

## Collaborative Community Public Engagement

We represent FACTSnet, a group of organizations that hire Young People to work on a variety of networking projects. On the FACTSnet.org website, previous presentations on this subject were called a “Monologue to Encourage Dialogue”. Recently, we have been having dialogues, which encourage Public Engagement. We appreciate the opportunity to make this presentation before the Election, so that preparations could be made for a mini Public Engagement event soon after the Election. The reason for this is that Public Engagement during the Election is at its highest and the opportunity to set the stage for a new form of Public Engagement is now.

Our **Collaborative Community Model of Public Engagement**, provides for ongoing engagement, so that we get improved participation in Public Engagement exercises. Currently, we are engaging the public, especially [Young People ages 15-30 by hiring them](#) to **reflect on Pre-COVID-19 society, evaluate present COVID-19 society, and image Post-COVID-19 society**. We still have positions where we could hire Young People to work in Spruce Grove. There are other communities which we could work in but would like to first give Spruce Grove the opportunity. One of these opportunities is for our Young People to be involved in developing Spruce Grove’s Public Engagement Networks. Now let us present our Monologue to reflect on Public Engagement in the past, evaluate it in the present and imagine the future of Public Engagement in Spruce Grove.

**In the past, Public Engagement** has gone from Town Hall Meetings and Community Engagement Events like the Community Caucus to Consultant and Administration managed engagement exercises. Let me illustrate. The Town Hall Meeting I remember best is the Hamburger Hill one at the Elks Hall. This was called because the City started to put up a fence so they could take down Hamburger Hill and create a parking lot. Hamburger Hill stayed, the parking lot was constructed and the baseball diamond moved. The Community Caucus was an opportunity for anyone from the community to be involved in dialogue with the City about plans for the next 3 year term of council. We remember it very well because our daughter worked with her teacher to present a drawing of a future Emporium that would be better than the Science Centre in Edmonton. We could go on reflecting about the past for hours but need to move on to evaluating the present.

**In evaluating the present**, I would like to focus on Public Engagement for developments in Spruce Grove’s City Centre (ARP). Public engagement was well managed by The Chamber of Commerce, which birthed the City Center Business Association, the administration and consultants. They represented the business and landowners perspective with minimum opportunity for participation from business renters and residents of the area. If we had not discovered what was happening and got engaged we would likely have lost our homes to developers. Here is what we did. We engaged our summer employees to send out flyers and

create email lists for those involved. From there we attended and evaluated the public engagement exercises and held a Town Hall Meeting. This led to a large group coming out to the first public hearing and a revision of the ARP plan and a second public hearing. There are still issues that need to be addressed like heritage preservation but at least we have our homes and community for now. There is a lot more to evaluate about the present, some of which will be addressed as we imagine the future.

**In imaging the future**, we would like to focus on coming out of COVID-19 and developing long term ongoing Community Engagement Policies and opportunities as follows:

1. Getting **Young People ages 15-30** involved. It is their future. As a result of COVID-19 many of Young People have moved back home from studying at Post Secondary Institutions. They are being affected economically as there are cuts to education and many of them may get left out in the new **Mental Health** funding promised in the Federal Election.
2. Spruce Grove has a good **Social Sustainability** Plan, but it needs revision in the light of COVID-19. Mental Health needs to be a big part of the Community Engagement Dialogue.
3. **Involving small nonprofit** and other community organizations. There are a lot of organizations in Spruce Grove with limited funding and opportunities to be engaged with each other and get funding, which usually goes to larger, better financed groups. The Ag. Society celebrates 50 years next year and perhaps we can get others involved in a major Spruce Grove celebration.
4. Bringing organizations, generations and families together to **support organic community networks** as follows:
  1. As soon as possible after the Election, host a “**Mini Community Caucus**” to look at budget considerations, COVID-19 recovery, and future Public Engagement opportunities.
  2. Early in the New Year, host a “**Major Community Caucus**” to dialogue on plans for the next 3 years (especially how we are going to handle Public Engagement in revising the MDP -Municipal Development Plan).
  3. **Develop Networks**, which provide for monthly dialogues, involving social media, zoom/in-person meetings etc.

Thank you for the opportunity to present. Hope we can have dialogues on Community Engagement in the near future.

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