

MAYOR REPORT TO COUNCIL

1100 Patricia Blvd. | Prince George, BC, Canada V2L 3V9 | www.princegeorge.ca

DATE: January 10, 2020

TO: COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Lyn Hall, Mayor

SUBJECT: 2019 Year in Review

ATTACHMENT(S): None

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated January 10, 2020 from Mayor Lyn Hall titled "2019 Year in Review."

PURPOSE:

2019 was another busy year for the City of Prince George. A short sampling of some of the activities, initiatives, and accomplishments marked by Council and City staff include:

- Building permit values continuing to break records.
- Exciting international sporting announcements.
- Major progress in emergency planning.
- Important investments in aging civic infrastructure.
- Two new City parks
- A proposal for an integrated health care and affordable housing project on First Avenue.
- New pilot projects aimed at providing washroom access and storage facilities downtown.
- The establishment of new committees to address social issues affecting the downtown and poverty reduction.

January

The year started with an economic bang with news that building permit values in Prince George [broke the previous record](#) by 26 percent. The numbers reached an all-time high of \$186.38 Million, surpassing the previous high mark of \$147.88 Million set in 2007 by nearly \$40 Million – a 26 percent increase. The value also included a record amount of private sector investment.

Starting in January, residents and visitors to Prince George who wish to contact the City had a [new, easy-to-remember way](#) of doing so: simply dial 311 when within City limits. Launching the new 311 service supports Council's commitment to enhance citizen-centered services.

The City of Prince George [unveiled the concept designs](#) for Fire Hall #1 at an event on the site of its future location just off Massey Drive. Mayor Lyn Hall and members of Council also revealed plans for a new access to the YMCA of Northern BC and announced that IDL Projects Ltd. will be the construction manager for the new Fire Hall.

February

[Curling Canada announced](#) that the 2020 World Women's Curling Championship will be played at the CN Centre in Prince George, from March 14-22, 2020 - the first time the city has hosted a World Curling Federation event and the second international championship hosted in the city following the 2019 World Para Nordic Skiing Championships.

One of Prince George's most familiar and functional buildings for business, commerce, and entertainment [hit the quarter century mark](#) in February. The Prince George Conference and Civic Centre (PGCCC) first opened its doors on February 11, 1994 as Northern British Columbia's premier meeting and conference venue. The Conference and Civic Centre hosts approximately 120,000 guests and 400 events over the course of a year.

March

In March, the [Government of BC announced](#) that the City of Prince George would be receiving more than \$8 Million to help address infrastructure needs and support planning for future opportunities. The grant payments are part of the \$100-million Northern Capital and Planning Grant, which provides funding for infrastructure and long-term planning to four regional districts and 22 participating municipalities, including the City of Prince George.

Also in March, [the City announced](#) that road rehabilitation investments over the past few years have significantly reduced both the number of potholes on City streets and the number of requests from residents to fix potholes. Since City Council first increased the road rehabilitation budget from \$3.5 Million per year in 2011 to more than \$5 Million in 2012, the number of potholes crews have to patch each year has fallen by almost 70 percent from a high of 22,000 in 2012 to fewer than 7,000 last year.

During the March 25 meeting of Prince George City Council, Council held a formal public hearing relating to a student housing development located downtown on Patricia Blvd. Council approved the rezoning and construction of the development by Faction Projects is currently underway.

April

In April, [the City released the results](#) of its [2018 Business Insights Report](#), which indicated that 87 percent of businesses feel that Prince George is a good or excellent place to do business. Eighty percent of businesses indicated that the business climate is better today than five years ago, and 77% predict that the business climate will be even better five years from now.

The City of Prince George [provided an update](#) on progress made on the City's Emergency Strategic Plan. 2019 was year-one of the Plan, which is aimed at improving the city's emergency readiness. The report included new evacuation zones to help emergency officials communicate with residents

should a local evacuation order or alert be issued. These zones are based on the current City garbage collection map.

Emergency preparedness, economic and social development, and the Government of BC's CleanBC initiative were among the topics discussed during a BC Mayors Caucus meeting held in Prince George. Hosted by Mayor Lyn Hall, the meeting attracted more than 30 mayors from all regions of the Province.

