

My “Coffee Talks”

iLC – October 2019 FINAL

My first community “Coffee Talk” was held on November 26, 2013 at the Creston Valley Bakery. There were 15 attending including Staff Sgt. Gollan, Fire Chief Moore and myself. In the last (almost) six years, I have convened a total of 24 “Coffee Talks” with the most recent one being held at Black Bear Books on August 29th. Over the years, although the coffee and treats have been provided at different locations - Real Food Café, Renee’s Roadhouse, Creston Hotel Banquet Room and Black Bear Books – the agenda (or lack thereof) remains the same ... to hear what’s on your mind! All citizens of the Creston Valley are welcome and encouraged to attend. Our most popular meeting saw a total of 23 people in attendance.

I created “Coffee Talks” with the intention of inviting citizens to engage with myself and our community public safety officers in a relaxed and informal setting with the discussion topics driven by the participants. There’s just something about “breaking bread” with others that lends itself to great conversation! The majority of the topics have been about our Town’s operations which are directed to me, but many questions have been directed to our local RCMP detachment, our Creston Fire Rescue staff and our Public Safety Compliance (Bylaw) Officer. We even had two meetings where the Regional manager and his local manager of our Highways (the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure) attended from Nelson.

As I reflect on these many talks, I am cognizant that I was elected as your Mayor and that, although we as a Council of seven are mandated by the Local Government Act to govern the affairs of our municipality, it is our Town staff who are responsible for the day-to-day operations. Several times during “Coffee Talks” I have been asked to fix or repair something – sidewalks, streetlights, snow berms, etc. Although I appreciate being made aware of the situation, I need to reiterate that these types of issues are operational in nature and are handled by Town staff. The best way to ensure that operational issues are dealt with effectively is by contacting Town Hall directly – in person (238-10 Ave. N.), via phone (250-428-2214), or email (info@creston.ca). Our website also has a link to report concerns: <http://www.creston.ca/RequestTracker.aspx>.

When I had my own personal business, I was the boss, and could do whatever was needed to ensure customer satisfaction. I have found that being employed in public office means that I must follow policies and procedures to ensure that all parties are equally protected. Actually, now that I think of it, being in business has definitely changed over the years in that you must follow just as many rules and regulations as you do in the public sector. I take our citizen concerns very seriously and it bothers me when people say that they have talked to our staff about a problem and, “nothing has happened”. That being said, it would be disrespectful of me, and members of Council, to circumvent current process by delving into operational matters. Therefore, I encourage you to contact Town Hall via one of the contact methods listed above to ensure that your issue is recorded and to contact me if you feel like your issue is not being resolved in a timely fashion.

I am tentatively scheduling my next Coffee Talk at Black Bear Books on Thursday, November 14th. I hope to see you there for great conversation and even better coffee!

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Do not hesitate to contact me by:

Visiting me at my office in Town Hall

Email me at ron.toyota@creston.ca

Call me at 250 428 2214 (extension 227)