

August 31, 2024

Attention: Mayor & Council

Re: Pique Article "Pemberton's Visitor Centre and Sani-Dump to Permanently Close" originally published August 26th (online) with updates printed August 29, 2024 (online & print).

The Pemberton & District Chamber of Commerce is reaching out with concerns we have with the above mentioned article. We believe that there was misinformation distributed to the public in the form of the Mayor's comments:

*Mayor of Pemberton, Mike Richman said that this week's announcement came as a surprise to council. "The village was aware that the info booth would be shutting down at the end of September as usual," he said. "We were not aware that it would be closing over a month early. We recognize that this leaves a big gap in tourism service and is detrimental to local businesses. This was a surprise to us, and we are working closely with Tourism Pemberton for possible relocations, and solutions."*

*Richman said that he was not informed of the early closure prior to the announcement.*

*"The chamber did not communicate that there would be an early closure this year of either the info booth or the sani-dump," he said. This is funded through Destination, BC and local government. We were under the impression that it would be open to at least the end of September or even until after Thanksgiving."*

On August 1, 2024, myself and the Executive Director, Ariane Larouche, sat down with Councillor Katrina Nightingale. She had reached out in response to our email to Mayor & Council regarding the state of the area around the Blackbird Bakery. It was a very positive and informative discussion. During that conversation, we did relay to her that once we knew when the student employees had to go back to school is when we would be closing for the last time. It was communicated that the sani-dump would have to be closed at the same time, as there are consistent issues with the station and it needs to be monitored.

On August 9th, Ariane Larouche sent an email to Elizabeth Tracey, CAO of the Village of Pemberton, informing her that the last day of operation for both the Visitor Centre and the sani-dump would be September 1, 2024.

The communication about the impending future of both the Visitor Centre and the sani-dump have been communicated with the Village of Pemberton since as early as October of 2023, when the board was informed that Lil'wat would be moving forward with decommissioning the sani-dump in September/October of 2024.

Our normal season of operation usually takes us into the middle/late September, and then we would shut down for the season. During this period in September, we would normally have our Visitor Centre manager working. She decided to retire at the end of May this year, and we lost another employee at the end of June. Since then, we have been trying to be creative with the schedule to try and ensure that we had 7 days of service for the traveling community. We did not feel the need to bring on someone just for 2.5 months of work, as there is training that needs to occur.

In the last week, we have had 2 vandalism attempts on the sani-dump, which is why it needs to be monitored. Many people try to by-pass the pay system, or manipulate the mechanics so it doesn't close. Because of these continual issues with the system, it made sense to close it at the same time as when we closed the Visitor Centre.

We do acknowledge that word to the public could have gone out sooner regarding the status of both the Visitor Centre and the sani-dump, and that is the reputational risk we will bear as an organization.

The issue we have is regarding the comment that the Village of Pemberton, and thus Mayor & Council, was not informed of what was happening. We have clearly communicated along the way what will be happening, and in a timely manner. We have had clear communication with Destination BC about our situation and timelines, and they have provided their support to us. We have communicated with Tourism Pemberton, and they attempted to have a Visitor Centre opened when we closed ours, but that did not come to fruition at the last minute. We have communicated with Elizabeth Tracey, Village of Pemberton CAO, continually about our situation.



We believe the Mayor's comments to be incorrect and harmful to the reputation of the Pemberton & District Chamber of Commerce. **As such, we are requesting that the Mayor retract his statement to the Pique regarding when the Village was informed of these events.** We feel this is an adequate remediation to this situation.

We look forward to hearing back from Mayor & Council on their decision regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Adam Adams.

Adam Adams

President, Pemberton & District Chamber of Commerce

A black rectangular redaction box covering contact information.