

MUNICIPAL ELECTION · OSOYOOS

Dustin: Fix the water and bring back the Fun

Mayoral candidate Dustin Sikora on a three-step water plan, short-term rentals, taxes, Town Hall turnover, and making Osoyoos a real year-round town

SO What interviewed Dustin Sikora

Osoyoos mayoral candidate Dustin Sikora owns and runs a large shooting range in Langley and the local range here. In an interview with SO What, he talked about why his business background fits the mayor's job, his three-step water plan, short-term rentals, taxes, and how to make Osoyoos a real year-round town.

His main theme was operations. A town, he said, is people and a budget — the same things he already manages in business. He is running, he said, because he does not trust how water and Town Hall have been handled.

• WHAT ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND LENDS ITSELF TO RUNNING A TOWN?

Dustin was asked how his background prepares him to be mayor.

He said a town works like any other organization. It has people, a culture, a job to get done, and a budget. "Show me your people, and I'll show you your culture," he said, repeating a line he uses in business. Companies, military units, volunteer groups, and governments all run on those pieces.

At his Langley range he has more than 40 employees. Most have been with him since he opened 14 years ago, he said. In private business, losing half your staff means you go bankrupt. That is why he thinks business owners often do well in politics — and why many also get frustrated by drama,

red tape, and people trying to "hijack the steering wheel," especially developers and other levels of government.

Nothing makes him "great," he said. What qualifies him is simpler: he already runs a group about the same size as Town Hall, with a multi-million-dollar budget, and it works well enough that he can live four or five hours away. He said he does not particularly want municipal politics. Looking at who is running — and at how the town has been managed — he felt he had to step in. Several councillor candidates this time, he added, also did not want to run, but share the same worry: the town has been run badly, and you fix that by building a team you trust.

On today's Town Hall, he pointed to heavy staff turnover. He said more than half the staff left in about two years, along with firings, suspensions, and other turmoil. "I can't be bleeding 50% of my staff in the private sector and expect to not be bankrupt." Running that kind of organization himself, he argued, is the skill set he brings.

• WHAT'S YOUR SOLUTION FOR THE WATER ISSUE?

Asked for a water plan, Dustin described three stages — near-term, medium-term, and long-term — and said you start the first while you plan the rest.

Near-term: Put commercial filters on the schools and at the Sonora Centre so the manganese advisory can be



PHOTO · Dustin Sikora · Mayoral candidate with family

lifted at those places. Add a 24-hour clean-water tap somewhere convenient so residents can fill jugs.

Medium-term: Bring in local camp-logistics technology already used at remote work sites. He named Matrix Camps & Logistics as the company that has approached the town. The idea: connect their system to a well, test it in the quiet season, and see if it can lower manganese and other contaminants enough to lift the advisory. He said they offered to test for free, already do similar work in Terrace, and gave contacts. In his account, the town stonewalled the offer.

Long-term: Find a lasting fresh-water source and pipe it in. He criticized a \$350,000 engineering report that, in his telling, only looked at two options — one bad, one very expensive — and skipped others. Those others include piping mountain spring water from Anarchist Mountain, and a Similkameen River approach like Oroville's. Put him in a

room with the responsible provincial minister, he said — not for photos and grant talk, but to clear the path for a pipe. "I don't care about your provincial money. I want you to get out of the way!"

On cost, he used rough numbers from his campaign notes: about \$1 million to \$1.5 million per kilometre of pipe. A 21-inch pipe, he said, could serve a town of 20,000. His order of work: first figure out how far good water is. Draw a circle of about 20 kilometres — a distance he thinks the town could afford, maybe a \$20–30 million pipe. Then spend exploratory money (he mentioned about a million dollars) drilling for mountain spring capacity — thousands of gallons a minute across several wells — or study a Similkameen route. Oroville, he said, basically drinks Similkameen water through wells near the river.

He argued that borrowing for new supply can cost less, over time, than endlessly patching a

weak system. As one example, he cited about \$750,000 a year spent on enzymes for the sewage ponds — money he ties to brackish, chemically softened water. Fresher mountain water, he said, could mean less softener use, easier sewage treatment, and faster release of treated effluent. He also warned that an \$80–100 million project promised far in the future becomes a political carrot. With provincial approvals that cooperate, he wants a different standard: "shovels in the ground in like 12 months."

"Our water is making people sick," he said. "I've had enough." (Claims about elevated cancer rates and individual medical cases in the interview are his. SO What has not independently checked them.)

• WHAT'S YOUR STANCE ON AIRBNBS?

On short-term rentals, Dustin said people imagine opposite extremes — pure upside, or

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Local camp company says it offered free water trial — town never followed up
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parties until 2 a.m. He believes in open markets. Someone who saved for decades to buy an investment property, he said, should not see that asset crushed overnight. Osoyoos is a resort municipality and could have opted out of the tighter provincial rules and "harnessed" visitor demand. Instead, in his view, council "shot itself in the foot" and wiped out real-estate value across town.

But Osoyoos also cannot become Daytona Beach. He pointed to neighbours who moved because of illegal, unenforced rentals and late-night pool noise. His answer is better bylaws and better-trained bylaw staff — not a ban that throws the tool away. At his Sonora Centre town hall (he said more than 150 people came), an informal show of hands was roughly 75–85% in favour of a workable Airbnb path. The rest, he guessed, mostly want quiet and do not see the upside. Show the benefits, enforce the rules, and support can grow.

Done right, he argued, property values rise, owners are more willing to pay property tax tied to those values, and the town gets more money for services.

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MUNICIPAL ELECTION · OSOYOOS

Johnny: We're on track, let's finish the job.

Incumbent councillor Johnny Cheong on brown tap water, treatment plant, STRs, Town Hall, and another term

SO What interviewed Johnny Cheong

Osoyoos councillor Johnny Cheong is seeking another term on council. In a wide-ranging interview with SO What, he covered how the town got brown tap water, what still has to happen before a treatment plant, how to pay if grants fall short, short-term rentals, friction at Town Hall, and why he wants another council term when much of the field wants a shake-up.

