any bylaw questions or concerns can be directed to Teresa Vandale, Bylaw Enforcement Officer at 250-242-3939.

WE NEED YOU!

The Tumbler Ridge Fire Department is made up of dedicated men and women who volunteer their time to provide emergency fire suppression, rescue, and medical services to the citizens of Tumbler Ridge. Not only do these people respond to emergencies, they also attend weekly training to ensure that their skills remain current. Are you over the age of 19 and in good physical health? The Fire Department is accepting applications for volunteer firefighters. For more information or to pick up an application, contact the Fire Chief, Matt Treit at 242-3939 or email trfire@dtr.ca.

Fundraising Opportunity!

If your group is interested in delivering the Ridge Report and or other District publications please contact Aleen Torraville, Deputy Corporate Officer at 242-4242, ext. 238 to have your group's name on the list

Transfer Station Hours
Tuesdays – Thursdays – Saturdays
10:00 a.m. – 5:45 p.m.
250.242.3638

Phone Numbers for Reference:

Town Hall 250.242.4242
After Hours Emergency 250.242.3578
Recycle Building 250.242.4141

Fire Hall 250.242.3939
Animal Control 250.242.3202
Bylaw Officer 250.242.3939

Community Centre 250.242.4246
Swimming Pool 250.242.5255
Tumbler Ridge Library 250.242.4778

Town Hall Office will be closed on Monday
October 12, 2009 for the
Thanksgiving Day
holiday!

District website: www.TumblerRidge.ca

Council meetings are open to the public and are held the first and third Monday of the month. Policies & Priorities Committee meetings are held the second and fourth Monday of the month.

Regular Council Meetings for the remainder of 2009 will be held on the following dates:

September 21	November 16
October 5	December 7
October 19	December 21
November 2	

Policies & Priorities Committee meetings for the remainder of 2009 will be held on the following dates:

September 14	November 23
October 13	December 14
October 26	December 28
November 9	