

Oliver/Osoyoos/Penticton Scan

Local Representation Oliver:

MP: Alex Atamanenko, (NDP, British Columbia Southern Interior)
MLAs: John Slater (Boundary-Similkameen)
Mayor: Ron Hovanes

Local Representation Osoyoos:

MP: Alex Atamanenko, (NDP, British Columbia Southern Interior)
MLAs: John Slater, (Boundary-Similkameen)
Mayor: Stu Wells

Local Representation Penticton:

MP: Dan Albas (Conservative, Okanagan-Coquihalla)
MLA: Bill Barisoff (Penticton)
Mayor: Dan Ashton

Latest employment numbers for Thompson-Okanagan Development Region:

January 2013:	244,600 jobs	6.5% unemployment rate
December 2012:	251,800 jobs	5.7% unemployment rate
January 2012:	256,700 jobs	6.9% unemployment rate

Last time in the area:

Osoyoos – February 6, 2012:

- Okanagan Correctional Centre: Announcement that the Osoyoos's Indian Band's proposed site location was selected for the new Okanagan Correctional Centre. The proposed centre will consist of 360 secure cells in 10 living units at an estimated construction cost of approximately \$200 million.
- BCL Stand-up Reception.

Penticton:

- February 7, 2012 – Penticton Public Safety Roundtable
- May 25, 2012 – Free the Grapes event and address the 60th BC Chamber of Commerce AGM

Key issues:

Penticton Regional Hospital Expansion: There are many calls in the community to expand and upgrade the 61 year-old Penticton Regional Hospital and there is growing frustration that Penticton is being overlooked in favour of hospital capital projects in Vernon and Kelowna.

Response:

- We understand that a new tower at Penticton Hospital is a priority for the community.
- And we are committed to building a hospital in Penticton.
- **Since 2001**, we have invested:
 - over **\$12 million** in upgrades to Penticton Regional Hospital.

- Over **\$8 billion** on health care capital projects across the province.
- **\$1.5 billion in the Interior alone.**
 - Expansion at Kelowna General Hospital where the first ever open heart surgery outside the Lower Mainland took place two months ago on a patient from Penticton,
 - The new UBC Faculty of Medicine and the Interior Health Clinical Academic Campus is helping to train new physicians.
- We need to balance financial requests across government against the reality of our fiscal situation.
- Where possible, we try to find innovative solutions that allow us to proceed with critical projects in a phased approach.
- These decisions are never simple, but there is only so much money to go around to pay for the ongoing, expensive and very real need for new and renovated facilities.

Modernizing liquor:

- British Columbia wines have gained international recognition for their outstanding quality over the last 20 years.
- Your government is encouraging other provinces and territories to allow their residents to order and receive direct shipments of 100% Canadian wine from other Canadian jurisdictions.
- While it is still illegal for me to ship Premier Wynne a bottle of wine, I am hopeful that when she receives a fine bottle of B.C. wine from MP Dan Albas, she will help us to change that.
- As part of your government's efforts to modernize antiquated liquor laws, we have done the following:
 - Provided flexibility to live-event venues and revises liquor laws for movie theatres.
 - Provided the opportunity for restaurant customers that want to bring their own wine into a licensed dining establishment.
 - B.C. residents may now bring back an unlimited amount of 100 per cent Canadian wine if it is for personal consumption and purchased from a recognized winery in another province, or choose to have it shipped from the winery direct to their home.
 - BC residents returning from another Canadian province can bring back on-their-person up to nine litres of wine, three litres of spirits, and a combined total of 25.6 litres of beer, cider or coolers for personal consumption.
 - Appointed an Honourary BC Wine Envoy who will work to complement existing cross-agency efforts to further advance government's efforts to open up domestic markets for BC wines.

Testalinden update:

- All outstanding claims by land owners and renters who suffered damages in the debris flow have now been settled by the province.

- The Province is currently in the process of attempting to recoup the costs awarded from the individuals deemed responsible for the incident.
- As there remains litigation before the courts, I am unable to comment in more detail.

Influenza A Outbreak at McKinney Place Extended Care Facility: At the end of January, an outbreak was declared at Oliver's McKinney Place Extended care facility when it was discovered that eight residents had a respiratory illness.