His through-line was continuity. Water and related files, he argued, run on multi-year timelines — and the job now is to finish what this council started.

• HOW DID OSOYOOS GET A WATER PROBLEM?

Johnny was asked for the history — not only today's sediment, but how the town got here.

Manganese in the system is not new, he said. The earliest mention he has found is in a water annual report around 2010, with records back to about 2009. "It's not new." Digitized files do not go back forever; reconstructing every chapter, he admitted, is hard.

The change that hit households, in his account, came in 2018, when Interior Health required chlorination. Chlorine is a strong oxidizer of manganese. What forms is manganese dioxide — the brown sediment residents know — and those particles clump together. Once chlorine was in the system, he said, the material kept accumulating.

He also described the aquifers. Source studies and aquifer work on the east and west sides, he said, show recharge tied heavily to irrigation. When irrigation turns on, aquifer levels rise. In that sense, he argued, it is not "natural groundwater" in the textbook way: water applied to agricultural land filters down, sits in the aquifer, and is pumped for use. The data the town had before, he said, was outdated and not detailed enough for the decisions ahead.

• WHY SO MANY STUDIES — AND WHAT'S NEXT?

Johnny was asked whether the town is still waiting on more studies, or whether it is finally past that stage.

He pushed back on the slogan that towns only need shovels, not studies. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and provincial staff that distribute grants, he said, set what evidence is required so claims can be backed and decisions defended. When he entered office, information was thin. Council started with a water-system infrastructure plan, presented in April 2023, which fed a Water Master Plan in July 2023. Together those showed asset condition, remaining service life, and replacement value. "We can't move forward unless we know what position we're at currently."

Numbers he put on the record: about 72 kilometres of underground conveyance; roughly 22 kilometres still asbestos-cement pipe from the 1960s, with a typical service life of 50 to 75 years. Osoyoos's mild climate may stretch that a little, he said, but the pipe still has to be replaced. On streets with repeat breaks year after year, proactive replacement beats reactive repair. In

2023 figures, he said, replacing one metre of residential domestic water line cost about \$2,800 — not just pipe, but labour, geotechnical work, and engineering. Labour is the expensive part; inflation, he added, has likely pushed that number up.

From there the town needed better well data. It worked with a research partnership linked to UBC on well-water pilot testing. That takes a full year because of seasonal fluctuation — "there's no way to speed it up." Analysis and a council presentation followed. Using that work plus lake-quality data through the Okanagan Basin Water Board, the town completed a source-water feasibility study.

Well water, Johnny said, is not only manganese and iron. Testing also found organic compounds, PFAS, and ammonia. Ammonia consumes chlorine, so maintaining a residual across the whole system means another treatment step — more complexity, more cost.

That drove a full-year lake and surface-water assessment with another research partner — again, a year to capture the seasons. With two stronger data sets in hand, high-level capital estimates put surface water and well water in a similar range; surface looked a little cheaper to build at first glance. But he stressed operating cost over decades: more complex plants need more staff and supplies. Temporary package plants used in oilfield settings, he said after speaking with senior Municipal Affairs officials, can have low start-up costs and high replacement costs. Averaged over ten years, he argued, they often cost more because they are not designed as permanent municipal plants.

• LAKE, WELLS, OR BOTH — AND WHEN DO SHOVELS GO IN?

Asked where the town stands now on source choice and timeline, Johnny described a hybrid path: keep using well water where it makes sense, add lake water, treat the blend, and build enough capacity without chasing new wells every decade.

Osoyoos Lake, he argued, is sustainable for generations in any scenario short of regional catastrophe upstream. Staying on wells alone, earlier projections suggested two more wells within about ten years — each perhaps \$1.5 million to \$2 million before piping, which is the expensive part. A hybrid system, he said, pulls more lake water instead.

Sizing follows demand. The plant has to meet maximum daily demand — the peak day. The town has nearly finished installing water meters. With metering and conservation messaging, average daily demand has dropped sharply, he said, which can shrink the plant footprint and leave room to expand later. One metering finding: about 12 properties accounted for roughly 4% of total use. Staff went to those sites. Usage that high on non-farm properties, he said, usually means a break or leak. Sandy local soils can hide main breaks — water disappears without sinkholes — so owners may not know.

On timing, Johnny said the town is "still on track for a 2029 operation." That date, he said, was the target from the beginning, built around how long the

required studies would take — including a year each on well and lake work.

• WHAT IF THE PROVINCE DOESN'T FUND ENOUGH?

Johnny was asked whether there is a Plan B if grant money falls short.

Grant programs have criteria, he said: shovel-ready design, completed studies and reports, a serious water conservation plan, and usually matching funds. Full funding is rare; 25% to 50% is more realistic; 75% would be a win. Matching money has to be lined up.

Municipalities also have a debt ceiling. Council can ask the province to raise it — every such request needs approval. Osoyoos is likely to apply for a higher ceiling "just in case," he said, not because it plans to smash through the limit.

He listed four main revenue tools: property taxation; grants; developer cost charges (DCCs); and borrowing. DCCs, he said, went years without proper updates, and a broader bylaw review found charges that were never collected — money that cannot be clawed back. Borrowing runs through the Municipal Finance Authority of B.C., with strong rates, but debt is still debt.

• WHY RUN AGAIN — AND WHAT CHANGES IN ANOTHER COUNCIL TERM?

Asked what he would do differently after a first term that was a steep learning curve, Johnny resisted the idea that everything must be reinvented.

"You don't need to do things differently," he said. The town has a plan and has invested in data. These are not four-year timelines — they are six-, seven-, eight-year files. The foundation is built; the job is to finish. Experience and thicker skin help push him forward without blinders. He said he encourages debate and disagreement: it is another perspective.

