Regional Growth Strategy launched for the South Okanagan

Penticton - In partnership with the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services, the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) has begun a Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) planning process for the South Okanagan with the member municipalities of Penticton, Summerland, Oliver and Osoyoos.

The region’s lifestyle opportunities and high quality of life have long attracted people to the South Okanagan, and the RDOS is anticipating considerable growth over the next 20 years. Many of these lifestyle advantages will be lost unless all levels of government act together to achieve the future we all want. The RGS will be a “made in the South Okanagan” plan for sustainable growth management that recognizes our unique nature, people, and resources.

Dan Ashton, Chair of the RDOS, believes the RGS is critical for preserving our quality of life for future generations.

“The Regional Growth Strategy provides a process for making choices for a sustainable future, which preserves the region’s high quality of life” Chair Ashton stated. “It will be a tremendous benefit for all present and future citizens of the region.”

The RGS is a long-term planning project that deals with growth management issues for the South Okanagan area. The South Okanagan RGS takes a “big picture” approach to planning. It will define a shared regional vision, and identify and prioritize common goals across the region that meet social, environmental, and economic objectives. Possible key issues to be addressed by the RGS include air quality, water quality and quantity, regional land use, economic development, housing, transportation, and infrastructure planning.

The South Okanagan RGS will establish a formal communications and coordination structure between all levels of governments that optimize our resources and ensure that development is sustainable. It will identify ways the RDOS, local municipalities, and First Nations can collaborate to achieve development that preserves our lifestyle advantages, and protects the environment.
The RGS planning process is scheduled to continue into 2006, with an approved RGS policy document in February 2006. A public consultation plan will be created that will outline the ongoing consultation activities with the public and stakeholder groups. The first public forum on the RGS is scheduled for November 2004.

“It is a collaborative process that includes ongoing consultation with the public, First Nations, and local, regional, and senior level governments” noted Mitchell Edgar, RGS Coordinator. “The process will allow local residents of the South Okanagan to choose the kind of future they desire.”

For more information about this important planning initiative, please contact Mitchell Edgar, RGS Coordinator at (250) 490-4137 or medgar@rdos.bc.ca or visit our website at www.rdos.bc.ca for an overview of the Regional Growth Strategy.

D. Ashton  
RDOS Board Chair

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