May 13, 2019

Senate Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources
The Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada, K1A 0A4

Attention: Clerk of the Committee, Ms. Maxime Fortin

Re: Responding to Comments made on April 12, 2019 in Winnipeg

Dear Members of the Senate Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources,

Fort St John is a community in a robust resource region in British Columbia, north of the 56th parallel. With that comes all four seasons and environmental assessments.

I write this in response to some comments made about activity in and around our community to the Senate committee in Winnipeg on April 12, 2019.

We take a planned and principled approach with all our initiatives including the development of our Official Community Plan, financial planning, development guidelines, water and sewer use, energy literacy, bylaw development, and recreation; everything we do. We have been recognized nationally and internationally for the work we have done.

With each project being proposed in our area, our council's position is that we will remain pragmatic and review each project with a lens to how our community will be impacted, whether it be beneficial or detrimental. We acknowledge that as a community, we must show leadership and get involved in the processes of the assessments. Many do not understand the process and therefore assume that we are taking a supportive approach which could not be farther from the truth. We have expectations that project proponents need to understand. Our Community has been in existence for about 225 years and we intend to be around a lot longer.

One such project was Site C - C Hydro's Clean Energy project just 7km from our downtown. The city discovered that we knew little about the construction of a dam and we would be the most impacted community during construction. We had choices. We could have sat back and argued against or for the project or we could engage and seek to understand the impacts. We chose the latter. Our well-researched presentations, provided the joint review panel with knowledge that was backed by technical data and community input.

Our council spent countless hours engaging our not for profit agencies, service providers (ie education, healthcare, public safety) and business community. We gathered information and encouraged them to get involved as we would only be able to provide secondhand information.

We are pleased to have what is referred to as a precedent setting agreement for a project outside of our jurisdiction and outside of our sphere of influence as a local government. The agreement speaks to housing, funding for our vulnerable population, access to the reservoir for water, RCMP funding, and a 75 year legacy fund to name a few. Prior to the construction, BC Hydro contributed in excess of $300,000 to local not for profits for housing services.
On the topic of housing, all "fly in-fly out" workers are housed at the camp. They are picked up at the airport and driven to the camp. The project has a shuttle that will bring them to town for shopping should they need anything. The camp is very robust with a medical clinic, pub and barber shop along with some recreational activities.

For longer term housing, those who have not purchased a home have the option of staying in a multi-family passive-house standard facility. The community has, in the agreement, access to a number of these units for housing needs from a community perspective and will be a legacy for many years to come.

Our work has been recognized by many including the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. As a result, we have been working for 4 years with municipalities in rural/remote Peru on the issues of municipal development, economic development and social inclusion. The statistics given to us shows that for many years their culture has had significantly high domestic abuse and encourages a macho culture that leans towards violence. We have listened to the voices of the women and men who have been impacted by this and our efforts to end this through encouraging their communities to acknowledge this continues.

What needs to be said is that violence in the home and gender-based violence exists, everywhere; it has for centuries and will until society deems it time to be abolished. When we listen to judges scolding victims, when we hear that enforcement personnel are not taking the victims seriously, THAT is the starting point. Victims need to know that they will be taken seriously AND that it will be followed through on.

In Summary:

Setting this Bill aside and picking up Bill C-337 Judicial Accountability through Sexual Assault Law Training Act; An Act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code (sexual assault) would go a long way to show that this issue is taken seriously as it should be.

Local governments need to engage with proposals in the area that they provide services to. When a local government engages its community in the existing assessment process, it can provide insight into the socio-economic impacts. That is when we all win and are able to build resilient communities for our grandchildren.

Sincerely,

Lori Ackerman
Mayor

www.fortstjohn.ca