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Kelowna News

Okanagan to benefit from throne speech

by Castanet Staff - Story: 52605
Feb 9, 2010 / 5:19 pm

The second session of the 39th Parliament of British Columbia was launched Tuesday with a speech from the throne that emphasized the steps government will take to propel British Columbia's Olympic momentum to create jobs, improve the environment and support families with children.

"In the year ahead we will build on our Olympic momentum with action that will reward the generations that follow," says Premier Gordon Campbell.

"We must ask how we can best lead change for our grand children's advantage. New support for families with children is at the centre of our economic and social agenda. We will initiate new supports for families with children that will increase productivity, enhance competitiveness and give parents new choices."

Campbell says a new budget will set the foundation for the province we want in 2030, with a far-seeing agenda that advances this government's Five Great Goals.

"Our government's economic mission is clear: We must foster job creation with faster approvals, lower costs, open trade and labour mobility. Productivity and competitiveness are the keys to growing people's pay cheques and re-asserting our role as Canada's job-creation leader."

Local MLAs Steve Thompson (Kelowna-Mission) and Norm Letnick (Kelowna-Lake Country) say the Okanagan stands to benefit from some of the items mentioned during the Throne Speech.

"I think there's some very interesting opportunities for the Okanagan," says Thompson. "The one specific thing I think is very exciting for Kelowna is the Open Skies Agreement. That has real opportunities, I think we would be one of the airports in the province that would really benefit from that."

Thompson says the Olympics will bring great opportunities to promote the Okanagan's tourism and economic and agricultural activity.

"I think residents will see the Throne Speech as setting an agenda and a vision for the government to lead and to continue to be the lead province in the economic recovery that's to come."

Letnick says one of the items during the Throne Speech was a tribute to public servants who have passed away this last year.

"One of the first things was a tribute to the people who have fallen over the last year and one of those was Brian Given and it was a nice tribute to all the public servants, including Brian," says Letnick.

He says one area of interest is the One Project, One Process approach to environmental assessments of projects.

"In many cases now we have two environmental assessment processes that are completed on processes and that of course is very expensive and time consuming, so what we are going to be looking for is for the federal government and other provinces and territories to work with us to pursue amendments to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act to create a unified federal provincial review process that does away with redundancy and unnecessary cost."

The throne speech highlights a number of initiatives to strengthen B.C.'s economy and provide more support for British Columbia families.

 [See some of the highlight's of Tuesday's Throne Speech](#)

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Kelowna Mission MLA Steve Thompson. (File photo: Kelly Hayes - Castanet)



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Kelowna Council Archive

-  February 8, 2010 at 1:30 pm
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Biker & cops charged with assault

by RCMP - Story: 52603
Feb 9, 2010 / 4:15 pm

On August 7, 2009, while off-duty, 40-year-old Cst. Chris MacDonald of Prince Edward Island and 25-year-old Cst. Kiel Samotej of Alberta were allegedly involved in an altercation outside a Kelowna night club (Cheetah's) with 15 to 20 individuals wearing Hells Angels and Throttle Lockers "colors".

As a result of the altercation, Cst. Chris MacDonald, who was part of a group of about seven friends, was taken to Kelowna General Hospital for treatment of numerous injuries. He was held overnight for observation and released the next day.

Other members of MacDonald's group also sustained minor injuries that did not require hospitalization. The incident was investigated by members of the Kelowna RCMP Detachment who forwarded all circumstances of the incident to Crown Counsel for consideration of criminal charges.

On February 5, 2010, Crown Counsel approved charges of assault causing bodily harm against 25-year-old Kelowna resident Errol Milsom-Gardener in relation to his alleged role in the attack on Cst. Chris MacDonald. He will be appearing in court on April 8, 2010 in Kelowna.

Crown Counsel also approved assault charges against Cst. Chris MacDonald and Cst. Kiel Samotej in relation to their alleged assault of an unknown male who was wearing Hells Angels "colors". This alleged assault involved a "shoulder bump" inside the night club and is believed to have instigated the much larger altercation that later took place outside. They will be appearing in court on April 22, 2010 in Kelowna.