The one change he did name was a more active public information presence — including on Facebook. 2023 was brutal, he said: a noose hung on a tree outside Town Hall, harassment of family, staff getting abuse daily. Accountability to voters is one thing; being a punching bag is another. He said he has tools now to communicate without the same risk to his family.

Pressed on why seek office again, he answered simply: someone has to finish



PHOTO · Johnny Cheong, councillor

what was started, and he can take the hits.

• SHORT-TERM RENTALS — WHY OPT INTO THE PROVINCIAL RULES?

On Airbnbs and other short-term rentals, Johnny was asked both for his position and why Osoyoos opted into the tighter provincial framework.

First clarification: under the old local bylaw, he said, stays under two weeks were never allowed. The problem was enforcement. A rule you cannot enforce is a suggestion. Previous councils and administrations, he said, kicked the can; regulation often lags industry disruptors. Public input was close — he recalled roughly 54% to 55% support for regulating short-term rentals. Provincial program details were still rolling out when council decided.

Enforcement math is ugly, in his account. Many problem operators live in the Lower Mainland. Serving a ticket can mean a process server at \$300 to \$400 a day. Owners who know the system fight in court; legal fees pile up. A \$500 fine can cost the town thousands. That hits the municipal budget even as neighbours' quality of life suffers.

Opting in, he said, gave access to provincial enforcement tools and digital infrastructure — a registry and levers the town could not build alone. He

supports that opt-in for a clear reason: if you are a permanent resident and your property qualifies, he wants you able to earn tourism income that stays here — spent at local shops and restaurants. But for illegal suites they now have better tools to enforce the law.

Licensing, in his account, is not a cash grab. Fire inspection and related checks exist so a family does not die in a suite that was never made safe. "These regulations are written in blood." Fees often barely cover staff time. A business-licensing framework modelled on other resort municipalities is already in place; operators can apply, meet the checklist, and run legally.

• IS THERE A "CULTURE OF NO" AT TOWN HALL?

Johnny was asked whether Town Hall defaults to no — whether permits have to take as long as they do, and whether every rule is necessary.

He said he took that criticism seriously after hearing it from business owners a while back. He raised it with the interim chief administrative officer and with council. The direction he would like to see is: do not stop at no — say no, then the options that could work.

Doing that takes knowledge, experience, and tools. A newly hired town planner with a strong resume is already working remotely and due on the ground soon — and is charged in part with building a culture of excellence and learning so

staff can grow decision trees bigger than a blank refusal. "If you don't have anything else to say, it's going to be no," he said — and that is the culture they are trying to change.

• CAN HE WORK WITH A COUNCIL THAT WANTS TO SHAKE THINGS UP?

Finally: many candidates are running against the status quo; Johnny is one of the few incumbents on the ballot. What will it be like to work with them?

"At this point, I am fairly confident I can work with anyone." He said he has learned to read people and context — for example, a colleague who grew up in poverty may be fiercely careful with public money, and that becomes workable once it is understood. He has offered coffee to candidates who want a realistic briefing on what council can and cannot do (privacy and confidentiality still apply). Some platform plans he has read, he noted, are provincial or federal files, or fail a cost-benefit test locally.

He says he wants disagreement. It is a learning opportunity. His posture for the next term: assume the best, stay professional — and finish the long files already underway.

SO What interviewed Johnny Cheong. Condensed and edited for clarity; questions summarized from a recorded conversation.

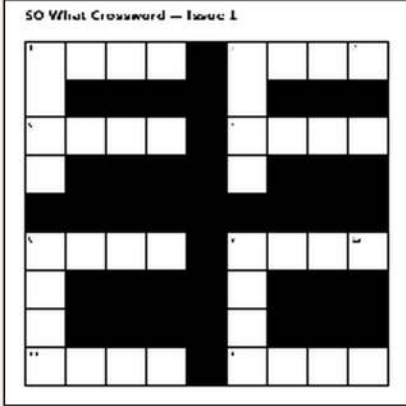
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OSOYOOS TRIVIA

1. The name Osoyoos comes from a Syilx/Okanagan word often rendered soo-yoos. What does it roughly describe?
2. Osoyoos Lake is widely billed as Canada's _____ freshwater lake.
3. Just west of town on Highway 3 sits Spotted Lake (Klikuk). What creates those famous "spots" each summer?
4. Osoyoos sits in a rare pocket of what kind of landscape — often called Canada's only true example of it?
5. Nk'Mip (Inkameep), used by the Osoyoos Indian Band for local place/business names, roughly means what in the Okanagan language?
6. During the First World War, labourers skimmed mineral salts from Spotted Lake and shipped them east. What were those salts used for?

Answers on page 3

SO WHAT CROSSWORD · ISSUE 1



ACROSS 1 Local swimming hole, the big one (4) 5 Vineyard bottle (4) 6 Grape grows on this (4) 7 Tidy (4) 8 Lake craft (4) 9 Street through town (4) 10 Dinner plate (4) 11 Not found (4).

DOWN 1 Affection (4) 2 Direction of sunrise (4) 5 Something to uncork (4) 9 Main artery / post (4) 12 Ink of news (4).

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Dustin: Fix the water and bring back the Fun

Continued from page 1

“I think Airbnb is a major tool... you need people with skill to operate that tool.”

• WOULD YOU ROLL BACK THE RECENT TAX HIKES?

Asked whether he would reverse recent tax increases, Dustin would not promise until he can see the full budget from the inside.

“Money solves money problems,” he said. You have to find waste before you know what you can cut. He gave examples such as buying a fleet of new trucks under a previous operations director when solid used vehicles might have been enough. Free up cash by fixing those choices, then decide whether that money

should pay for infrastructure that keeps property values and services rising. If Town Hall runs well and the town’s reputation improves, he argued, you may not need to raise taxes — and confidence alone can bring investment before the new projects even open.

• HOW DO YOU MAKE OSOYOOS A FOUR-SEASON TOWN?

Beyond water and rentals, Dustin was asked how to stretch past a short summer rush.

