



SILGA 2022 - COMMENTS

COUNCILLOR DOUG FINDLATER

This year's 2022 Southern Interior Local Government Association (SILGA) conference in Salmon Arm was the first in-person one since SILGA 2019. This was of course the value of the conference after 2 years of lockdown and it really was great to see people again and chat about so many natural and political events in the interior and the world in the interim.

SILGA is an opportunity to discuss important local issues, network, and share ideas. Many of the topics of the conference included: Climate Change and Health, Flood Readiness, planning for more Wildfire Seasons in B.C., Wildfire Risk Reduction, Attainable Housing, and more.

City of Kelowna, which is so much larger than other SILGA communities, did not attend, although Kamloops, Vernon and Penticton were well represented, as were the plethora of smaller municipalities and electoral areas. Elected was Chair Karla Kozakovich of RDOS, 1st Vice Toni Boot of Summerland, and 2nd Vice Aimee Grice of Oliver, so the south Okanagan is dominant on the SILGA Executive. Others were elected as directors at large.

Delegates voted on a number of resolutions to go on to UBCM (Union of BC Municipalities) that included: Family Physician Funding and Physician Retention, Local Government having Legislative Input in Forest Cutting Permits, Criminal Justice Reform for Repeat Offenders, and RCMP Cost Sharing. Many of the resolutions reflected the very rural and small town nature of SILGA, although some such as Emergency Management, Watersheds and Criminal Justice strongly relate to communities like CWK. The Sustainable Funding for BC Libraries resolution, which WK endorsed, was submitted on by RDOS and passed.

One of the speakers was the Honourable Nathan Cullen, Minister of Municipal Affairs, who covered a multitude of topics, including: Wildfires and Floods, Watershed Security, Climate Change, RCMP costs, the sentencing of repeat offenders, Council Code of Conduct, and other local government issues, all of which are issues that the Province is considering.

The Minister is intent on making changes do deal with elected officials who are charged with a criminal offences while in office, whether the charges are related or unrelated to their position. On the matter of housing, he stated there will be no legislated changes without a thorough consultation, but noted BC needs to accommodate 100,000 people this year.

The keynote speaker was Jesse Wenté on “Dreaming Our Future: Storytelling and Healing Our Way Forward”. Wenté is a member of the Serpent River First Nation (Ontario), and is a writer, broadcaster, speaker and arts administrator. In 2018 he was named the founding director of the Indigenous Screen Office, and in 2020 was appointed Chair of the Canada Council for the Arts. He held a captivated audience at SILGA with his fascinating words and storytelling about his life and experiences.

The Central Okanagan Regional District (RDCO) won one of the Excellence Awards for “Environmental Sustainability” for Flood Mitigation Planning.

The conference wrapped up with some words by Vernon Mayor Victor Cumming announcing that next year’s SILGA 2023 will be held in Vernon. I had the honour of joining Mayor Cumming whom I have known for 30 years, when we sat together at the banquet.

In summary, SILGA is useful but I would suggest in future that there be a caucus within SILGA of Municipalities over 15,000 population to discuss concerns that relate to entities of this size.