

Council's 2016 Strategic Priorities: Partnerships

Earlier this year, Council set five key priorities to guide us as we work together to build our community. They are:

- Employment and Tax Diversity
- Natural and Built Infrastructure
- Watershed Protection and Water Management
- connections with key groups and organizations we believe can help us achieve our objectives in each of
- Communications and Engagement
- Partnerships

In this column over the past few months, I've outlined priorities and plans in the areas of 'Communications and Engagement' and 'Employment and Tax Diversity'. This month, the focus is on 'Partnerships'.

Council's intention in setting Partnerships as a strategic priority was to emphasize our commitment to working with our citizens, community organizations and neighbours to build our community. Our Stz'uminus neighbours call this the power of Naut'sa Mawt – Working Together.

We have clearly identified a number of important partners, laid out specific ways in which we can work together this year and identified the outcomes we would like to achieve. These partnerships range from community organizations and neighbours to other local governments and include federal and provincial representation as well.

A number of partnerships are aimed at creating economic activity and new jobs. We are already working closely with the Ladysmith Chamber of Commerce and Ladysmith Downtown Business Association on ways to help local businesses succeed and grow. You may have heard about, or taken part in, our joint Business Walk last month. Volunteers from the Town, Chamber and LDBA held one-on-one meetings with owners and managers of local businesses to find out how they are doing, and what we might be able to do to help them succeed. This is just the first step in this project. The results of these interviews will help each of our organizations to develop specific things we can do, together or independently, to support our local business community.-

We will also be working closely with the Stz'uminus First Nation on the opportunity to develop industrial land in the south end of Ladysmith, with the goal of attracting more industry to the community, creating more jobs and expanding our tax base.

Our Stz'uminus neighbours are and will continue to be an important partner in many of our initiatives and plans. We are in the process of updating the Memorandum of Understanding between our two Councils, which will clearly lay out our joint projects. These include expanded service agreements to supply water and sewer services, environmental restoration of the Ladysmith Harbour, installing public

art installations and First Nations place name signage, as well as a commitment to honour the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

At the local community level, we already have productive relationships with local organizations such as the Ladysmith and District Historical Society (the Ladysmith Archives and the Ladysmith Museum), the Ladysmith Maritime Society (the LMS Community Marina) and the Ladysmith and District Arts Council (the Waterfront Gallery). I continue to be amazed at what happens when the Town is able to contribute space at a nominal rent, or staff resources, or access to liability insurance, or a commitment to maintain a new structure built by a community organization. The volunteers then take over, and the results are astounding. That is how we have such community amenities as the Rotary Boat Launch, the Kinsmen Playground at Brown Drive Park, and the new playground at Transfer Beach, to name just a few examples.

We are eager to explore new partnerships in the community that will help us achieve our goals in each of the key priority areas. There are so many worthy projects, and more importantly, there are so many dedicated organizations and individuals in our community. When our volunteers work together to get something done, there is almost no limit to what they can achieve.

We have always known that there are some issues we just can't tackle alone. Clean-up of the derelict and abandoned vessels in Ladysmith Harbour is one of them. For years the Town has tried to get federal government action on this issue. What finally started to get things moving was when federal and provincial elected officials, Stz'uminus First Nation, the Ladysmith Maritime Society, concerned citizens, media and the Town all started working together. This created a momentum that made senior governments take notice and, finally, take action. The recent announcement that the Viki Lyne II will be leaving Ladysmith Harbour proves that working together across party lines and jurisdictions for a common cause can have big results.

Under our new Nuisance Abatement Bylaw, we can now, in a similar way, bring together multiple relevant agencies such as the Town's Bylaw Compliance staff, Ladysmith Fire/Rescue, RCMP, and Island Health to deal with nuisance properties in the community. Thanks to this new approach, one of the Ladysmith's worst properties is now vacant and boarded up, and all debris has been taken away.

We also count other local governments as partners. We now contract with the Municipality of North Cowichan to provide the Town's Information Technology services, a more cost-effective approach than the previous arrangement. We will continue as well to work with other local governments and regional partners to reduce water consumption throughout the Cowichan Valley and to protect our watersheds. We are also working towards regional equity in recreational services in the Cowichan Valley Regional District.

There are many more examples of successful partnerships in our community, and many more possibilities for exciting new ones. When we all work together, we can build a more vibrant community, create economic opportunities and protect our natural resources. I firmly believe that working closely and sharing resources with others who share common goals gives us all a much greater chance of

reaching those goals. As Henry Ford said, “Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.”

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