

Council advocates for key local issues at UBCM

(Penticton, BC – September 27, 2024) – The City of Penticton took full advantage of the 2024 Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) annual general meeting, engaging in critical face-to-face meetings with provincial ministers and senior staff to address urgent local challenges like complex care, rental supports, and resource road improvements.

“Having the opportunity to directly engage with provincial ministers gives us a unique platform to not only present our challenges but to drive home the urgency for action,” said Mayor Julius Bloomfield. “Our conversations on complex care, rental supports, and resource roads were well-received, and I’m confident the province better understands the immediate needs of Penticton.”

Key Meetings and Discussions

During the conference, Penticton met with various provincial ministers and senior staff to advance important local initiatives:

- **Mental Health and Addictions staff** to explore opportunities for expanding complex care in Penticton. Addressing the need for comprehensive care options is pivotal to supporting vulnerable populations, and the conversation opened doors to exploring new solutions.
- **Minister Rob Fleming** to discuss raising maintenance standards on Forest Service Road 201 to improve accessibility for typical vehicles. While Minister Fleming is focused on improving the reliability of Highway 97, the City’s concerns about regular closures and impacts on everyday road users were clearly heard.
- **Minister Nathan Cullen** and Ministry of Municipal Affairs staff met with Council and the Penticton Indian Band to discuss water servicing opportunities, strengthening partnerships and ensuring collaboration on key projects.
- **Minister Ravi Khalon and Vincent Tong, CEO of BC Housing** to highlight the need for expanded rent supplements and to request updates on outstanding BC Housing projects, such as the Skaha Assembly. Minister Khalon recognized the City’s concerns and indicated that updates would follow when the new government is formed.

Learning from Other Municipalities

In addition to advocacy meetings, Council members attended sessions designed to share insights and strategies from other municipalities. Sessions included:

- Community to Community Forum, which explored opportunities for advancing reconciliation.

- What's Next in Housing, a discussion on emerging housing policies and trends.
- Strengthening Responsible Conduct, which delved into the UBCM policy paper on codes of conduct for elected officials.
- Homelessness and Encampment Response, an exploration of how to remove barriers to stable housing through integrated health and social supports.

Two motions proposed by Penticton – the need for expanded complex care and the need for improved resource roads - were also endorsed by UBCM delegates. “These motions are crucial to addressing long-standing issues in Penticton,” said Bloomfield. “With UBCM’s endorsement, we are better positioned to push for provincial action on these key priorities.”

The total estimated cost for sending five Council members and two staff to UBCM is approximately \$33,000.

“As we await next steps from the province, the City remains committed to pushing for tangible progress on these issues that will ensure a stronger, more resilient Penticton,” concluded Bloomfield.

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