



Yes! This is a Good Time to Invest in Our Community



I believe the majority of people in our community are supportive of Council's efforts to lead Quesnel through this challenging transition period. However, anti-change and anti-investment sentiments have recently been dominating some of the local social media sites as well as the feedback pages of the *Observer*. The anti-change argument is that the past should dictate our present and our future; that any change from the status quo is unnecessary and unacceptable. The anti-investment argument is that this is not the time to invest in our community because our economic future appears uncertain.

The reality is that our community *is* changing and *must* change; the choice for Council is whether we lead our community through this transition period or merely react to the changes as they occur. Your Council has chosen to lead this change process by proactively planning for a major transition in our basic economic foundation and a fundamental shift that is occurring in our population, which will put different demands on the City's services, programs, and infrastructure.

The pending reduction in the annual allowable necessitates that we proactively reduce the City's dependence on the forest sector as the major source of our taxation revenue; failure to do so would be gross negligence on the part of Council. By substantially reducing the City's operating costs and freezing industrial taxation at 2015 levels we're weaning our community off its long-standing and unsustainable dependence on our forest industry while minimizing the financial burden this tax shift would otherwise create for residential and commercial ratepayers. The service and staff reductions associated with this proactive fiscal management have been *minimal by any standard* and Council stands by them.

Contrary to those who claim that our uncertain future should cause us to stop investing in our community (that we can't afford an arena or major investment in West Quesnel or a new public works facility, etc.) – this is precisely the time to make these investments. Every major investment we are making at this time is necessary, long overdue, and signals our confidence in our community's future. We also believe they are affordable, will not add an undue burden to taxpayers, and will provide a direct stimulus to our local economy at this critical time. Every one of these investments will create and support local jobs and local contractors, infuse cash into local businesses, and add to the vibrancy and resiliency of our community.

Due to decades of status quo decision-making Council must now move quickly to address long-outstanding issues in order to ensure the vibrancy and resiliency of our community. None of the decisions we've made have been simple or easy, nor were they made lightly. For the anti-change, anti-investment proponents, however, they've been characterized as thoughtless, unnecessary, and inappropriate. But, I believe the majority of people in our community are supportive of Council's leadership on these issues and have confidence that each member of Council and all of the City's staff and employees have the best interests of Quesnel at heart.

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