

## **COUNCIL TO LOBBY FOR THE COMMUNITY AT THE UNION OF BC MUNICIPALITIES**

September 22, 2017

City Council is attending the annual Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Conference in Vancouver to meet with our Province's new leaders and make a case policy changes and lobby for provincial funding.

The conference provides the opportunity for Council to access BC's newest Ministers and key decision makers at one location.

UBCM is the primary avenue to advance the policy changes in our community and lobby for local infrastructure and program funding. "From accepting small grants to collectively pushing year after year to see a \$312 million hospital expansion come to fruition, the outcomes of UBCM have been significant for Penticton," says Mayor Andrew Jakubeit.

"UBCM's weighty program of over 80 overlapping sessions requires a team effort" says Mayor Jakubeit. "We will be attending a combination of Ministerial meetings, resolution presentations and policy forums to understand what the direction of the new government may mean for Penticton and to advocate for some of Penticton's pressing needs."

This year's topics focus on affordability, homelessness, wellness, addiction and public safety. The following meetings are confirmed:

### **Ministry of Mental Health & Addictions, Hon. Judy Darcy:**

#### **Topic 1: Support needed for local pilot project to address homelessness crisis**

- The City of Penticton is requesting funding for a pilot project to create a low cost transitional housing solution and an innovative governance and service model to better coordinate and deliver services to those living on the streets that are suffering from addiction and poor mental health.
- The project would be coordinated by the City of Penticton but driven by service providers, stakeholders and the community.
- Staff are currently researching the operating and capital costs of this pilot project.

### **Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General, Hon. Mike Farnworth:**

#### **Topic 1: Provincial Mental Health Liaison Officer:**

- City of Penticton is requesting a Provincial Mental Health Liaison Officer, as part of the Penticton RCMP Detachment.
- Liaison Officer Programs include peace officers with specialized training in mental health that work directly with health professionals.

- These programs are having immediate and measurable impacts on calls for service for police and have increased the ability to engage with clients on the street in both large cities (i.e. Vancouver and Surrey) and smaller communities (i.e. Mission).
- This funding should address the fact that many of the chronic users of these services are transient in nature and move throughout the entire South Okanagan, as such; this provincial member would be based in Penticton for the benefit of the broader South Okanagan Similkameen area.

### **Topic 2: RCMP Policing Costs & Community Wellness Committee:**

- The City and the RCMP are in the early stages of collaboration to establish a Community Wellness Committee to work as a steering committee that integrates all services, including housing, in order to reach the people in need. Taking a regional approach, the committee will include representation from all emergency services, local government, business leaders, the School District, Interior Health etc. The committee will take the sole ownership of the issues off of enforcement and encourage ownership by the broader community.
- The City of Penticton is requesting support through funding for this project that will establish benchmarks and deliverables focused on early identification, education, service integration and alignment with the intent of creating a safe and healthy community.

Highlights of Penticton's participation in policy and resolution sessions include: funding for local governments; dissecting affordability; local government roles in BC Framework for Cannabis; tax on vacant and derelict properties; long term rental accommodation; renovations and the Residential Tenancy Act; new approaches to the overdose crisis; and taking the Water Sustainability Act from legislation to practice to name a few.

"We have a new government that has made a lot of promises to make life more affordable and safer for those who need it most. We won't leave any stone unturned in our appeal to bring those promises home to Penticton" said Mayor Jakubeit.

The total cost of attending in Vancouver for the team is estimated at close to \$17,000. This includes conference fees, accommodations, transportation and meals.

Mayor and Council will take the opportunity while in the City to meet with Shaw Cable regarding undergrounding new infrastructure as well as meet with The Canadian Federation of Independent Business where proposed changes to tax laws on small business will be scrutinized. Mayor and Council are also hoping to brief Hon. Selina Robinson, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and her staff on a pilot project to address homelessness in the community. A meeting is currently being scheduled for later in October with the Minister and her team, but the hope is to begin the conversation about this pilot next week.

UBCM's 2017 theme considers the increasing leadership of local government in matters where federal and provincial governments have retrenched their services. Cities are increasingly looked upon to solve issues around climate action, the opioid crisis, the need for a deeper response to homelessness and housing affordability, yet jurisdiction and resources around these issues remains at Provincial and Federal levels. Forums like UBCM allow local governments to have an audience with those who hold the power to legislate and fund changes that will improve people's lives.

Continued updates on progress toward initiatives will become available over the coming months.

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