Response:

- Even though precautions are taken to prevent the spread of influenza within health facilities, outbreaks can occur during flu season within hospitals and residential care facilities.
- There are a number of ways to prevent the spread of influenza in health and residential care facilities, including avoiding facilities if you have flu-like symptoms, practising good hand-washing hygiene, and, of course, getting immunized.
- In the case of a localized outbreak, facilities put in place additional precautions and restrictions to prevent the spread and transmission of influenza.

Affordable Housing: The cost of housing is becoming an increasing concern for the town.

Response:

- Over the last few years we have worked to improve rental housing and homeownership opportunities for B.C. residents:
 - We amended the Strata Property Act to preserve the right to rent a strata lot from one purchaser to the next for strata corporations formed after January 1, 2010;
 - Encourage municipalities to introduce bylaws that expand secondary suites and laneway homes; and
 - Continue to press the federal government to stop penalizing developers and bring in fair tax policies that encourage new rental housing in our communities.
- In addition, around \$500,000 is invested each year to provide subsidized housing and rent supplements for more than 150 households in Oliver.
 - This includes support for more than 100 senior households and over 45 families.
 - Government investment has also helped create 33 new affordable rentals in the community since 2001.
- In January, we raised the threshold for the Homeowners Grant which means that more than one million B.C. homeowners may be eligible for the full grant.
 - In Budget 2007, the homeowner grant program was also expanded to include eligible low-income homeowners who, but for the high assessed value of their homes, would have been eligible for the full grant.
 - The government also announced in November 2011 plans to create a further grant of up to \$275 for low-income Canadian Forces veterans with

more recent service in the event they do not already qualify as seniors or persons with disabilities.

- Property Tax Deferment is a low-interest loan program that enables qualifying homeowners in BC to defer, all or in part, the annual property taxes of their homes.

Future Policing Costs Weighing on Council: Increased policing costs are expected to take effect after the 2016 Census, where Osoyoos's population will exceed 5,000 people which will increase policing costs to 65%, local taxes could increase.

Response:

- Under the Police Act and the RCMP police agreements, municipalities with populations between 5,000 and 15,000 persons that contract the RCMP pay 70% of their RCMP cost-base while municipalities over 15,000 persons pay 90%, with the remainder of each paid by the federal government.
- All municipalities remain responsible for 100% of certain costs, such as accommodation (ex: the detachment) and support staff.
- The federal government cost-share the services in recognition of the benefit that Canada receives by having RCMP members across Canada that can be redeployed in the event of an emergency.
- We obviously would encourage emerging municipalities to prepare for the possible future increases in policing costs.

911 Funding Changes Could Hurt Penticton: Changes to the funding formula for regional 911 dispatch service to a user-pay system would see Penticton's cost rise by almost \$200,000 this year yet other areas in the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen would then enjoy substantial decreases.

Response:

- 911 services are often administered and provided by Regional Districts to participating rural areas and local municipalities.
- Regional districts determine the cost sharing arrangement among their members to pay for the service and these cost sharing models can vary region to region.
- The province has no role in determining the allocation of 911 costs.
- The regulation of telecommunications is a federal, CRTC, responsibility.

Canada, U.S. Deal on Okanagan Water Flows Raises Concerns: In early 2013, Canada and the U.S. reached a 25 year agreement on Okanagan water flows. There are concerns this could have a negative impact on Osoyoos Lake.

Response:

- This change was in response to concerns raised by several shoreline residents that a sustained maximum lake level would be too high because of concerns about flooding, erosion, riparian habitat, endangered species and navigation.
- The change would also eliminate the need for drought declarations.
- On January 31, 2013, the International Joint Commission issued an Order of Approval renewing Washington State's authority to operate Zosel Dam.
- The Order notes that the maximum elevation of Osoyoos Lake be reduced to 912.5 feet with the flexibility to regulate within a two-foot range every year

WestJet's Encore Overlooks Penticton: Penticton was not one of first round of destinations WestJet announced on Monday for its' new regional carrier Encore.

Response:

- This announcement represents only the initial services to be offered by the new airline.
- WestJet Encore will take delivery of their first two regional aircraft in June with another five being delivered by year end. With the first two aircraft, WestJet Encore will serve routes to Nanaimo and Fort St. John.
- Additional destinations in BC are expected to be included as WestJet Encore takes possession of new aircraft and announces new routes.
- WestJet Encore has indicated that its initial focus will be on western Canada, meaning cities such as Penticton are potential destinations for early inclusion in their route network.

