

My UBCM Experience

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I turned around to look at a room full of people I didn't know but understood the importance of. Throughout my week immersed in politics and government, I've learnt three main life lessons. If my generation wants our future to look different from our current world, we need to act now. Most of the issues I see and experience in my community do not go unnoticed. At the end of the day, everyone, even scary politicians, are humans. The Union of British Columbia Municipalities conference gave me insight into the steps and connections needed to create change.

Climate change is here. The province of British Columbia has done a lot to reduce the effects of climate change like their target emissions and goals and the "Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy". BC has just experienced the worst documented wildfire season to date. Municipalities are reacting, but will that be enough? By involving youth in the discussion around ongoing issues and possible solutions we can help young minds prepare for their future. Everyone is impacted, either personally, through family and friends or even online, meaning they understand the importance and need for action. Throughout my week, I saw how much of a process it takes to not only formulate change but implement it on a provincial level. My generation has big aspirations and if we wait any longer to put our vision into action, we will not be here to see them completed or the results.

I have lived in Salmon Arm for seventeen years and have noticed lots of improvements to be made in my town. What I didn't know was that the City Council was or had already noticed the problem and started to take steps towards resolution. I found meeting with the Ministers very helpful to my image of my municipality. To see my city ask for what is needed regarding the present issues I and others are faced with was brilliant.

I felt very lost during the UBCM convention, there was so much going on and so many people. During the conference, I had the privilege of attending individual meetings with the Ministers and my city, a SILGA meeting with Premier Eby, resolution sessions, networking events such as the SILGA luncheon, the UBCM Welcome Reception, the Annual Banquet, the Trades Show, and more. The one takeaway I internalized from the connections I made was that everyone there was human. They understood I was lost, they were surprised I was even at the convention in the first place. I had others express to me on multiple occasions that almost everyone there would not enjoy or be interested in the experience I was partaking in, at my age. To the public, politics and the people associated, appear intimidating because they hold so much power. From what I experienced, simply put, individually they possess the power to bring a message up the chain, to someone else. However together our government is a powerful interworking system that requires everyone to do their part, however small, to create change. That is what the public sees from the outside, a mass change resulting from one person speaking up when in reality it took hundreds of people time and effort to take into account the backlash,

consequences, impacts and benefits for everyone before they can put anything into action. So, politicians are just people doing their jobs.

To conclude, throughout my attendance at UBCM, I gained insight into the procedures taken each year at the conference. I learnt that, if my generation expects to see any results from our innovations we need to act now because creating large-scale change takes time. My local government is doing more than what the public can see. At the end of the day, the government is constructed by people with opinions and feelings just like everyone else. I now see the amount of steps and work it takes to complete anything as a government, no matter the size.