



Become an Informed and Engaged Citizen



The City of Quesnel has a proactive Council. Since taking office in December 2014, Council has actively addressed a number of long outstanding issues and has taken the position that we have an obligation to act strategically and deliberately to ensure our community will thrive through this transition period rather than merely survive it. This active decision-making has resulted in pushback from some people who believe Quesnel doesn't need to change or that Council's direction is not in their or the community's best interests.

Reasoned, thoughtful dissent is critical to a healthy democracy. However, dissenting voices are increasingly overstating their concerns and overreacting to decisions made by elected leaders. This is partly due to the deep cynicism people have toward politics and politicians and partly it's a result of our increasing collective inability to accept that every decision involves compromise. Unfortunately, the deeply negative and accusatory way dissent is expressed these days too often negates any meaningful insights dissenters may have from being heard; it also makes it more and more difficult to attract good people to community leadership positions.

Your elected leaders make decisions on the basis of the information available to them, and those decisions always involve compromise -- ensuring some people will not be happy and some will feel their views were not taken into account by the decision-makers. Prior to making any decision Council has an obligation to consult with affected parties. In the case of bylaws and substantive changes to the budget or the strategic direction of the City, formal public hearings must be held.

Unfortunately, unless something is really controversial, people generally do not attend the public consultation meetings held in advance of Council making decisions on important matters -- no matter how often or by what means we advertise these opportunities to provide input. Very few people engage in the City's budget process where the tax framework and tax rates are set, yet many complain about their taxes when they get their tax bills. Few people attend public hearings with respect to proposed bylaw changes but reserve the right to complain afterward if they don't like any restrictions a particular bylaw imposes on them. And, only a select few active members of the public engage in stakeholder discussion about strategic initiatives, thereby amplifying their voice (negatively or positively) in Council's decision-making.

In order to have reasoned debate and dialogue about the future of our community it is critical that more residents become informed and engaged in the City's public consultation processes. This is the only way to offer informed insights, options, and alternatives to Council prior to decisions being made. Yes, this will require investing your time, but if the future of your community is important to you it will be time well spent.

We are currently reviewing our communication tools and are working on a new website and social media platform that will keep citizens informed in a timely manner.

Stay updated on the activities of Council, Council agendas and reports, and upcoming consultation sessions and public hearings by:

- Subscribing to our email list (email tingram@quesnel.ca to join)
- Liking our Facebook page ([/cityofquesnel](https://www.facebook.com/cityofquesnel))
- Following our Twitter page ([@cityofquesnel](https://twitter.com/cityofquesnel))
- Visiting our website (www.quesnel.ca)

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