Start with spring and fall, he said — especially fall, which he called spectacular. Hold outdoor farm and harvest events through Halloween.

Lean into wine-country fog and harvest season. He brushed off repeated indoor aquatic-centre studies as a \$50 million dream that never gets built. Build something more like Spirit Ridge instead: outdoor pools and hot tubs that are simply heated all year — he also mentioned Langley Otter Co-op — maybe around \$8 million plus winter heating, not another half-million-dollar study.

He also wants summer events that still work when wildfire smoke hits, after heavy cancellations last August: water or motor sports that draw visitors even when the air is bad. Film was a big idea. Contacts in “Hollywood North,” he said, told him Osoyoos is poorly listed as a

filming location. With this landscape and agriculture, it should already be a busy film hub bringing money into a tourism town. Music in the Park is great, he said, but small compared with what a real festival could do with this geography and climate.

The deeper fix is culture: swap a habit of “no” for a habit of “yes.” “Imagination has no limits... bring the party back.”

SO What interviewed Dustin Sikora. Condensed and edited for clarity; questions summarized from a recorded conversation. Medical and staff-turnover claims are the candidate’s accounts, not independently verified by SO What.

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TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. Place where two lakes meet / the narrows (shallow crossing or spit).
2. Warmest.
3. Mineral-rich water evaporates into coloured circular pools (epsom salts & minerals).
4. Desert (pocket / semi-arid desert).
5. Bottomland (valley floor).
6. Munitions / explosives factories (eastern U.S.).

Questions on page 2

HEALTH · SOUTH OKANAGAN

The Rural Doctor Shortage Is an Economic Trap. Victoria Holds the Key.

By SO What

In a functioning market, a severe shortage triggers an immediate economic correction: when demand vastly outstrips supply, prices rise until new talent rushes in to fill the gap.

In the South Okanagan, that fundamental rule of economics is effectively outlawed.

Towns like Oliver and Osoyoos are not struggling to attract family physicians because the valley is an unappealing place to live. The crisis persists because the job is fundamentally harder than its urban counterpart, the institutional supports consistently fall short, and provincial fee schedules prevent local healthcare markets from adjusting to reality.

• THE GROUND LEVEL

The math on the ground is stark. The South Okanagan General Hospital in Oliver serves a permanent population of roughly 12,000 residents across the towns, plus another 10,000 in the surrounding valleys.

In 2025, Interior Health recorded 30 emergency-room closures at the facility. When the local ER goes dark, patients are forced to make a 40-kilometre emergency drive north to Penticton.

The professional burden itself acts as a massive deterrent. While an urban family doctor can often maintain a predictable, clinic-only schedule, a physician practicing in Oliver, Osoyoos, Keremeos, or Princeton faces an exhausting hybrid mandate. They are

expected to juggle outpatient clinics, hospital rounds, long-term care facilities, emergency room shifts, and grueling after-hours on-call duties. It is little wonder that many recent medical graduates opt for focused practices, urban clinics, or hospital-only roles with transparent hours.

While British Columbia sweetens recruitment letters with rural retention bonuses and relocation packages, these incentives treat the symptom rather than the disease. They do not manufacture physicians out of thin air when a doctor needs time off, nor do they empower small communities to compete on an open economic playing field.

• A PRICE CEILING ON CARE

Publicly funded healthcare operates under strict state controls. In B.C., physician compensation is dictated entirely by provincial fee schedules and payment models managed out of Victoria—not by local municipalities staring down a desperate shortage.

When patient waitlists explode, local clinics cannot raise their rates to attract applicants. The natural market signal that recruits supply is completely capped.

Consequently, provincial bonuses and return-of-service contracts remain top-ups on a price ceiling that local markets cannot adjust. When those fixed fees fail to account for the real-world costs of overhead, constant on-call burnout, or the lifestyle disparity with urban centers, the market doesn’t correct

through higher wages. Instead, it collapses into empty panels and shuttered emergency rooms.

This is not an argument against public healthcare; it is an honest reckoning with a structural trade-off. When you freeze the price of a doctor’s time, you simultaneously freeze the primary economic lever required to draw physicians into communities that need them most.

• PARTIAL MEASURES

Communities are scrambling to patch the leaks. Oliver has initiated modular housing projects for healthcare workers after traveling staff found themselves locked out of a punishing summer rental market. Princeton’s earlier recovery leaned heavily on municipal housing, consolidated clinic spaces, locum support, and grassroots community backing.

On the horizon, five new physicians—secured through international and practice-ready streams on two-to-three-year return-of-service contracts—are expected to arrive this fall for Oliver, Osoyoos, and Keremeos.

Housing and temporary staffing support are essential baseline measures. But they cannot permanently replace an economic signal that refuses to move.

Until the province confronts the rigidity of its compensation models and makes rural practice genuinely sustainable, towns like Osoyoos and Oliver will continue to lose a bidding war they have no legal mechanism to win.

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“Freeze the price of a doctor's time, and you also freeze the primary economic lever that draws physicians into communities that need them most.”

— SO What

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ANALYSIS · LANDLORDS

The Short-Term Rental Debate Is About Control, Not Just Cash

By SO What

In almost every municipal meeting and neighborhood forum across the South Okanagan, the debate over short-term rentals eventually flattens into a single, predictable argument about money.

The math is undeniable: a lake town in peak summer can command nightly rates that make long-term leasing look like a financial afterthought. It is the flashpoint that dominates local headlines and divides town councils. But reducing the friction between short-term and long-term hosting to pure greed misses the structural reality of why so many property owners refuse to touch standard residential leases.

Ask landlords who have managed both worlds, and they will describe a calculus defined less by gross revenue and more by risk management, operational rhythm, and the terrifying permanence of a bad tenant.

• THE LONG-TERM ILLUSION

On paper, a long-term rental is marketed as the path of least resistance. You find a tenant, sign a standard lease, and the daily administrative grind largely evaporates. There are no rotating calendars, no endless cycles of linen changes, and no frantic cleanups between Friday check-ins and Sunday departures.