Nuisance Deer: There have been several media reports of an increasing deer population that is causing problems for local residents.

Response:

- In some areas, urban deer have become a safety concern due to the growing number of conflicts between people and pets, increases in deer-related automobile collisions and the tendency of urban deer to attract predators such as cougars.
- Since every community has a different geography, deer population and capacity for dealing with urban wildlife, solutions can vary depending on specific conditions and local attitudes.
- The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations can help communities manage urban deer conflicts by taking part in planning committees, providing technical advice, developing hunting regulations, issuing permits to manage urban deer populations and loaning equipment to communities as required.
- Local governments experiencing urban deer issues are encouraged to develop detailed community management plans that include resident opinion surveys, deer population estimates, "no-feeding" bylaws and educational initiative outlining various conflict reduction strategies.

Taxes Going up for Oliver Residents: It has been reported that Oliver residents will see a \$20 hike to their taxes to pay for regional district services.

Response:

- The municipality sets the tax rates, so any increase in taxes are generated locally, by the local government.
- Property taxes are determined by applying the tax rate to the assessed values.
- Assessments are just a tool for determining the distribution of the tax burden.

Lower Property Assessment Values: South Okanagan homeowners, including those in Oliver and Osoyoos, saw a lower property assessment values this year according to BC Assessment.

Response:

- BC Assessment forms their assessments based on property sales in the community as of July 1, 2012.
- If 2013 assessments are going down, it's because the market is indicating a downward trend.

Objections Over New Federal Riding Boundaries: Mayor Dan Ahston has objected to recently announced federal riding boundaries changes.

Response:

- This is a federal issue.

Recent Accomplishments:

- **Funding for Tree Fruit Industry:** In January, it was announced four organisations in the South Okanagan region were receiving a combined \$66,000 in federal-provincial funding to enhance B.C.'s tree fruit operations. The four organisations are the Jind Fruit Company, the Okanagan Kootenay Cherry Growers' Association, the BC Fruit Growers Association Research and Development Test Orchard.
- **Okanagan Correction Centre RFQ Issued:** In December 2012, a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was released to identify proponents capable of delivering the new 378-cell prison, located Oliver. The construction cost of the project is estimated to be approximately \$200 million. It's expected the prison will generate significant economic benefits for the region, including the creation of up to 500 direct and 500 indirect construction jobs, as well as approximately 240 new, full-time correctional positions when the centre opens in late 2016.
- **Improvements for Highway 97:** Work is underway for improvements to Highway 97 between Oliver and Okanagan Falls, north of Gallagher Lake. The improvements will provide four lanes with a paved 2.6 metre centre median, 2 metre wide shoulders, rumble strips and roadside barriers as required. The total cost of this project is \$10 million. Work started November 1, 2012, and is scheduled to be complete by March 15, 2013.
- **Osoyoos and Interior Health Partnership:** In early February, Osoyoos signed an agreement with Interior Health to forge a partnership over the next five years aimed at reducing chronic disease and obesity through an expanded regional health care coalition. The agreement includes the expansion of the Okanagan-Similkameen Healthy Living Coalition (OSHLC).
- **Better At Home Program Coming to Osoyoos and Penticton:** The Better at Home program is designed to help seniors age 65 and older live in their own homes longer by providing simple services delivered by local non-profit agencies. The program is managed by the United Way of the Lower Mainland and funded by the government of British Columbia.
- **BC Jobs Plan Job Fair in Osoyoos:** On February 14, Osoyoos hosted a BC Job Plan jobs fair at the Watermark Hotel.
- **Osoyoos Receiving Resort Municipality Initiative Funding:** In January, it was announced that Osoyoos received \$282,900 in Resort Municipality Initiative (RMI) for 2012. Funding is used to support and promote local tourism economies.

- **Penticton to Host BC Winter Games:** On January 26, it was announced that Penticton had been chosen to host the 2016 BC Winter Games. The B.C. government provides base funding for the Games of between \$525,000 and \$600,000.
- **Aboriginal Training for Employment Program Funding:** In November, it was announced that the Penticton Indian Band received \$150,000 in Aboriginal Training for Employment Program funding for its "Footprints to Employment." This program will train 24 participants and commit to finding employment for 10 participants. It focuses on four primary areas: sales and services; trades; transport and related occupations; forestry and hunting; and art, culture and recreation.