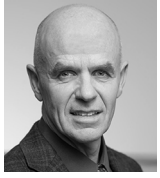




## Advancing Our Issues in Victoria



It's that time of year again: the annual meeting of local governments at the Union of BC Municipalities Convention. This year it's in the provincial capital, which means our "speed dating" with the various Ministers we've asked to meet with will take place in their offices in the Legislature.

This year we got meetings with all of the Ministers we requested to meet with and I and Council members will have 20 minutes with each Minister to update them on initiatives we have underway while highlighting areas where we can use continued (or more) provincial support. As a result of the tight timeline of these meetings we can only focus on a few key issues in each Ministers' portfolio, but these are critical and important opportunities for us to put some focus on our issues for each Minister and his or her senior staff.

With the Minister of Environment we will be raising our concerns about the health of Dragon Lake. Along with raising our concerns about goldfish in that lake, we'll be asking for help to create a long-term, comprehensive stewardship plan for the entire Dragon Lake watershed. In addition, we'll be letting the Minister know that we are very interested as a community in a renewed conversation about climate change and how the province can equip local governments to be more proactive and active in reducing our GHG emissions.

Our conversation with the Minister of Transportation will focus on the good work we're already doing with his regional staff on safety and traffic flow improvements on Highway 97 through the City. We'll be asking for firm timelines for informing and engaging the public in the implications of the most recent traffic flow analysis the Ministry conducted and options and possibilities for making substantive changes to highway 97 through the City to make it a safer while improving traffic flow. We will also be lobbying for a rural Bike BC program (which provides match funding for our active transportation strategy) so we don't have to compete with the larger urban centres that have their own resources and are already well down the path toward greater integration of bicycles on their City streets.

With the Minister of Health we'll be supporting Northern Health's desire to make substantive upgrades to G.R. Baker Memorial Hospital's ICU and Emergency Room and asking for assistance to expand our successful Doctor recruitment program to other health professionals. In our meeting with the Minister Responsible for Housing we will be updating the Minister on our new bylaw that provides incentives for not for profit groups to build seniors and affordable housing units in the City and seeking his support for fast tracking the relocation of our homeless shelter.

In our meeting with the Minister of Jobs, we will be asking for more alignment between the Province and the City (and CRD) in any transition initiatives the province will undertake as well as immediate supports for our existing forest sector that have been asked for and remain unaddressed.

Finally, in our meeting with the Minister of Forests, we will be discussing the importance of the current annual allowable cut review and the need to get a truly sustainable cut level established for the next five years. We will also be lobbying for an expedited answer to our request for an interface community forest tenure so we can begin to use some of the resources the Province has made available to protect our City from a potential catastrophic wildfire like the one that devastated Fort McMurray.

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