

**We actually do want to  
hear from you!**

One of the criticisms of Council's re-branding effort was that we didn't consult with people before launching a new brand and marketing strategy for our community. The short response to this accusation is: we did consult, extensively.

The claim that Council doesn't consult is a common refrain we hear (or read on Facebook) from people who are either caught by surprise by something we do or who disagree with actions taken by Council. For example, despite a year of advance warning, two town halls, and a direct mailer to impacted households, there were still people living in West Quesnel who did not know why, all of a sudden, so many streets on the west side of the city were torn up last spring.

While Council is deliberating, and before we vote on any new initiative or bylaw that will have a significant impact on residents or represents a major change in policy, City staff will seek advice from potentially affected parties and Council will hold either formal public hearings or informal public information sessions. Notice for these hearings and town hall sessions, as well as other consultation processes, gets posted on social media, the City's website, the newspaper, and, quite often, is sent directly to those potentially impacted by the proposed change via direct mail and/or email.

Yet, in general, the only times we get significant numbers of people turning up at public engagement events is when they are angry – often as a result of a misunderstanding of either the process or the intent of the specific matter Council is consulting on. One example is when Council initially proposed to regulate the use of shipping containers in residential and designated commercial areas in the City. A significant number of upset people showed up at the public hearing for this proposed bylaw, most of whom, it quickly became clear, would not have been impacted by the restrictions on shipping containers that were being proposed by Council.

When Council explored a proposed land swap in Southills in an attempt to achieve a number of long expressed community goals, Dragon Lake School was packed with concerned residents. Council listened to the concerns of the majority of these residents and did not proceed with the land trade. Yet, when a subsequent public consultation session was held to discuss the development of the long promised "Southills Park" only eight people from that neighborhood showed up to provide input into this process.

Creating and maintaining a vibrant, resilient community is not a simple process, even at the best of times. With the need to move quickly on a number of fronts to ensure we maintain our resiliency during this transition period, Council truly needs your input and advice. Not in anger or frustration, or based on a flawed understanding of what Council is trying to do, but as an engaged citizen who wants to help your elected leaders make informed and sometimes difficult choices.

We make every effort to hear from you on all matters that are important to our community; I hope you'll take the time to engage in these public processes when they are afforded to you. Please visit the City's website, "like" our Facebook Page, and sign up for email notices (we will be launching a new website in April) so you can stay abreast of any upcoming opportunities to engage with Council in shaping our community's future.

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