For months at a time, the arrangement can feel frictionless: rent hits the account like clockwork, and the property ticks along.

The hazard lies in what happens when the relationship breaks down. A problematic long-term tenant is not a bad weekend; they occupy the space with an entire household of furniture, belongings, and legal protections. When a tenancy goes sour under British Columbia’s rigid residential tenancy framework, the legal eviction process can be slow, expensive, and emotionally exhausting.

Landlords who have lived

through that cycle do not recount it as a simple paperwork hiccup. They describe a year-long financial bleed where rent stops coming in, property damage mounts, and the owner has virtually no practical recourse to reclaim their asset quickly. Most long-term tenants are responsible, but the tail-risk, when it strikes, is devastating.

• THE SHORT-TERM REALITY

Conversely, short-term rentals demand intense, high-frequency labor. There is booking administration, continuous coordination, and the relentless physical labor of resetting a unit between stays.

Yet, for property owners, the operational model offers a critical safety valve: an immediate exit ramp. If a short-term guest turns out to be a disaster, they are legally gone in a day or two. The visit ends, the property is reset, and the risk profile resets with it.

Furthermore, digital platforms have introduced an accountability loop that

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OPINION · STAY

Skip the Elevator: Why the Unassuming Motel Deserves a Second Look

By SO What

• SKIP THE ELEVATOR

Hotels command the glossy, full-page advertising campaigns. Motels are left to shoulder the side-eye.

That reflex is a mistake, particularly in a landscape like Osoyoos, where half the regional charm lies in staying close to the ground. There is a distinct, low-rise cadence to a classic motor court—a row of rooms with the scent of the lake drifting on the air and your car parked three steps from the threshold.

Consider the mechanics of arrival. The traditional hotel experience relies on elevator roulette and a grueling luggage-cart trek from a cavernous parking lot through an intimidating, heavily branded lobby. A motel cuts straight to the point: you pull up, open the trunk, and you are home. For families lugging golf bags, wine-country hauls, and the inevitable excess of a weekend farmers-market sweep, that logistical simplicity is transformative.

Then there is the social architecture. High-rise hotels shepherd guests down carpeted, sterile corridors into sealed, anonymous boxes. Motels spill outward. Guests naturally gravitate toward the outdoor pool, linger on plastic chairs that have survived decades of summer sun, and strike up conversations with strangers



Osoyoos motel courtyard — pool side

about where they drove in from. Kids find playmates by the water; someone fires up a grill. The evening assumes the relaxed posture of a front porch.

Admittedly, the retro motel stereotype has roots in cinema from a generation ago. But a walk through modern Osoyoos reveals a quiet evolution: properties infused with fresh paint, modernized beds, and revitalized grounds. Many of these spaces remain fiercely independent, family-run

operations rather than carbon-copy franchises managed from three time zones away. That independence manifests in small, human touches—an unprompted recommendation for a local taco stand, a nightly rate that hasn’t lost its mind, and a front-desk manager who remembers you visited last August.

None of this is a declaration of war on luxury hotels. If your trip demands a pristine spa, an on-call concierge, and a hallway smelling of expensive imported soap, book the high-rise.

But when returning to a town that sells its unique character to the world, overlooking the accommodations built specifically around that character feels like a missed opportunity. In Osoyoos, some of the most memorable places to lay your head still run on a refreshingly straightforward premise: see your car, hear the pool, and skip the elevator. That isn’t a compromise. That’s the point.

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FREE ESTIMATES



Who’s on the Osoyoos ballot

Source: Town of Osoyoos 2026 voters guide, candidate statements, candidate website

VOTE · SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2026

Advance polls Oct 7 & 10 · Term Nov 2026 – Nov 2030

MAYOR · PICK 1

Scott Armstrong

Has been coming to Osoyoos for 47 years; bought property here 17 years ago and moved here full-time with his wife after retiring two years ago. Spent 47 years in construction, the last 10 running curtain-wall plants. President of the Sole Vita strata. Has volunteered with the food bank and at Coyotes games, and organized a concert that raised \$10,000 for school backpacks. Says water and sewer come first, then development to grow the tax base.

Zachary Poturica

Born and raised in Osoyoos; family roots here date to the late 1950s. Recently finished 23 years in the grocery business, latterly as assistant store manager at Nesters. Served 12 years with the Anarchist Mountain Fire Department and nine as an Osoyoos Credit Union director. First elected to council in 2022 on the Osoyoos First slate. Says his priorities are senior-government infrastructure funding, safe drinking water, protecting Osoyoos Lake and health-care access.

COUNCILLOR · PICK 4

J.F. Launier

Moved to Osoyoos from Montreal at age eight; graduated with honours from Osoyoos Secondary and earned his Red Seal in town. Owns JF Kustoms autobody; active with the Cactus Jalopies Car Show and Wine Country Racing Association. A leading figure in the 2023–24 tax protests. Says his priority is keeping taxes low; wants water-plant options re-examined and evening council meetings.

Jenn Demo

Has lived and worked in Osoyoos almost 10 years; has adult children and two grandchildren. Says protecting drinking water is one of her highest priorities, through responsible planning, conservation and sustainable infrastructure. Supports balanced growth that keeps Osoyoos’ character while strengthening small businesses, wineries, agriculture and tourism. Pledges fiscal responsibility and to work with residents, First Nations and businesses.

Derek Hesketh

Civil engineering technologist, husband and father who owns a construction surveying company, which he says brings experience in development, infrastructure and construction. His family has lived in Osoyoos since the town incorporated in 1946. Says he wants a sustainable community where families put down roots, and a town his son will want to return to and raise a family in.

Brian Bagnall

Served with District of North Vancouver Fire and Rescue from 1974 to 2003, listing his role as captain and training officer; helped its training centre earn Pro Board accreditation. Studied management systems at BCIT. A former CPR, first-aid and high-angle rescue instructor, he coaches tennis and pickleball and has been Osoyoos Pickleball Club president. Is learning Punjabi.