Also in April, [the City introduced](#) about 300 bear-resistant residential garbage carts to the Hart Highlands Croft neighbourhood as part of a pilot project to help to deter bears from trying to access garbage contained in residential bins.

May

Throughout the spring, the City hosted a series of training exercises in order to train staff, external agencies, and emergency personnel and refine the City Evacuation Plan. In mid-May, [the City hosted](#) a “rehearsal of concept” drill at ice-level at the CN Centre, which included representatives from dozens of governments, agencies, and industries. The drill staged a mock emergency scenario of a large wildfire moving towards the City.

Also in May, the City hosted a public open house on the Community Wildfire Protection & Emergency Strategic Plan, aimed at helping to reduce the risk of wildfire in and around Prince George. The event was attended by about 75 people who were provided an update on the Plan.

[The City announced](#) that HDR, a global architecture, engineering, and consulting firm with expertise in sport and recreation design, and Chandos Construction, an award-winning, Canadian construction company will be leading the design and construction of the City's new aquatic facility to replace the Four Seasons Leisure Pool. Construction is expected to begin in 2020.

[Crews began installing Radio Frequency Identification \(RFID\) tags](#) on all household garbage carts. These tags are helping the City to improve customer service by tracking broken, overflowing, or missing carts.

Council approved a new [Asset Management Policy](#), which enables the City to identify and prioritize civic building systems in critical need of repair or replacement. This work has been accompanied by condition assessments that have recently been completed for every civic facility.

June

In June, Prince George's newest riverfront park [officially opened](#). Nechako Riverside Park is on the north side of the Nechako River, at the Foothills Boulevard crossing. A highlight of the new park is the accessible trail to the river's edge. The Park also features numerous picnic tables, a canoe launch, new parking off Foothills, and washroom facilities.

The [City of Prince George began training](#) upwards of 250 staff and other personnel in a new digital registration system that will greatly improve service to evacuees and others requiring support services during times of emergency. During 2017 and 2018, Prince George welcomed a total of 14,000 wildfire evacuees. Each of those evacuees registered for supports such as food and

accommodation by using a paper-based system provided by the Province of BC. The City worked with Emergency Management BC to implement a digital system that would reduce the time needed to register evacuees and decrease the number of staff and volunteers required.

The City announced [the results of an Alternative Approval Process](#) held in the spring. Elector approval was received for 11 loan authorization bylaws allowing for borrowing to undertake equipment financing and capital projects deemed essential to maintaining and enhancing important civic infrastructure. Each bylaw was later approved by Council.

July

The City of Prince George and the Canadian Red Cross [signed an agreement](#) that will see the Red Cross become the lead organization delivering Emergency Support Services in Prince George. Under this agreement, the Red Cross will provide Emergency Support Services for Prince George residents displaced from their homes due to a local emergency. The Red Cross will also support the City of Prince George in larger emergency events.

In July, [School District No. 57 began installing](#) signs at eighteen schools throughout Prince George to indicate their designation as official "Community Evacuation Assembly Locations" in the event of an evacuation. These locations will provide services to residents who require transportation during an emergency. Earlier in the year, the City and School District No. 57 also signed a memorandum of understanding to ensure the safety and well-being of students and residents during an emergency event resulting in evacuation. Should any school need to be evacuated due to an emergency, the City will accommodate students and school staff at civic facilities.

August

The Government of British Columbia [announced](#) it is partnering with the City and Northern Health on an innovative proposal that would bring together new affordable housing and health-care services to support people in Prince George. The proposed mixed-use development would be located on First Avenue, at the current location of NR Motors, and provide 100 housing units and health care space. A public hearing on the development is expected to be held early in 2020.

The new [Wood Innovation Square opened](#) in downtown Prince George. It is the first new park space downtown since the creation of Canada Games Plaza. Wood Innovation Square is located on 5th Avenue, adjacent to both the Wood Innovation and Design Centre (WIDC) and the Wood Innovation Research Laboratory. The park is equivalent to four city lots and features picnic tables, seating, and paths, along with trees, flowers, and shrubs.

