



REGIONAL DISTRICT OF OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN INFORMATION RELEASE June 23, 2014

West Bench Water Supply Upgrade Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

The Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) is pleased to announce the completion of the West Bench Water Supply Upgrade project.

Boiling drinking water on a daily basis is now a thing of the past for the West Bench water service area customers. After many years of effort from the residents and several levels of government staff and politicians, the water system has been completely rebuilt and is now connected to the City of Penticton's water. On May 9, 2014 the Boil Water Notice was lifted.

In 2009, an application was submitted under the joint federal and provincial Building Canada Fund – Communities Component program and was approved for \$ 3,380,000 for specifically improving the treatment of the water. Two options were identified as feasible upgrades for the water system to meet the Canadian Drinking Water guidelines and Interior Health Authority requirements – a new Ultraviolet Treatment facility or a connection to the treated water from the City of Penticton's water filtration plant. Residents agreed through a referendum to proceed with the purchase of bulk water from the City of Penticton's water system.

“Our Government is committed to strengthening our communities and protecting Canadians”, said Dan Albas, Member of Parliament for Okanagan-Coquihalla and Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board on behalf of the Honourable Michelle Rempel, Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification. “With our investments in these vital infrastructure upgrades, we have delivered on our commitment to providing a safe and reliable water supply for residents, while contributing to the long-term prosperity of the community.”

Funding for \$2,353,333 was approved by the provincial government in 2005 under the British Columbia Community Water Improvement Program. The support was approved on the basis that the WBID would dissolve and move the water service to either the Regional District (RDOS) or the City of Penticton.

“The Government of British Columbia provided over \$4 million to help bring safe, clean tap water to the West Bench in the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen,” said Penticton MLA Dan Ashton. “This significant investment in water quality will help support the community’s quality of life.”

The water upgrades project began many years ago by the West Bench Irrigation District (WBID) with the initiation of a major pipe replacement project in the mid 1990's due to an increase of pipe failures over a 12 month span. WBID resolved to complete an

engineering study that prioritized a systematic replacement of all water mains. The water system consisted of mostly steel pipe built in the 1950's and was at the end of its useful life and would continue to fail. The WBID then began the systematic replacement of the watermains and over 60% of the watermains in the system had been upgraded by 2010.

Water quality monitoring requirements were also rapidly increasing in the 1990's as well as growing water conservation concerns in the Okanagan valley. These requirements led the WBID Board to apply for senior government support through the Regional District to not only replace the failing pipes, but also to provide for the treatment and metering of water.

The final stages of the water upgrade project began in 2012 with the replacement of about 2.5 km of watermain by design consultant Aplin & Martin Consultants and construction contractor Grizzly Excavating. The second part of the project involved bringing a connection from the City of Penticton's water distribution system on Riverside Drive up to the West Bench area and building a new booster station. Focus Corporation was the design consultant on this portion of the upgrade project. The new supply main was constructed beginning at Riverside Drive, taken under the Okanagan River channel by directional drilling, and installed up West Bench Hill Road by H&M Excavating. The new water booster station was constructed by Cumming Construction.

During the design of the water system upgrades, the new pedestrian corridor pathway project up to the West Bench area was also moving ahead. For efficiency, the projects were merged together for design and construction.

As part of the upgrade project, water meters have been installed on all water connections by Grizzly Excavating. RDOS staff will be reviewing data to propose a usage rate billing structure that will move to a user pay system in the future versus the current system based on property size.

Thank you to the residents of the West Bench for your patience and commitment to the upgrade projects.

M. Pendergraft
RDOS Board Chair

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