

## Delegation presents findings of study of substance use service access in Abbotsford

On Sept. 10, a delegation from UBC's Centre for Advancing Health Outcomes presented to City Council the findings of a significant and collaborative study on substance use service access in Abbotsford.

Utilizing funds from a SparcBC Homelessness Community Action Grant, the City of Abbotsford partnered with UBC's Centre for Advancing Health Outcomes to identify and address critical barriers faced by unhoused individuals in accessing substance use services.

The research gathered evidence-based insights from frontline workers across 25 social service agencies through 27 interviews, focus groups and field observations. The study highlights key challenges, including the severe lack of treatment options, the toxicity of the current drug supply and systemic delays that hinder access to essential services such as detox and stabilization. These findings provide crucial evidence to support Abbotsford and its partners in advocating for improvements to services and increased funding. The goal is to ensure that individuals in need can access these life-saving services without delay.

This important work underscores the City of Abbotsford's ongoing commitment to addressing the impacts of substance use, homelessness and overall community well-being. The findings serve as a call to action not only for Abbotsford but for communities across the region, encouraging meaningful change and ensuring vulnerable populations receive the support they need.

## City Council approves land proposal to allow work on Fraser River bank stabilization

On Sept. 10, City Council approved a Fraser River Bank Stabilization - Land Tenure Application package for a term of 30 years for protection of works associated with the Matsqui Dike.

In their presentation, staff explained that the agreement is needed in order for the City to access and stabilize a three-kilometre section of Crown land along the south side of the Fraser River between Beharrell and Page roads. That section of the riverbed is eroding and if unattended to may expand and affect the stability of the Matsqui Dike.

A Steering Committee that includes the City, Province and Semá:th First Nation is proposing constructing large benched vanes spurs - cone shaped features built of rock that create a back eddy on the downstream side - which would provide necessary bank protection, while also enhancing fishing sites and improving fish habitat.

The plan is expected to cost \$18 million, with \$7.26 million from the federal Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund approved in principle by the Government of Canada as well as \$10 million in Provincial grant funding (with an additional \$2 million in interest accrued).

## Tourism Abbotsford provides City Council with 2024 update

On Sept. 24, Tourism Abbotsford came before City Council to provide their Year to Date services update for 2024. The update is a part of the agreement the City renewed with Tourism Abbotsford in January for its tourism marketing, destination development and event management services.

As part of its mandate, some of the Tourism Abbotsford Society's primary business functions include increasing the amount of time and money visitors spend in Abbotsford, improving occupancy rates between peak tourist season and the offseason, growing the overall value of Abbotsford's visitor economy, creating and facilitating opportunities for local tourism businesses to collaborate and network, and increasing the diversity of experiences available to tourists in Abbotsford. Starting this year Tourism Abbotsford was also responsible for producing the City's Canada Day event.

Tourism Abbotsford's update included an overview of marketing campaigns, events and programs from this past year, as well as some statistics. For example, they found that from April to August, Visitor Centre ambassadors interacted with 5,533 tourists, an increase over previous years; on Canada Day, up to 65,000 people, mostly from Abbotsford, attended throughout the day from the parade to the fireworks display; and 20,000 people, including 8,200 locals, have accessed the Go! Abbotsford online events calendar.



## City Council receives Energy and Climate Action Annual Update

On Sept. 10, City Council received a presentation from staff on the 2024 Energy and Climate Action Annual Update, including a review of progress towards greenhouse gas reduction targets as well carbon reduction initiatives.

The update noted that the City's corporate-facing carbon emissions for 2023 were 24 per cent below 2007 baseline levels (the year the City signed on to the BC Climate Action Charter), exceeding its short-term reduction target of 20 per cent by 2025.

Fleet emissions are down 23 percent from baseline levels due to a continued transition to renewable diesel as well as the ongoing replacement of fossil fuel passenger vehicles with electric vehicles. Building emissions are 5 per cent below 2007 levels. The report also noted that these emissions are particularly challenging to reduce due to seasonal and extreme weather impacts on operational heating and cooling demands.

Public Works emissions are down 70 per cent from baseline levels due to the completed LED Streetlight Upgrade project and ongoing application of optimized and efficient systems and technologies. Contractor-attributed emissions are 20 percent below baseline levels due to seasonal and weather impacts generally related to snow clearing.

2023 Community Climate Action highlights include advancing the Official Community Plan Update Project, developing a Climate Resilience Strategy, designing a Residential Retrofit Program, implementing an Urban Forestry Strategy, launching a Contamination Remediation Plan, enhancing active transportation and transit, managing drinking water supply and demand, and incorporating sustainable procurement.

