



Penticton

Plan in works for healthcare

Colton Davies - Dec 26, 2017 / 5:00 am | Story: 214746



Photo: travelbc.com

Help is on the way for making healthcare more available in the Town of Osoyoos, in a year where a shortage of doctors [drew frustration](#) from locals.

The town received a [\\$100K grant](#) from the province in October, to be used for a study on how it can improve medical services.

Mayor Sue McKortoff said she and the town's manager, Barry Romanko, will meet with local doctors next month to discuss how to spend that money.

The issue of medical services was amplified when a local man received hip replacement surgery after a ['debilitating' wait](#) of more than 70 weeks.

The chief of staff at the South Okanagan General Hospital [resigned in protest](#) of Interior Health's plan to remove six beds from the hospital. McKortoff later [signed onto a letter](#) urging IH to keep the beds.

"I have a positive feeling that we're making some headway in it, and at least we are all talking together," McKortoff said in a year-in-review interview with Castanet.

While more resources are expected to be put towards healthcare, the town is hoping it can save on policing costs.

The town [appealed the results](#) of the 2016 census, which showed its population had climbed to 5,085 — slightly above the 5,000-person threshold that triggers much higher policing costs.

With more than 5,000 residents, Osoyoos would have to pay 70 per cent of RCMP costs in the town, compared to the 30 per cent the town currently covers.

McKortoff said it could take until July for the town to get a response from Stats Canada on their appeal.

"If we do have to pay, that's what we're planning for in our budget... because we assume that is going to happen eventually. But we just felt on the day they took the census they probably didn't

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\$12.6M. More than \$7.7M worth of those permits were issued for single-family homes, which town staff said is [leading the increase](#).

While the town slowly adds, there was a large focus in the spring for protecting what it already has — when Osoyoos Lake showed [potential to flood](#) late in May.

"It's 409.5 feet above sea level right now, and in the flood stage this year it was almost 410.7. It's a big difference."

McKortoff said the public responded well to requests to stay off the water, as well as closures of the public boat launches when the threat of flooding was high.

She added the Okanagan Basin Water Board is now doing flood mapping to better prepare for such high waters, "because we assume it will happen again."

In the meantime, the town will continue to look at ways to make Osoyoos more attractive, for residents and visitors alike.

Council [approved plans](#) for a new baseball diamond and a new dog park in the fall. More recently, the town has looked into potentially [building an aquatic centre](#) in the area.

Osoyoos is one of 14 resort municipalities in B.C., and McKortoff said funding from the province that goes along with that designation — for projects that can benefit tourism — is set to expire in March.

She added that she met with the province's Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Lisa Beare, in Vancouver earlier this month to discuss the matter.

"We're hoping to having this resort municipality funding continued into the future... we're really trying to explain why it's so important and what we've done with it."

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3

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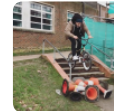
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