



City Council News - [March 14, 2018](#)

Beyond budgets and bylaws

The main function of any elected Council is to provide governance and oversight to a corporate entity that delivers public services and programs, and which builds and maintains public infrastructure within a legally defined geographic area. All the properties within that geographic area pay taxes based on both the assessed value and use (residential, commercial, and industrial) of their property at a rate established by Council. The tax rate Council sets should cover both the annual operating costs of the corporation and the present and future capital investments required to maintain core infrastructure (roads, sidewalks, sewer, water, etc.).

The other major function of an elected Council is to establish local laws (bylaws) and policies to guide property development within the legal boundary governed by that Council. Bylaws and policies can also be used to help create a healthy, safe, and livable community, and to ensure standards are maintained to protect property values.

There was a time when local governments only had to concern themselves with their core responsibilities: budgets and bylaws. But, as a result of a significant shift in focus at the provincial and federal levels of government, local governments must now tackle a whole host of issues that they are neither mandated nor financially equipped to address; issues like systemic poverty, social housing, health care, seniors' care, victim services, the opioid crisis, mental health and addiction, economic development, investment attraction and job creation, tourism marketing, and the list goes on.

Some municipal councils and regional district boards continue to resist taking on these "downloaded" responsibilities. Others have embraced them as an opportunity to show real leadership and to work with their residents to create interesting and sustainable communities. Quesnel City Council fits into the latter category.

For example, Council's proactive partnership with Northern Health enabled us to address what would have been a critical shortage of doctors before this became a crisis. We continue to work with Northern Health on a number of fronts that are essential to addressing the very real challenges confronting our community but that are also clearly in the domain of the provincial government. Specifically: we're working with Northern Health (NH) and BC Housing on a mental health and addictions initiative that will help us improve the delivery of these services throughout our city; we're collaborating with NH and our seniors advocacy groups on an age-friendly initiative that will result in significant improvements in the delivery of services and programs for seniors; and, we're working with NH and our local Green Team to address the serious public safety issue of disposed needles throughout our community.

Council has also taken deliberate steps to address our community's need for more social, accessible, and affordable housing. A housing incentive bylaw was established by Council that enabled the development of the housing projects currently under construction in the City and we continue to work with BC Housing to attract more such investments.

Economic development has also been a major focus for this Council, and our recent leadership on the wildfire recovery initiative is just another expression of our desire to lead our community through this challenging transition period. Recently, we've secured some funding to pull together into one document all the initiatives we have underway to attract and retain more visitors, residents, and investment to our City and our region.

Quesnel City Council has clearly demonstrated, on multiple fronts, that we are willing to go beyond our core obligation of budgets and bylaws. We've embraced the challenge to demonstrate leadership on the social, economic, and environmental initiatives that will make our community an attractive and livable community for generations to come.

Mayor Bob Simpson

Email: mayor@quesnel.ca

Mayor and Council write Council News columns to provide residents information and updates regarding Council and City projects, initiatives, committees and business. This column is published in Quesnel Cariboo Observer on Wednesdays.