

Mayor's Minute - October 3, 2019

Summerland Council joined local governments and regional districts throughout B.C. in Vancouver last week at the annual Union of B.C. Municipalities (UBCM) convention. This Mayor's Minute will be the first of two on the 2019 UBCM Convention.

UBCM is an engaging and bustling four-and-one-half days of educational and professional development sessions; meetings with provincial Ministers and staff; voting on resolutions; and networking with colleagues.

The theme of the 2019 Convention was 'Resiliency and Change'. I think the sub-theme of all elected official conventions of this nature (at least the ten—five each of UBCM and Southern Interior Local Government Association (SILGA)—that I have attended over the years), could be 'Connectedness Through Relationships'.

Delegates had numerous opportunities throughout the week to share challenges, accomplishments and best practises with colleagues in other communities. Additionally, the two-day concurrent trade show allowed one-on-one engagement with representatives from companies and funders about the services and grants they offer to local governments. Frankly, I find it difficult to attend everything I would like to take part in, but kudos to the UBCM Executive for ensuring there are options for all delegates regardless of community location, size, or challenges.

As one would expect, the attainable housing and opioid crises were highlighted issues, but this year there were two other topics that were addressed at considerable length: reconciliation and climate change.

Given that last month Council made a commitment to strengthen our relationship with the Penticton Indian Band (through educational, political, cultural and operational activities), the timing could not have been better to begin learning, as a team, how to undertake this long-term commitment.

Councillor Holmes and I attended the full day pre-conference session on financing reconciliation; the entire Council (Councillor Erin Trainer was unable to attend UBCM) and Chief Administrative Officer Anthony Haddad attended a half-day session on Tuesday that included a panel discussion and examples of B.C. communities that have partnered on a variety of projects with their Indigenous neighbours.

As a table officer of SILGA, I was invited to a meeting with Scott Fraser, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and his staff. In February 2019 the B.C. Government committed to tabling legislation to implement the framework for reconciliation set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP). If the legislation passes, British Columbia will be the first province in Canada to legislate its endorsement of the Declaration.

Minister Fraser advised that the proposed legislation closely follows federal Bill C-262. It was developed by the Province in consultation with the First Nations Leadership Council, the B.C. Assembly of First Nations, the B.C. Union of Indian Chiefs, and the Indigenous Relations Committee of the UBCM Executive. Minister Fraser assured the SILGA executive and the four SILGA-area students who attended UBCM that an action plan and communication materials will facilitate the anticipated roll-out to local government.

Climate change was also at the forefront during the last week of September, and was the topic of sessions and of several resolutions, many related to climate mitigation and adaptation.

Typically, a vote at UBCM is the third time a resolution is voted on by elected officials. The municipality or regional district where it originates votes at a Council or Board meeting; the local government association

delegates vote at their annual spring convention; and UBCM delegates vote at their annual fall convention.

Delegates overwhelmingly passed a resolution “that UBCM call on the Provincial government to end all subsidies to fossil fuel companies and to invest the money instead in climate change mitigation and adaptation activities being undertaken by local governments in a predictable and regularized funding formula”. The resolution also included the call by UBCM, through FCM (Federation of Canadian Municipalities), to call on the Federal government to do the same.

Time will tell whether this resolution sees affirmation action by the Provincial and/or the Federal governments.

Friday morning, I was invited by Global BC to do a short live segment at their studios in Burnaby about how climate change has impacted Summerland. This was a good start to ClimateStrike 2019 that saw an estimated 100,000 people in Vancouver alone demanding action be taken to address climate change.

The next Mayor’s Minute will continue Summerland Council’s UBCM 2019 week, including my thoughts on Minister and staff meetings and other interesting discussions in and around UBCM.