

iLoveCreston – September 2018 article

My 10 years as Mayor

When I first ran for the mayor's seat in 2008 I could not have expected that in 10 years I time I would be seeking my fourth term. But, like many who are elected to public office, I find the work fulfilling and endlessly challenging. So here we go again!

I believe that my strength has been the ability to lead three great Town Councils, all of which have had certain strengths and areas of expertise. Leadership involves bringing out the best in all involved, and I have strived to do that with each Council. But a Town Council is only as effective as its staff, and I have become a great admirer of many of those who make careers in the public sector.

With Council's support, our staff has made it a priority to be well prepared for when grants become available, working with RDCK staff where appropriate. Has that approach worked? Well, the proof is in the pudding, as far as I am concerned. During my time in office we have received more than \$20 million in grants as a result of our co-operative approach. Included in that total is nearly \$7 million to complete the replacement of the century-old Arrow Creek Water System mainline, a \$2 million grant for the Creston & District Community Complex, and another \$3.1 million for a community park at CDCC, construction on which will start this year. This year we received a \$2.8 million Gas Tax grant for a bio-solids handling system upgrade at the Town's waste water treatment plant, and in 2009 a huge upgrade to the system was accomplished with a \$5 million grant.

I often hear that these grants "are our money", but we don't get them if we are not prepared with "shovel-ready" proposals when the application time frames are announced. Our co-operative approach with regional directors and RDCK staff has been a major accomplishment over the last 10 years.

Monetary issues aside, I am especially proud at the relationships that we have built with the Lower Kootenay Band. It was a great thrill to have the Lower Kootenay and Creston councils take part in a joint inauguration in December 2014. I was also pleased when the LKB purchased Morris Flowers & Greenhouses, which further solidifies the connection between our two communities.

The 2014-2018 term has been productive. During that period, the Pine Street intersection at Northwest Boulevard was completed, public art displays have generated interest and we purchased the Creston Education Centre to ensure that the existing programs will continue to provide critical services for children and families of Creston and the Creston Valley. And a decades-old concern was put to rest with the opening of downtown public washrooms on Canyon Street between 11th and 12th Avenue. The new sidewalk on Railway Blvd with trees and viewing benches have received many great comments. And of course, our OCP (Official

Community Plan) completed in 2017 and then special recognition by the BC Planning Institute to the many volunteers with a “Silver Award” this year.

An important consideration for my seeking another term is to fulfill our need for a new fire hall. After the defeat of a borrowing referendum last fall, Council turned the planning process over to an appointed Fire Hall Advisory Select Committee, which spent many, many hours of volunteer time to assess the community’s needs. Recommendations from the committee are detailed and thoroughly considered. I am very grateful for the committee members’ service to our community and believe that we are going into the coming borrowing referendum with a solid and affordable plan for a fire hall that will be a cornerstone of the Creston Valley for a half century or more.

In recent Town Council meetings our staff has reported a surge in building construction, with renovations and new homes serving as an indicator that Creston is a place that more and more people are choosing to make their home. The Columbia Basin Trust recently purchased our historical grain elevators. In the coming months and years the buildings will be spruced up, and the public will be invited to provide input about their use. This is a huge win for our community.

I continue to enjoy engaging with citizens, whether or not they are residents of Creston—the Creston Valley continues to be my focus. And I love the opportunity to stop and chat, or to hold coffee talks with other providers of public services. I maintain a 3-day office week and have participated in a hundreds and hundreds of meetings and events since 2008. I would like to thank I Love Creston for the chance to communicate with its readers on a regular basis.

I truly believe that we have made great strides in making Creston and area a stronger, more vibrant and forward-thinking community, one that is more pedestrian-friendly, thanks to our walking paths and trails, and one that embraces change that we know will make us stronger in years to come.

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