

Mayor's Message September 2015

The hottest July on record had a profound effect on our province, and on our community. Forest fires raged right across BC – including here on the Coast – and municipal water supplies serving communities large and small were depleted to concerning levels. In August, for the first time, Gibsons followed the lead of the SCRD, and implemented Level 4 water restrictions. Although the water supplied to zones one and two by our aquifer was unaffected by the dry weather, the Town chose to treat residents of all areas equally; until August's welcome rainfall began, the restrictions were concerning to home gardeners and market farmers. Many local residents found new ways to water their plants and lawns, purchasing rain barrels and capturing grey water (the water that comes from showers, baths, sinks, and washing machines, as distinct from black water, which is flushed down the toilet.) As our Medical Health Officer emphasized, not all grey water is the same, and he did not recommend its use for watering food plants, because of its potential for harboring pathogens.

Certainly, this long hot summer has increased awareness of the need for water conservation and sustainable growing practices. I have heard from several people who are determined to reduce their overall use of fresh water, through water-wise landscaping, rainwater harvesting, and installing water-efficient appliances and plumbing fixtures. It's worth noting, however, that in many ways Gibsons is well ahead of other communities who have not focused attention on the stewardship of water to the same extent we have done over the past five years. Our community has reduced water consumption by 40 per cent, and the Town's use of water meters keeps all of us aware of how we are doing in this regard. This conservative approach has both ecological and financial benefits, as it has enabled us to defer infrastructure work which would be a budgetary challenge for us at this time.

As I write these words, the forecast calls for more rain. At our most recent Council meeting, we voted that Gibsons would go no further than Level 3 water restrictions, for Zone 1 and 2, during the remaining months of 2015, even if predictions prove accurate that several weeks of summer weather lie ahead of us. Whatever the weather, I encourage all of us living in Gibsons to continue both the conservation, and the conversation: let's remain vigilant about the responsible use of fresh water, and let's continue to share good water use ideas.