

Community Meeting on Poverty In BC

I attended this meeting at the Senior Citizens Hall on the morning of Tuesday, March 13th. The event was hosted by Community Futures, and presenters from SPARC BC facilitated the meeting. The Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia (SPARC BC) was established in 1966 and is a leader in applied social research, social policy analysis and community development approaches to social justice. Their mission is to work with communities in building a just and healthy society for all. Community participation at this event was good, with people attending from a wide spectrum of social and business interests and spheres. The meeting was structured to encourage dialogue and group participation around the issue of homelessness and poverty. Many good ideas were shared, and the information collected will go directly to the Province and inform their Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Boundary Housing Needs Workshop

The same presenters from SPARC BC carried on in the afternoon with a workshop on key housing needs in our region. They presented housing statistics from the 2016 Census which clearly pointed to our region's need for a continuum of housing choices, all the way from housing for the homeless, to suitable social housing, to the private rental market. They further identified potential funding support for rural communities and provided information about several funding streams available from CMHC. These funding resources need community input in the form of a working committee that can put together a business plan, organize statistics and factual data, along with proposed plans for housing strategies that could work here. We are waiting for Community Futures to assimilate all the data that was presented at the workshop, but suffice to say, this was a very exciting presentation that could lead to an opportunity to garner much-needed housing funding for the area.

Microcell Transmitter Placement Consultation Resolution

The resolution on microcell transmitter placement consultation that we took to the UBCM was sent to the applicable Provincial and Federal levels of government after it passed at the UBCM convention last September. This month we received a reply from both the Province and the FCM about the resolution. The Province's response was to defer to Federal regulations for cell tower sitings. They stated that "the demand for cellular services is growing and is expected to continue, as more and more British Columbians use smart phones and other mobile devices. To accommodate this demand, more towers will be needed." Unfortunately, they haven't addressed the fact that microcell transmitters are used for far more than just cellular service, or the issue of microcells being located on utility poles and other City infrastructure sometimes only meters from people's living spaces. The FCM's response was equally disappointing; they simply categorized the resolution as "not in accordance with existing FCM policy."

Both the Province and the FCM have not addressed the request in the resolution "*to mandate consultation*" with land use authorities when telecommunications companies are installing small, powerful Wifi-emitting microcell transmitters within 100 meters of homes, schools and hospitals. By doing so, they have declined to address their responsibility in setting adequate safety regulations for this new technology. They have also dismissed the health and safety risks attached to these devices.

Respectfully submitted,
Beverley Tripp