Johnny Cheong

Sitting councillor seeking re-election after 4 years on council. A chiropractor, he co-owns Sunshine Valley Family Chiropractic with his wife; in Osoyoos nine years with his young family. Cites a budget overhaul, asset-sustainability funding, water-treatment progress and \$9 million-plus in grants. Says his priorities are keeping the treatment plant on track to operate in 2029, a municipal development corporation and tourism revenue that doesn’t burden locals.

Arlyn Greig

Retired to Osoyoos after 25 years with the Fort McMurray Fire Department, including four terms on the firefighters’ union executive, handling budgeting, purchasing and contract negotiations; sat on a seniors’ housing board there. Ran provincially in 2020 for Wexit BC. Says poor water quality is her main goal; backs fiscal responsibility and evening council meetings, and would donate her council salary to local charities.

Dustin Sikora

Lives in Osoyoos with his wife and two young daughters; moved here from the coast about six years ago. Served as Military Police in the Canadian Armed Forces. Founded and owns The Range in Langley and patented a way to recover HAZMAT metals from range berms. Vice-president of the Osoyoos Wildlife Federation. Ran for mayor in 2022, leading the Osoyoos First slate. Says his priorities are safe water, responsible taxes, smart development, transparency and to “bring back the party.”

Jim Dinwoodie

Has lived in Osoyoos about 10 years and says he has 33 years of municipal-government experience, including as the Town of Osoyoos’ director of operational services (2015–2019) and in operations and parks and recreation in Fernie. Says he wants to make Osoyoos “THE destination,” ensure tax dollars are used efficiently and effectively, and, as an arts supporter, give visitors more than “that little town with a lake by the border.”

Natasha Stevenson

Her family moved to Osoyoos in the 1970s and she went to school here. Opened her first restaurant in town in 2002; runs Wine Tours Gone South and Best Cellar Books and Tours (becoming Best Cellar Bistro). Wants residents heard, local businesses thriving, responsible development, and the lake and town character protected. Says she is running to listen, ask questions and bring people together on solutions.

Sy Murseli

Of Albanian heritage, born in Kosovo; came to Canada from New Zealand in 1981 and says he has lived in Osoyoos more than 45 years. A self-described council “watchdog” for decades; ran for council in 2018 and 2022. Organized the local Terry Fox Run (2008–10) and a 2018 Osoyoos–Oroville walk for Canadian and U.S. troops. Says his loyalty would be to taxpayers and electors.

Ken Davreux

Osoyoos resident since 1997; owns Century 21 Premier Properties in Osoyoos. Director of Emergency Support Services and of the Association of Interior Realtors, and a Rotarian. Councillor from 2003 to 2006. Says his top priorities are clean water that meets health standards, accountability through transparency and better communication, and fiscal responsibility to curb rising property taxes.

Pat Wycherley

Her family has made Osoyoos home for 19 years. Says she wants opportunities for families, support for local businesses and a sustainable future, and will ask questions and push for transparent decision-making and practical solutions. Lists her goals as a strong administration team, better infrastructure, responsible financial management, housing opportunities and a vibrant local economy.

Frank Zandvliet

Born and raised in Osoyoos; worked 33 years for the Town, finishing as water and sewer lead hand. Has volunteered with the Kinsmen and Elks and sits on the Elks Golden Villa board. Spent 25-plus years on the Canada Day fireworks, for years ordering, setting up and firing the show. Describes himself as easy-going and hardworking, someone who enjoys solving problems.

Bridget Wilson

Has lived in Osoyoos since July 2021; a strata manager for about 25 years, work she says built skills in budgeting, financial reporting and working with authorities. Has worked in the local hotel industry and volunteered with the South Okanagan Chamber of Commerce. Says water must come first, with clean drinking water for everyone; wants to be a practical, respectful voice on council.

Ron Sargeant

Moved to Osoyoos in 2019 after 45 years as a plumber, 10-plus years self-employed. Did 15 years of search and rescue before moving; has been a member of the Seniors Centre, Festival Society, Elks, Legion and Rotary. Took a prominent role in the tax protests. Says communication is the core problem; wants water first without restarting the lake-plant plan, predictable taxes and regular town halls.

Tom Shields

Arrived in 1978 to read news and sports on CKOO radio; was a development officer in 1981 and Chamber of Commerce president in 1988. Formed Tommy & the T-Birds in 1983 and helped stage concerts including Bryan Adams and Tom Cochrane in 1992. Served three terms as mayor between 1990 and 2002. Cites residents’ requests to bring back councillor portfolios. Proposes cutting property taxes and funding water work with concert revenue and a casino partnership with the Osoyoos Indian Band.

Hart Buckendahl

Came to Canada from Germany in 1955, graduated from Oliver High School and earned a business diploma, then farmed and built homes across the South Okanagan. Was an Oliver alderman for a term, then Mayor of Oliver from 1987 to 1993; also led a provincial energy-audit program covering 26,000-plus homes. Says he would serve one term. Lists his priorities as water and sewer, evening council meetings, town operations, local business, and young people and families.

OSOYOOS 2026

HOW TO VOTE
IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTION

WHEN & WHERE
SONORA COMMUNITY CENTRE | 8 AM - 8 PM
ADVANCE: OCT. 7 & 10 GENERAL VOTING: OCT. 17

ON YOUR BALLOT

1 Vote for ONE mayor

VOTE FOR UP TO FOUR
COUNCILLORS
You do not have to choose four.

Only like 2 candidates? Vote for 2.
Only like 1 candidate? Vote for 1.
Those votes still count.

DO NOT choose more than 4 councillors.
That part of your ballot will not count.

Made a mistake or need help? Ask an election official.
MUST bring 2 pieces of ID. At least 1 must have your signature.

Vote only for the candidates you truly support.

