



Mayor's ADDRESS



2020

December 14, 2020

Each year at this time, I like to do a year in review to highlight what the Township of Langley has accomplished and celebrated over the past 12 months.

To say 2020 has been a year unlike any other is an understatement. The spread of COVID-19 and the challenges posed by this life-threatening virus has had an enormous impact on our community and around the world.

Nevertheless, the year started with us welcoming the 2020 New Holland Canadian Junior Curling Championships to the George Preston Recreation Centre, but within weeks, COVID-19 had struck. By mid-March, the Township of Langley, like everyone else, was making severe changes for the sake of everyone's health and safety, and since then our new normal has been constantly evolving as we learn and adapt to fight the coronavirus.

The pandemic created a year full of unprecedented challenges, but there were many things to acknowledge and be grateful for, too. We may not have hosted our regular annual events and meetings, but the important work of the Township continued in 2020 as staff from all divisions committed to providing the vital services and infrastructure we rely on, while keeping the health and safety of all community members the top priority.

On March 19, the Emergency Operations Centre, which serves both the Township and the City of Langley, was opened. It provides a centralized information and response centre and ensures appropriate levels of services are in place to support our community. We are very grateful to the staff members who took on the important task of operating the EOC on top of their own workloads and responsibilities. And to ensure residents had the most up-to-date, reliable information on everything from our reopening and safety plans to health and community support links, an online resource was created at tol.ca/COVID19.

In 2020, many things went virtual, from our Canada Day celebrations and the Langley Walk, to our livestreamed Council meetings, which were held continuously to ensure the necessary work of the Township was done. Business was conducted online or by phone, Zoom and Teams meetings became the new norm, and strict physical distancing and other measures were put in place, as we followed Provincial Health Orders to ensure the safety of those working in Township facilities.

The Township changed the way services were delivered so that people and businesses could continue to function. Throughout 2020, staff could be found repairing roads and

maintaining infrastructure, protecting people and property, keeping trails and parks open, and ensuring that day-to-day business continued as smoothly as possible.

Our community volunteers and pioneers were celebrated, albeit without gatherings, a Fraser River flood watch was undertaken, work continued on our Climate Action Strategy, and the 75th anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands was celebrated at the Derek Doubleday Arboretum with a sea of orange tulips, all while keeping safety at the forefront.

To help reduce residents' financial hardship during the COVID-19 crisis, Council passed the Township's 2020 Budget with only a 2% tax increase and divided the late payment dates for unpaid taxes, while staff came up with safe ways to collect payments. The Township also worked with and for local businesses, to help them make critical adjustments to allow them to continue to serve us and provide employment.

In May, Council temporarily expanded patio use and food truck operation requirements to allow for more outdoor, physically distanced seating. As well, an Open For Business directory was created to connect residents to Township businesses providing delivery, contactless pickup, or physical-distanced interactions, and to encourage people to shop locally.

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to our first responders, our health care providers, police and fire personnel, educators, transit operators, the owners and staff of our local businesses, and everyone else who ensured the public had the critical care, supplies, and support we needed during this crisis. Throughout the community, people stepped up to help one another, heroes were found in our emergency responders and front line workers, and our local businesses showed a capacity for change and creativity that ensured no one went without, even in the uncertain initial stages of the pandemic. It was a year of painted rocks along pathways, thank you signs in windows, and rounds of applause at 7:00pm.

Good news, a vaccine will be available in 2021. However, inoculation for all Canadians may not be complete until later next year, so until that time, we must remain cautious and diligent. Township residents have been doing an exceptional job and we ask you to continue doing so.

I would also like to thank members of Township Council, our dedicated staff, and all of our residents, for doing their part to get us through this extraordinary year.

Looking back on our unforgettable 2020, it's clear that the Township of Langley is strong and resilient and by continuing to support each other and working together while staying apart, our community will overcome this. We know celebrations will be different from those in the past, but we can still enjoy time with the people we love – virtually and safely.

I wish you all the best for the holiday season and a safe and healthy new year.

Jack Froese

MAYOR, Township of Langley