



Silverton residents -

I would like to give you an update on the issue with our water system we first communicated in March, as well as overall village operations and the ongoing issue of harassment of village staff and elected officials by a small number of residents.

Water system update

First, and most importantly, our water remains safe to drink and is now being tested by a certified technician. We are not making any changes to how we provide water, but only ensuring it is properly tested.

Earlier this year a review of village operations found that due to a staff issue our water was not being tested by a certified technician and samples were not being submitted on a regular schedule as required by provincial water regulations. We worked with Interior Health to immediately address that.

Since our last update we have put a temporary measure in place - a qualified public works employee with Nakusp is travelling to Silverton weekly to conduct water tests for us. A Silverton employee is undergoing training to obtain the certification needed to take on this work, which will be a more permanent solution. We are grateful for Nakusp's support during this challenging situation.

Provincial water regulations are in place to prevent British Columbians from getting sick due to any number of waterborne diseases. Unlike many larger communities, Silverton does not treat its water with chlorine or other chemicals that kill harmful bacteria, which is something many residents tell me they value. That means if something happens in the stream from which we source our water we could see a spike in bacteria. Regular testing is the most important tool we have in detecting any issues so they can be quickly addressed.

Again, I would like to be clear that we have no plans to change how we treat our water. Rather, we are ensuring the water is properly tested on a regular schedule. Being out of compliance with provincial water testing regulations would put everyone's health at risk and create legal liability. The mechanical issues with the water system we experienced July 5 that interrupted service are unrelated to this, and were quickly addressed by our public works team.

A broader commitment

For small municipalities like ours, core services such as water systems take up most of our budget and limited staff resources. Inflation and rising costs are making our budget challenging, necessitating property tax increases this year to cover existing services, maintenance, and upgrades – a situation all BC communities are facing.

Since taking on the Chief Administrative Officer job at Silverton last summer I have heard concerns about other topics, such as the poor state of some sidewalks and the garbage bins that had recently been placed around town. We have addressed the garbage bins, removing them in favour of continued weekly curbside pickup by village staff – every Tuesday. The bins were creating a number of issues – attracting rats, leaking motor oil and other environmental contaminants into the soil, and causing unpleasant odour, just for example. The bins were not sized to fit on a truck, so our staff had to manually empty them with shovels. We were also finding a large number of people from outside Silverton were dumping their garbage in the bins, which we then had to dispose of at Silverton taxpayer expense. Removing the bins and continuing with weekly pickup at the curbside in front of homes and businesses was the responsible way to address this. Please, make sure to set your garbage out early every Tuesday in an animal-proof container (a standard residential trash can with a fitted lid works). When residents put out garbage in bags they tend to attract animals such as rats, birds, and bears who tear them open and create a mess. We will sell the large bins to recoup the cost of purchasing them.

We are also working to address an issue at the Silverton Gallery Building beside village hall. Recently, the fire suppression system's control board had a mechanical failure, which needs to be repaired in order to ensure the building is safe and meets fire codes. We are sourcing bids on doing that work, and hope to have it repaired soon. In the meantime, we have asked building user groups to shift over to Memorial Hall.

I am committed to working with the mayor and council and village staff to address all of these matters in an open way, while sticking within our budget to keep property tax increases as low as possible. Some projects are easier to address, while larger undertakings will require us to set aside money in our budget so require more planning. We are hearing you, and doing what we can within the resources we have. We welcome constructive suggestions and input from any resident.

I am equally committed to transparent local government that respects every dollar paid by our taxpayers - you. To that end, we continue to conduct a review of all village operations and will report any findings publicly. We are also moving to a system of more detailed financial reporting. Previously village operations were reflected in a single line item in our budget. By breaking out the major operating costs we undertake, such as snow removal and garbage collection, we will be better able to understand where taxpayer money is being spent and create transparency for residents paying for those services with their tax dollars. We plan to have that in place before the next annual budget is developed. Further, we are continuing to move village business to open council meetings wherever

possible, reducing how much municipal business is being decided in closed meetings to only what is required due to matters of personnel, legal action or land negotiations. Feel free to come by a meeting, held 7 p.m. on the second Wednesday of every month.

Threats and Harassment

I would also like to update you on another, unfortunate, situation – ongoing harassment and threats against me, your elected mayor and councillors, and other village staff by a small number of residents.

When we addressed the water system issue earlier this year a small group of residents started spreading misinformation about the situation. This quickly escalated to threats and harassment that continue today. A substantial amount of dog poop was dumped on the village office's front steps the week of June 26. I have been accosted on the street, physically threatened and told to quit my job and leave town or be forcibly removed from office. The mayor and councillors have had people bang on the front doors of their homes and come into their places of work to threaten them, demand they fire me, and threatening to force them out of office.

This behavior will not be tolerated. Everyone deserves a safe workplace, and no-one has the right to threaten public officials – or anyone else – or vandalise village property. Our elected officials are committed and mostly volunteer, making only \$3,000 - \$5,000 a year for untold hundreds of hours of work. They deserve our thanks, not threats at their front door.

We will continue to report all instances of uttering threats, harassment, and vandalism to RCMP, and appreciate their support in investigating these acts. We are also taking steps to enhance the personal security of all elected officials and village staff, as well as our buildings and facilities.

My sincere hope is that cooler heads prevail, and this behavior stops. We know change is difficult, and we are undertaking a great deal of change right now. Please know that we are working in the best interest of good government and responsible finance for all Silverton.

We are stronger when we work together to address challenges in a constructive manner and deal with disagreement through civil dialogue rather than with misinformation, threats, and criminal behavior.

Thank you

I would like to thank you for reading this update, and again extend an invitation to come out to a council meeting or let us know your thoughts about any village matter by emailing cao@silverton.ca. Please, just keep it civil and constructive!

Kind regards,

Viv Thoss
Chief Administrative Officer