Crews and electricians working for the City of Prince George completed the construction of a [new set of traffic signals](#) at the intersection of 22nd Avenue and Ospika Boulevard. The new signals improve access to nearby areas, pedestrian access to Ospika Blvd., and safety at the intersection.

September

A section of [7th Avenue in front of City Hall reopened](#) revealing an enhanced streetscape, which improves walkability in the downtown area. Working with local contractors, the City replaced and rerouted the storm drainage system, and upgraded and rerouted the sanitary sewer. In fact, as part of the project an entirely new sewer line was installed across Queensway and along Lower Patricia to provide the increased capacity that is critical for further growth downtown.

In September, Prince George City Council approved [an updated Snow and Ice Control Policy](#). Among the changes to the Policy, the City Snow and Ice Control Program now includes a Heavy Snowfall Declaration to notify residents following heavy snowfalls that crews may take longer than usual to clear the streets and sidewalks.

BC Transit and the City of Prince George announced [a fare change and service expansion](#) in the Prince George Transit System. The service expansion serves to extend service hours for the Spruceland, Hart, and Queensway areas with longer service days. Bus riders are now also able to purchase a DayPASS when they board the bus, making it more convenient to ride the bus all day within the Prince George Transit System.

October

The City of Prince George, BC Housing, PGNFC, and AWAC [announced new pilot projects](#) aimed at providing much-needed washroom access and storage facilities for vulnerable and homeless people living in the downtown area. One pilot site, located at 181 Quebec Street, will provide access to storage, washroom, and outreach services. The second pilot site, located at 144 George Street, will provide access to storage, washroom, shower, laundry, and outreach services. These are examples of recent, City-led initiatives or partnerships aimed at reducing homelessness and crime, while increasing safety, health, and security for all residents, and revitalizing the downtown core.

[Talktober public events were held](#) October 1 and 2 at the Prince George Conference and Civic Centre. The Mayor, members of Council, and staff were on-hand to provide information and answer questions. There were displays about the historic development of Prince George and current infrastructure, and staff from the Service Centre were on-hand to take service requests from residents.

Two studies published in October provided [further positive economic news](#) for Prince George. A study by the Conference Board of Canada forecasts that the city's economy will continue its trend of modest growth over the next few years despite recent negative news from BC's forest industry. Similarly, a report published by the City of Prince George and conducted by MDB Insight from Vancouver also featured an optimistic forecast for the local economy and businesses in the city while providing recommended strategies for attracting and retaining a talented workforce.

November

Less than a year after Prince George set records for both the number and total value of building permits in one year, in November the City announced that [all new heights had been reached](#). The total value of building permits issued in Prince George through the end of October, 2019 reached an all-time high of \$193.76 Million, surpassing the previous high mark of \$186.38 Million set in 2018 – a four percent increase with two months of the year remaining to be tallied. By the end of November, the total value had reached more than \$217 Million.

December

The [December 2 meeting of Prince George City](#) Council held a public consultation with residents to receive feedback from the public on key issues, gaps, and the work needed to address social issues throughout Prince George with a focus on the downtown core. The feedback gathered at the meeting will inform Council's budget deliberations for 2020 as well as the City's coordination with partners and other levels of government.

During the meeting, Council resolved to create a new committee to address the social issues affecting the community. At the December 16 meeting, Council established the new Committee and its Terms of Reference, and encouraged residents who are interested and feel they are qualified to put their names forward to be part of the committee. The City [recently announced](#) the selection of the people and organizations that will make up the newly created Committee. Council wishes to thank the new members of the committee for their dedication to the community, and to thank the dozens of residents who applied.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

On behalf of Council, I would like to thank City staff for their continued hard work, excellence, and service to our community. The snow plow operators, parks employees, city planners, engineers, utility crews, service centre representatives, and the rest of our committed city staff are a credit to our operation. This 'year in review' represents just a few of the new initiatives and activities undertaken by Council and employees in the past year. This goes along with the outstanding level of service staff provide the community, day in and day out. As always, it is Council's privilege to serve our community.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:



Lyn Hall, Mayor

PREPARED BY: Michael Kellett, Senior Communications Officer

Meeting Date: 2020/01/20