

Mayor's Message February 2017

As I write this message, residents of New Brunswick are enduring the effects of an ice storm that has caused widespread damage and hardship; our thoughts are with those dealing with the effects of this natural disaster on their homes, businesses and municipal infrastructure.

Although winter here in Gibsons has been far less harsh than in Eastern Canada, we have experienced bouts of lower than usual temperatures, and ice and snow which have challenged residents' patience, and the Town's budget. In one neighbourhood, unfortunately, several households had to deal with home heating issues during the holiday season, a time when offering a warm welcome – in every sense – is so important. Because heating homes in that neighbourhood, Parkland, is a shared Town/homeowner responsibility, I would like to explain what occurred; to acknowledge again for any discomfort and inconvenience to the homeowners involved; and to describe what the Town has done to help ensure this does not happen again.

Parkland, as you may know, is heated by a Town-owned and managed geothermal energy system. There are several benefits to this approach: this is a particularly clean type of energy, and, because this geothermal utility is a municipal resource, all user fees collected for the heating get re-invested into the system. Utilizing a local, green energy source improves the resiliency our own community. Operating and maintaining this source of heat on behalf of our residents has not been issue-free, however, and we continue work on improving it.

In January, a few households in the area experienced an interruption of the Town-sourced geothermal heat, due to a leak, which was difficult to diagnose. Fortunately, a secondary source of heat was also available in these homes. We apologize to those affected, especially for the fact that our resolution of the issue was not as timely as we might have wished.

Staff will be reviewing all aspects of this incident to ensure we make improvements to minimize the chances of this happening again; in addition, ongoing training is being provided to enhance our skills in operating and maintaining this system. We are also working with local plumbing contractors and homeowners in Parkland to ensure we all have solid understanding of our respective roles.

A report on this incident, with recommendations aimed at preventing this matter re-occurring, is being prepared by staff and expected in the next few weeks.