

**Gaining a reputation as a
progressive community**

This past weekend I had the opportunity to speak at a Conference in Vancouver focused on communities in transition. The speakers' list included a who's who of political and social leaders from across Canada and the topics covered the full spectrum of issues confronting communities in this time of political turmoil and economic, social, and environmental transition.

When the organizer of the conference called me a number of months ago she was interested in having me speak about Quesnel's designation as a "Living Wage" employer. Since Quesnel was the second municipality in Canada to receive such a designation (and the only rural community to seek it) we have an interesting and important story to tell about why we sought to become a living wage employer and what it means for our City.

However, as the conference organizer interviewed me about how things were going in Quesnel, it became clear to her that our City had a host of stories to tell about how elected leaders could manage through a difficult and imminent transition challenge if only they were willing to exercise political courage and foresight. From our four-year tax framework, or how we addressed our infrastructure deficit, or the investments we are making in our community to improve its accessibility and attractiveness, or the new procurement policies we've created in an attempt to maximize local benefits from taxpayer funded projects, or the reconciliation steps we are taking with our First Nations communities, or our physician recruitment strategy, Quesnel is quickly becoming known as a progressive and proactive community.

I was eventually invited to speak on both our Living Wage designation and our physician recruitment strategy. Both talks were very well received with lots of follow-up questions and interest from the audience.

On the Living Wage panel I shared the stage with a representative of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation, the first First Nation government to obtain the Living Wage designation, and a Councillor from the City of Vancouver, which is just in the process of seeking this designation (after about 5 years of deliberations).

While each of us represented very diverse communities with diverse challenges, we all shared the same desire to see people earn a wage that enables them to more fully participate in our local economies and in our communities.

At an evening session, I outlined our award-winning physician recruitment strategy as part of an interesting and eclectic panel of speakers from across Canada who all had to present their ideas in six minutes and forty seconds! The presentation style is called PechaKucha and requires presenters to speak to 20 PowerPoint slides at a pace of 20 seconds per slide. Anyone who knows me will know how challenging such a short, tight presentation on any topic would be for me, never mind one I am excited about and proud of, and which involved so many moving parts and such great partners.

At the end of both my presentations I inserted a closing slide with one of our new advertisements for Quesnel based on our new brand. Both ads generated many compliments and lots of questions about our City as a potential place for people to relocate to, visit, and invest in. I thought that a little shameless promotion to an audience interested in living in a progressive community wouldn't hurt...

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