WATER COUNCILLOR · SYSTEMS 8 & 9
PICK 2 (THOSE USERS ONLY)

Sarabjit Rai

A farmer who has lived in Osoyoos for 30 years. Previously served one term as a water councillor for Systems 8 and 9, running as an incumbent in 2018. Says he would appreciate the chance to serve the community again.

Jim Shogren

Has lived in Osoyoos for seven years. Says water is a high-priority concern for most residents, and hopes to work with the mayor and councillors so residents of his area have a respectful voice at the table.

Gurneet Chahal

Has lived in Osoyoos four years; her husband’s family has farmed 30 acres here for more than 30 years. With a young family that relies on agriculture, she wants the town to keep working with growers. Supports accessibility, responsible water use and positive development; majored in political science.

ANALYSIS · LANDLORDS · CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

The Short-Term Rental Debate Is About Control, Not Just Cash

Continued from page 4

traditional leasing lacks. Online reviews act as a mutual currency; guests with a history of trashing properties find themselves locked out of future bookings, meaning the average visitor arrives with more skin in the game than a negligent tenant insulated by tenancy laws.

• THE POLICY BLIND SPOT

This divergence explains why local regulations often miss the mark. When municipalities treat short-term hosting purely as a cartoon villain versus a civic saint, they ignore the underlying market failure.

Property owners aren't just choosing high summer yields; they are choosing control, predictable turnaround windows, and protection against a legal system they feel has abandoned them when a lease turns toxic. Until housing policies address the severe imbalances in long-term tenancy dispute resolutions, owners will continue to fight fiercely for the autonomy that short-term hosting provides.

HOCKEY · OPENING WEEKEND

Coyotes opening weekend: a town that showed up

Sports · Osoyoos · Sun Bowl Arena

It could not have gone much better.

Saturday night at Sun Bowl Arena, the Osoyoos Coyotes opened at home against the Summerland Jets with a 7–0 win — the kind of score that makes a rink loud and exciting. There was pace, there was something to cheer about on almost every shift, and the stands were packed with people who looked glad to be there. New coyote merch. New jerseys. Kids stayed somewhat contained bouncing around the upper decks, so parents could enjoy themselves without worrying a kid would escape into traffic — a drink, and a reason to stay out.

By most accounts, that is how you want

a first home game of a new era to feel.

• THEN THE ALUMNI KEPT THE WEEKEND ALIVE

A home opener that big can make Sunday feel like leftovers. It didn't.

The next day, former Vancouver Canucks players skated against an Osoyoos All-Star side. The building was still full. Unlike last year's version — remembered more as a blowout than a contest — this one played like a real game. The local team pushed. They fought. They could have stolen it if a couple of post-first-period changes hadn't tilted the ice, most notably a goalie switch. Final: 6–3 for the

Canucks alumni.

Close enough to matter. Entertaining enough to justify coming back the day after a shutout party. That is a good weekend for hockey in a town that does not invent winter entertainment out of thin air.

• NEW LOOK, NEW LEVEL, NEW OWNER

This is also the first season the Coyotes skate as a Junior A club — a real step up in the story of the franchise — under new ownership led by Justin Styffe.

The upgrade is not only on the league letterhead. Styffe has pushed a visible

refresh: new colours, new jerseys, new merchandise, fresh paint around the rink, new banners, new sponsors. The brand looks sharper. The building looks cared for. The team looks like it belongs in the conversation it just joined.

None of that guarantees a season. One weekend never does. But it is a promising start — entertaining hockey, a building that filled twice, and a town that already seems invested in what comes next.

For Osoyoos in winter, that matters as much as the scoreboard. Sleepy months need a place to go on weekend nights. Opening weekend suggested the Coyotes might be that place again — and that the new era is off to a strong start.



PHOTO · Coyotes goalie celebration — opening weekend, Sun Bowl Arena

South Okanagan Horoscope

Light · local · for entertainment only

ARIES	TAURUS	GEMINI	CANCER	LEO	VIRGO
A patio plan collapses into a grocery run; treat it as reconnaissance. Someone you haven't texted since July has news that actually matters.	Shoulder season suits you: slower tills, better chats, one errand that turns into three. Don't overpay for a "deal" just because it's quieter.	Two downtowns, one afternoon — Oliver then Osoyoos, or reverse. Gossip travels faster than the highway; verify before you amplify.	Nest mode hits hard when the lake empties. Cook something that smells like home and invite one neighbour who still waters their plants in September.	You want a stage; Main Street wants a listener. Lead with questions at the next open house and you'll still get the spotlight — honestly earned.	Checklist energy is high: taxes, STR rules, who's covering the rink. Finish one real task before opening three browser tabs about council.
LIBRA	SCORPIO	SAGITTARIUS	CAPRICORN	AQUARIUS	PISCES
Balance the summer friends and the year-round ones. A coffee at Gino's with someone who stayed beats another group chat about who left.	Water talk, housing talk, who's-really-in-charge talk — you're in your element. Channel it into one clear ask, not a midnight spiral.	Road-trip itch meets harvest trucks. Point the car up-valley, buy fruit that isn't Instagram, and come back with a story worth telling.	Budgets, beds, and "who pays for paradise" are your love language this month. Write the letter; don't only mutter in the parking lot.	You've got a contrarian take on the motel vs hotel debate and you're not wrong. Share it once, then listen — the valley likes a plot twist.	Foggy mornings, clear evenings. Drift through the quieter beach, then ground yourself with a crossword before bed.

WATER · OSOYOOS

Local camp company says it offered free water trial — town never followed up

Based on a public Facebook post · SO What

An Osoyoos company that outfits remote work camps says it offered the town a no-cost trial of its water-treatment system more than a year ago — and got no serious uptake.

Matrix Camps & Logistics, headquartered on 51st Street in Osoyoos, posted the account on Facebook after a mayoral candidate named the firm in a campaign discussion about the town's long-running drinking-water problems. Matrix builds and runs workforce camps for mining, fire, and oilfield projects across Canada, and treats water as part of that work. The company said it just wanted to help because this is their town too.

