



City Council News February 12, 2020

Infrastructure and inconvenience

When it comes to infrastructure projects, there is always inconvenience for the general public. The most current being the need to close a portion of the Riverfront Trail to accommodate the addition of a new Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and Emergency Room (ER) to the hospital and the temporary loss of a significant amount of parking at G.R. Baker for the duration of the project (about two years). Find the detour map here: <http://bit.ly/2Sr5vcr>

By their very nature, infrastructure investments are disruptive. They create traffic delays, disruptions, and re-routing; loss of parking; and noise. They also change streets and neighbourhood dynamics for a time or, sometimes, permanently. Most people deal with this disruption with grace and patience, understanding that, ultimately, the benefits we obtain from these investments far outweigh the short-term nuisances they create.

Quesnel is about to enter a period of significant disruption due to an unprecedented amount of public sector investment in our community. Not only are we getting a much-needed new ICU and ER, we're also getting a new Junior School and more social housing projects. The City's new public works building will also be constructed this summer.

If we're successful in our current infrastructure grant applications, we'll also see a major renovation to the Arts and Recreation Centre and a new Cultural Centre built at Ceal Tingley Park. In addition, a significant highway improvement project will be undertaken at Racing and Hydraulic Roads and, hopefully, the North-South Interconnector will start being built in the near future. We're hoping that the construction of the new West Fraser Road will also commence as soon as possible too.

The importance of these infrastructure investments at this time cannot be overstated. They indicate a significant commitment from the current Provincial Government to the resiliency of our community. Many of these projects have been talked about for years, this Provincial Government is delivering them, and the timing couldn't be better for us.

With the long predicted permanent downturn in the forest sector upon us, these public sector investments will boost our local economy and create local jobs at this critical juncture in our community's history. Enbridge's compressor station upgrade at Australian (about 10km south of Kersley) will also commence this spring and provide additional job opportunities for Quesnel residents and economic benefits for local businesses over the next two years.

As a Council, we're working with the Province and its agencies (Northern Health, BC Housing, Ministry of Transportation, etc.) and private sector investors to ensure we obtain maximum benefit from these public and private sector investments. However, it's also the responsibility of local job seekers, contractors, and businesses to make their connections to the main project contractors to ensure they benefit from these projects too.

Make sure you sign up for notices and pay attention to project information bulletins and updates. Follow the City of Quesnel, Northern Health, Ministry of Transportation, Provincial Government and BC Housing for more information.

I would hope that when all these projects get underway and the City is buzzing with contractors, workers, and equipment building new facilities and new road infrastructure our residents will welcome this investment in our community and see it for what it is: a much needed shot in the arm to our local economy and a temporary inconvenience to achieve great improvements in our community.

Mayor Bob Simpson

Email: mayor@quesnel.ca