An internal RCMP Code of Conduct investigation is currently being conducted. Both members remain on duty.

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Cops get man wanted in Ontario

by Castanet Staff - Story: 52601
Feb 9, 2010 / 3:40 pm

Members of Kelowna RCMP's Downtown Enforcement Unit arrested an Ontario man who was wanted on a Canada Wide Warrant.

36 year old Alexander McKay was wanted by Kingston Police for an alleged Sexual Assault, Sexual Interference and Breach of Probation.

Kingston Police Service advised that McKay may be in Kelowna and asked for assistance in locating and arresting him.

On February 4th, McKay was tracked down to a local homeless shelter, where he had been staying. He was arrested without incident and has since been returned to Ontario to face the charges against him.

McKay is known to police for Criminal Code issues and is considered Violent.

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Google launches Kelowna Street View

by Wayne Moore - Story: 52600
Feb 9, 2010 / 3:30 pm

Google has unveiled its controversial 'Street View' of Kelowna.

The on-line search engine launched 'Street View' in May of 2007.

Since that time, Google has added more cities and more streets within those cities.


To access 'Street View,' users type in an address in Google Maps and below the address, click the 'More' drop down menu, then click 'Street View.'

Castanet Content Manager, David Fowler, says larger Canadian cities, such as Toronto and Vancouver, were added about six months ago.

Fowler says Tuesday's launch includes several 'second tier' cities, including centres around the Okanagan.



File photo: Kelly Hayes

 January 25, 2010 at 1:30 pm

 January 19, 2010 at 6:00 pm

 January 18, 2010 at 1:30 pm

 January 11, 2010 at 1:30 pm

 December 18, 2009 at 08:00 am

 December 14, 2009 at 1:30 pm

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 November 30, 2009 at 1:30 pm

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He says 'Street View' provides users a 360° horizon tal view from a row of positions along the street.

"Google Maps allow us to see a general map of an area. It also allows us to see a satellite shot of the area. Now with 'Street View,' it's literally a view of the area," says Fowler.

"It's like you are standing in the middle of a street and being able to look around 360 degrees."

He says it allows you to do a virtual walk through of any street in Kelowna at any time.

"The photos are dated. I noticed on my street we had our street re-paved and a traffic calming measure put in. That wasn't in when I went to see my house when I logged in."

Street View vehicles were spotted in the Okanagan in the spring of 2009.

The Chevrolet Cobalt's were equipped with pole mounted cameras on the roof of the vehicles.

Fowler expects we will see the vehicles around again in a year or so as the site gets updated on a periodic basis.

Aside from the obvious curiosity factor, Fowler says he believes the biggest benefit is to those people looking to buy a house in a new town or city.

He says in that regard, it's revolutionary.

"I really think it is. If you are looking to buy a house in Kelowna and you're from out of town, to be able to walk down a potential street that you may want to live on and get a feel for the area, I think it is an invaluable tool."

Canada's Privacy Commissioner, among others, have spoken out against 'Street View' due to privacy concerns.

Fowler doesn't think that is as big an issue as people think it is since all of the images are at least a year old.

All Okanagan communities from the border all the way north are all available for viewing on 'Street View.'

 **Video: Demonstration of how Google Street View works.** (Video-Kelly Hayes)

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Retired firefighter watches truck burn

by Wayne Moore - Story: 52593
Feb 9, 2010 / 1:30 pm

During his working days, Lea Wegleitner was called to many vehicle fires.

Tuesday, the retired Kelowna firefighter found himself on the other end.

Wegleitner says he had just parked his truck in the rear parking lot at Capri Centre Mall during the noon hour to do some shopping.

"I got out of the vehicle, went in to shop and someone hollered and said 'look at your truck.' I looked back and there was black smoke coming out, which is a bad sign when it's black," says Wegleitner.

Within minutes, a number of bystanders were able to gather up a number of fire extinguishers.

Andrew Pritchard, an employee at the Capri Hotel was one of those.