In the post, the company said it approached the town over a year ago about trying one of the treatment systems it already designs and deploys at its camps. The offer, as Matrix described it: supply the system, cover installation, provide ongoing maintenance, and name the Town of Osoyoos on the company's insurance policy — "All of this AT NO COST to the town of Osoyoos" — just to see how the gear handled the town's known water issues.

Matrix said it has used the system in other B.C. towns and municipalities, offered references, and got no follow-up. The company added that it did not yet have full source-water details or lab analysis, but was still willing to help.

"Unfortunately we were not taken up on our offer and were

blatantly told by the town and former CAO they were too busy to engage with us to even explore this option," the post said.

That line is Matrix's account. SO What has not independently verified with the town what their response was.

The company said the conversation revived this election cycle. It has been contacted to discuss the treatment option, it wrote, and is now getting more water analytics and flow-rate data to judge whether the system could fit.

"We are excited to explore further how we can support the upcoming planning to create safe drinking water in our town," the post said.

Osoyoos has spent years on studies, metering, and source options while residents still deal with brown sediment and a plant that is not yet built. Whether a camp-style package system belongs in that mix is still an open technical question — Interior Health approvals, long-term operating cost, and how any trial would sit beside the town's preferred design all matter. Matrix's post does not settle those points. It does put a concrete local claim on the public record: a hometown logistics firm saying it raised its hand, priced the trial at zero, offered references, and was waved off as too busy — until the election put water back at the centre of the ballot.

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SUMMERLAND · AUGUST 2026

Summerland's Bald Range Fire: what happened

News Feature - SO What

On Friday afternoon, August 7, a fire started about 15 kilometres northwest of Summerland. By nightfall it was the story of the Okanagan summer.

BC Wildfire Service says the Bald Range wildfire (K51490) ignited in the late afternoon. Within about three hours it had chewed through roughly 5,000 hectares. Hot, dry fuels and gusty southwest winds did the rest. Instead of climbing a slope the way textbooks prefer, a west wind shoved the fire downhill toward Okanagan Lake and the heated ground made the wind faster as it ran.

Premier David Eby later said he'd been told it was "like a bomb."

• WHO HAD TO LEAVE, AND FOR HOW LONG

About 20,000 people were ordered out: the entire District of Summerland (roughly 12,000) plus thousands more in and around Peachland and the rural valleys west of town. Reception centres opened in Penticton and West Kelowna. Highway 97 closed. Helicopters pulled more than 50 people out when roads failed.

Most of Summerland proper came home in stages. Stage 1 re-entry began Friday, August 14 (about 400 properties moved from order to alert). Stage 2 followed Sunday, August 16 (about 800 more). On Tuesday morning, August 18 — a little more than ten days after the scramble — most remaining Summerland orders were downgraded to

alerts. Some streets, including Garnet Valley Road and a short list of hard-hit addresses, stayed on order longer while crews dealt with danger trees, power, and geotech work.

Peachland and Trout Creek east of the highway got earlier relief. Faulder and Meadow Valley waited longer. Some Faulder residents weren't allowed back until late August — nearly three weeks after they fled.

• WHAT BURNED

The fire eventually grew to about 25,000 hectares. BC Wildfire Service listed it as held around August 28, after the first real rain since the start and cooler weather finally gave crews a break.

A rapid damage assessment classified 147 properties as destroyed — 105 of 204 assessed in Area F, and 42 of 799 assessed in Summerland. That is a property classification, not a final public count of "homes only."

In Faulder, reporting after re-entry put the local picture in plainer terms: only 8 of 81 homes still standing.

Prairie Valley, Garnet Valley, Meadow Valley, and Faulder took the brunt. Much of Summerland townsite survived because firefighters held lines and structure protection worked.

• CAUSE

The cause is still unknown. BC Wildfire Service and Penticton RCMP say the



On the line — Bald Range fire, Summerland area

ignition is under A viral bear-banger video investigation. Crews have spread early on is not the asked for dashcam and cause: RCMP say the person witness accounts from the in it is a witness, not a Princeton-Summerland Road suspect, and the clip was shot / Bathville Road area on the kilometres from where the afternoon of August 7. fire started.

• ONE LIFE

An 80-year-old Meadow Valley woman died suddenly on the night of August 7 while trying to leave with a family member. RCMP say

they believe the death resulted from the wildfire. The BC Coroners Service is investigating. The family asked for privacy. There were no other known fatalities reported to police.

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OSOYOOS COYOTES

Home Games · 2026–27 Season

2026–27 HOME SCHEDULE · SUN BOWL ARENA

OCTOBER

Oct 2
6:50 pm vs Beaver Valley

Oct 3
6:50 pm vs Williams Lake

Oct 18
2:00 pm vs Nelson

Oct 23
6:50 pm vs Revelstoke

Oct 24
6:50 pm vs Beaver Valley

Oct 30
6:50 pm vs Langley

NOVEMBER

Nov 10
12:45 pm vs Grand Forks

Nov 13
7:50 pm vs Kimberley

Nov 14
7:50 pm vs Kimberley

Nov 21
7:50 pm vs Fernie

Nov 27
7:50 pm vs Chilliwack

Nov 28
7:50 pm vs Kamloops

DECEMBER

Dec 12
7:50 pm vs Merritt

Dec 18
7:50 pm vs Fernie

JANUARY

Jan 2
7:50 pm vs Grand Forks

Jan 3
3:00 pm vs Nelson

Jan 5
12:00 pm vs Grand Forks

Jan 9
7:50 pm vs Princeton

Jan 23
7:50 pm vs Fernie

Jan 30
7:50 pm vs Quesnel

FEBRUARY

Feb 12
7:50 pm vs Columbia Valley

Feb 13
7:50 pm vs Columbia Valley

Feb 21
3:00 pm vs Beaver Valley

Feb 24
7:50 pm vs Nelson

Tickets: osoyooscoyotes.com · Showpass
Sun Bowl Arena · 9301 Hummingbird Lane, Osoyoos