

May 22, 2013

Local Government Awareness: Students voted with City bucks, businesses lunched and learned

The City of Campbell River hosted two information sessions May 22 for students and business representatives to learn about City services and the challenges in meeting community needs.

As part of Local Government Awareness Week, students from Carihi and Timberline schools were in City Council Chambers in the morning for a hands-on chance to weigh the balance between an ever-increasing demand for City services and a limited budget. The event was moderated by local government specialist Jerry Berry, who donated his time to talk about why it's essential that today's students start thinking about the future role of City services – particularly how to fund them.

During a Chamber of Commerce lunch, Jerry Berry delivered an energetic presentation about the history and role of local government and the challenges faced by City Councils working with an outdated funding system. Berry explained that the system of local government property taxation currently in place in British Columbia is approximately 200 years old.

“Jerry was a very engaged and informative speaker, and the messages he presented really resonated with a lot of the work the City and Chamber are actively involved in as part of our collaborative partnership,” says Colleen Evans, President and CEO of the Campbell River Chamber of Commerce. *“The Chamber looks forward to discussing the next steps of civic engagement and building a healthy, prosperous community in our ongoing conversations.”*

Students tackled the City budget in a session inspired by the Sim City video game, where people play at building and maintaining a community. City staff representing 10 different departments had one minute to sum up services provided to the community – and request funding support. On behalf of the recreation department, Rachel Lim, a former member of Campbell River's Youth Action Committee, highlighted how local government services support Campbell River.

Each student was given \$700,000 in City Hall bucks to allocate to 10 departments, and in less than five minutes, students had voted with their cash. Compared against the 2013 City budget, students boosted funding support for the water and sewer services as well as for environmental protection, garbage and recycling, land use planning and the fire department.

“Jerry's session with the students was informative, entertaining, interactive and fun – and we really appreciate everyone's participation in this event,” says City Clerk Peter Wipper. *“He gave them lots to think about, including the value of their vote and ways they can be directly involved in local government by running for office or choosing a career in civil service. The room was buzzing as students and teachers departed.”*

A video of the student presentation will be available for viewing on the City's website. Click on the Local Government Awareness Week link from the homepage at www.campbellriver.ca.

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Photos:

Voting for services with City bucks was part of the student event at City Hall during Local Government Awareness Week.

Jerry Berry shared his local government insight during a Chamber of Commerce luncheon.