"There was a report on the radio that there was a truck on fire in front of Capri Insurance. I came around the corner and there was this huge column of smoke coming out of the truck," says Pritchard.

"It must have been really hot because it melted right through the hood. I sprayed through the hole in the hood to try and calm the fire down a bit."

He says there was a lot of fire and a lot of smoke.

"It started melting through the dashboard and into the cabin of the truck."

Pritchard says they were able to grab about a half dozen extinguishers from the laundry and maintenance areas of the hotel.

Wegleitner says he has no idea how the fire started.

He says over the years as a firefighter, he learned to be careful around vehicle fires.



Photo: Wayne Moore - Castanet

Kelowna SPCA Featured Pet



Tigger

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"You learn a lot. You have to be cautious because a lot of motors now have magnesium parts in them and if you put cold water on magnesium that is hot you get a backflash and a little bit of an explosion. I was a little worried about that."

It appeared as if vehicles around the burning truck escaped without any damage.

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Kelowna asks for B.C. pesticide ban

by Wayne Moore - Story: 52589
Feb 9, 2010 / 9:00 am

Kelowna City Council wants pesticides banned throughout the province.

Just how far that ban should go was a source of debate with council chambers Monday.

Council, which established a pesticide bylaw that came into effect in 2009, is sending its support for proposed provincial legislation which would prohibit the sale and use of cosmetic pesticides by homeowners.

The recommendations would also put restrictions on who could apply certain pesticides and how they could be sold.

However, some on council believed the recommendations don't go far enough.

Councillor Charlie Hodge felt the restriction should include licensed applicators as well as homeowners.

"If you want to go ahead and stop using pesticides fine. But, we are going to have to come to you and say 'if you want the same looks of your parks we will do our very best, but you'll also have to show us a significant increase to our operating budget,'" says Civic Operations Director Joe Creron.

He says that increase could be as high as \$700,000.

"This is our opportunity to send a strong message and I think I heard staff say the alternate recommendation is better protection for our environment, it may cost a little bit more," says Councillor Michele Rule.

In a 5-3 vote, council agreed to recommend its current policy to the province, with Councillor Hodge, Rule and Angela Reid all voting against, favouring the harder line approach.

"Quite personally, I don't think the recommendations are even strong enough yet, but they are a good start," says Councillor Charlie Hodge.

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Council wants public input on elections

by Wayne Moore - Story: 52582
Feb 9, 2010 / 5:00 am

Kelowna City Council wants the public to weigh in on possible changes to the Local Government Election Act.

The province has established a task force which is looking into changes to the act prior to the next series of municipal elections in 2011.

The city has been asked to submit any changes it would like to see to the task force prior to April 15.

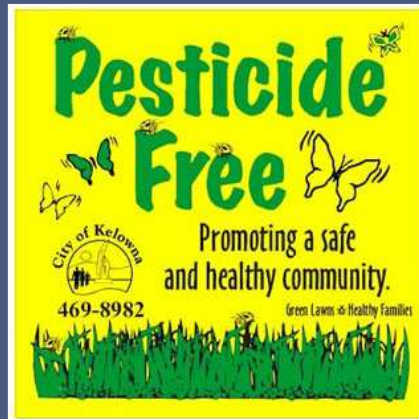
City of Kelowna staff issued a report to council Monday, recommending the election date be moved up, possibly by as much as a month as well as expanding mail-in-voting to including anyone who wishes to vote in such a manner.

Mail-in-voting was introduced during the 2008 election, however, it was restricted to those who would be out of town on election day.

"It seems that a lot of the discussion around local government elections and elections in general is accommodating the voters and trying to get the voting public out to vote and figuring out ways to increase voter participation," says Karen Needham who prepared the report for council.

Instead of endorsing the report, council instead decided to defer it, asking for public input before responding to the task force.

"I thought we could have a much longer list. I think some of the things that were thought about here we haven't discussed



File Photo: Rachael Kimola - Castanet

as council," says Mayor Sharon Shepherd.

"I'm not sure why we are hesitating to deliberate how we feel as council about some things like voters age, terms of office, I think we should come up with a suggested date. We haven't even received information from the broad public in our community."

