

March 2017 Mayor's Message

After a particularly 'wintry' winter, I encourage you to participate in the advent of spring by celebrating two exciting milestones: on March 3, the Gibsons Public Market opened for business, and on March 24, they will hold a grand opening celebration. It is exciting to see the Market step more fully into its role as a hub of our community. Some of you will have heard me speak of placemaking, defined as 'a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces (which) capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well being.' Given our community's generous engagement in the Market project, I believe we are well on the way to enjoying just such a public space in Gibsons. I encourage you to visit the Market's website at <http://gibsonspublicmarket.com/> to learn more.

This time each year, the Town's elected officials and staff are focused on building a budget for the next fiscal year. Public feedback indicates a heightened interest in the budgeting process this year on the part of many residents who have received reports indicating that BC Assessment's assessed value of their property has increased substantially in the past year. Some are concerned that they may see significant property tax increases in 2017. While it is logical that a property which would command a higher selling price would be subject to higher taxes, there is not a proportionate link between the percentage increase of one's assessment, and municipal taxes. Council will work diligently to ensure that any tax increases in our Town this year are reasonable. It is difficult to be more specific at this time, since your property tax notice includes municipal taxes and levies from the Sunshine Coast Regional District and School District No. 46, for which the Town does not control taxation rates, but merely acts as the collector on their behalf. Gibsons Council has control over the rate setting of municipal taxes only. Our responsibility is to build a balanced, prudent budget that protects our natural assets, while allowing strategic investments in our Town's infrastructure needs based on effective planning and careful stewardship. The financial planning we have been making to achieve financial sustainability of our water and sewer utilities is paying off, largely in part to your efforts as consumers and rate payers.

On your behalf, we will continue to improve on what we have, invest modestly in the infrastructure needs of our Town, and capitalize on our assets, for example increasing bike lanes, renewing the popular waterfront walkway, and enhancing our network of trails and parks.

Again this year, your input to our budget planning process is welcomed. Please check our website and local papers for the dates of upcoming budget planning meetings in March and April. Please join us, if you can.