Council also talked about electronic (internet) voting, something City Clerk Stephen Fleming says has been discussed but not pursued because of the expense.

He says using electronic voting, something Nanaimo asked for in 2009, would require a change to the elections act.

"The issue with electronic voting isn't so much the technological or the secrecy of the vote, it's the expense. Our estimate based on some preliminary discussions we had with the service provider is it would triple the cost of putting on an election," says Fleming.

"That's not necessarily a bad thing but it would be something that council would need to consider with its budget deliberations. We haven't budgeted to put on an election with the costing triple what it costs today."

Fleming says the province would have to allow it and if they did the city would probably do it, but he warns council they would have to be prepared for the cost involved.

Meantime, something the city does have control over, number of nominators and deposit required for potential candidates will be debated before the 2011 elections.

Councillor Luke Stack asked that both issues be talked about prior to the next election.

Currently, the city requires potential candidates to get only two nomination signatures. The legislation allows for as many as 25.

The city also demands each candidate to place a \$100 deposit, which is refunded once financial statements are turned into City Hall. The \$100 deposit is the most the city can ask for under current legislation.

Fleming says there was some discussion about increasing the nomination requirement to 25 signatures for last fall's by-election, however, it was felt at the time the system should remain the same as it was for councillors running in the regular election one year earlier.

"I would like to make a notice that we have a debate on how many names should be required for a nomination and secondly review the amount of money one would place as a deposit to become a candidate," says Stack.

Fleming says it was always staffs intention to come before council at the appropriate time and suggest the number of signatures be increased to 25.

Councillor Graeme James also agreed.

"I think one of the reasons there was such a poor turnout is because of the high number of candidates. I don't disagree everybody should run but I do expect somebody to get more than 25 votes," says James.

"Unfortunately it costs money to run for municipal council. I really believe \$100 is too little. If you only have \$100 you're not going to get elected."

James says some of the candidates didn't take part in any of the forums, calling them nuisance candidates.

"If you're serious, people will know that."



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Homeless rally draws large crowd

by Elisha Dacey - Story: 52583
Feb 8, 2010 / 6:10 pm

Some shouting "no more violence, no more violence," about 125 people walked in protest at 5 p.m. Monday night over the vicious beating of a homeless man just over a week ago.

Kelowna resident Celia Browne-Clayton organized the rally after hearing the story of a homeless man, identified as "Shorty" by friends in the crowd, who was savagely beaten by four men for being homeless.

Browne-Clayton says while the beating horrified her, what disgusted her more was that no one stopped to help, despite passing by during the attack.

"We're in growing pains," says Browne-Clayton. "We're on the verge of becoming a big city, and I don't want us to become a really big city that doesn't care about each other."

There were several speakers before the march, including Heather Henderson, who was homeless herself at one point.



A protester stands at the Orchard Park Mall bus stop with his sign. (Elisha Dacey - Castanet)

Henderson teared up several times and was visibly shaking as she talked about her experience on the street, including not talking to her child for more than three years, or her father for 10.

Many who gathered brandished protest signs while they walked from the Kelowna Zellers parking lot to the Orchard Park Mall bus stop, the distance Shorty had to walk to find help.

The signs included statements like "I Care," and "Please don't turn beating homeless people into an Olympic spectator sport."

Browne-Clayton says she was happy with the turnout, considering it was dinnertime, it was raining and the rally was organized on short notice.

"I'm not a professional protester," says Browne-Clayton. "I've never done something like this before. I just wanted to show that we care, to make a statement that Kelowna doesn't support violence, especially against those in our society so marginalized."

Lindsay Guenther, who is currently homeless, says she wished more people from the homeless community had showed up to the rally.

"I have real mixed emotions about it. I know it's hard to get the message out (to the homeless community) but I wish more of our brothers had showed," she says, adding she saw about five homeless people there.

Guenther says people in Kelowna don't realize how violent the streets are.

"There's a lot of violence, and a lot of it goes unreported and unsaid. A lot of it is ignorance. People don't understand that a lot of us who are homeless aren't homeless by choice."

Guenther says she has been on the streets for four months and has just managed to find a place to rent.

Browne-Clayton says while the rally was in response to a violent attack, the solution is to speak up.

"I want to let the people who witnessed the violence to know that it's not too late to come forward, it's not too late to care, and to tell the police what happened and what they saw," says Browne-Clayton.

Police say no one has yet to come forward with more information about the attack.

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Council quashes Sutherland Ave. apts.

by Wayne Moore - Story: 52581
Feb 8, 2010 / 5:00 pm

A 36-unit affordable housing complex is the right project in the wrong place.

That was the opinion of Kelowna City Council in unanimously turning down an application for the four-and-a-half storey building proposed for the corner of Sutherland Avenue and Richter Street.

"To me, maintaining the character of the area means maintaining the OCP designation of the interior of the block. I like the idea of smaller units, but in this location I honestly think it's significantly out of character with the neighbourhood," says Councillor Robert Hobson.



Conceptual drawing

There are a number of areas in the downtown core that we have designated for higher density which would be a welcome place for this kind of development. In this location, I think it is significantly out of character."

The applicant, Walter Weisstock, proposed the development, which would include many smaller size, affordable apartment units between 450 and 700 square feet.

City staff recommended against the development, in part because Weisstock would not sign a housing agreement.

Weisstock argued before council that he would be unable to get bank financing if it was tied to a housing agreement.

He says he has several apartments in another development which he is unable to sell because they are tied to a housing agreement.

"We have professional salesmen and as soon as they explain to them the city is going to tell you how much equity you can make and you still have to put a down payment on it and who you can sell it to, everyone walks away," says Weisstock.

"Every developer I have ever talked to that is in this situation say they can't sell them."

Community Planning Manager Theresa Eichler says the letter Weisstock produced from RBC regarding financing of projects tied to housing agreements was from September, 2008. She says a mortgage default clause was added in 2009

after extensive discussions with CMHC and lenders.

"We do have probably between 40 and 50 units that are sold with these agreements in place, both prior to and after the change," says Eichler.

Staff also took issue with the size of the development, location and the fact current services and infrastructure may not be adequate to support the added density.

Council was unanimous in its support for the project in a different location.

"I too can't support this as it is. It's an excellent idea Mr. Weisstock but I just think the location is the wrong location," added Councillor Luke Stack.

"Affordable units in an appropriate area designated for RM-5 would be ideal. I think at the right location you would get a lot of support and you wouldn't have to worry about a housing agreement."

Mayor Sharon Shepherd, who's daughter lives across the street from the proposed development, declared a conflict of interest and excused herself from the debate.

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Passerby thwarts attempted B & E

by Wayne Moore - Story: 52572
Feb 8, 2010 / 3:30 pm

It seems a passerby was in the right place at the right time to thwart a break and enter which was in progress late Sunday evening.

Police say the person called shortly after 11 p.m., indicating there was a possible break in at a vacant storefront on Banks Road.

Constable Steve Holmes says no one was in the business when police arrived, however, he says the lock to the door had been broken and would-be thieves had attempted to break into an adjoining business through an adjoining wall.



RCMP Cst. Steve Holmes. (File Photo: Wayne Moore - Castanet)

The business, A & C Sports, sells hunting, fishing and outdoor gear.

"Obviously as a police officer, I would be thinking perhaps the reason they were doing that would not be for a few flies. They might be going after something more sinister," says Holmes.

The owner of A & C Sports, Cindy Sommer, credits police for a fast response to the break-in call.

She says her business is heavily alarmed and everything is locked away.

Sommer says the space next door has only been vacant for a few weeks.

There was a very small hole in the wall which Sommer says has already been repaired.

Holmes says thieves are getting more creative in their attempt to get what they are looking for.

"There have been roofs, there have been front doors. I don't think anyone has tried to dig under a building yet. They are trying every angle they can think of."

The investigation is on-going and Holmes says anyone with information is asked to contact the Kelowna RCMP Detachment or Crime Stoppers.

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