

Council votes to petition Parliament for bail reform

COLIN SLARK
Citizen Staff

Prince George city council voted to pursue a petition on public safety through the House of Commons with the help of a local MP at a meeting on Monday, Dec. 15.

A report written by director of administrative services Eric Depenau ahead of the meeting said that ongoing issues in the downtown area including street disorder, mental health and criminal justice challenges are something that local governments like the city have a limited authority to address.

The main tool council has at its disposal, Depenau said, is to support recent calls to the federal government to implement bail reform, increase penalties for repeat offenders and institute stricter sentences for violent crimes.

For that reason, Depenau advocated for submitting a petition to the Attorney General and minister of justice

through the House of Commons' online portal asking for changes to the Criminal Code of Canada, the appointment of more judges and prosecutors to reduce court backlogs, an increase in support for Crown counsel and an increase to funding for provincial correctional services.

The report said that a petition must first have between five and 10 initial supporters before being submitted and council is recommended to be the first signatories.

Then the submitter must choose the length of time that the petition is open for signatures between 30 and 120 days.

A member of Parliament must sign on to authorize the online publication of the petition.

Mayor Simon Yu said Cariboo-Prince George MP Todd Doherty has agreed to support it.

Then the petition will be examined by the clerk of petitions and vetted, with a French copy being produced and being

posted online if it meets requirements and the supporters are validated.

If the petition gets 500 signatures, the clerk will issue the supporting MP with a certificate that they can then present to the House of Commons. Should it fail to meet the threshold, it would still be online but would not be presented in the House.

Two motions were presented to council, one approving the draft petition and another naming Yu as the petitioner and the rest of council as supporters.

Discussing the item during the meeting, Coun. Cori Ramsay asked whether it would be quicker and easier to run a paper petition as it would require only 25 valid signatures in order to be tabled in the House of Commons.

She also wondered whether the language of the petition should be updated given recent bail reforms tabled but not yet approved by Parliament. Specifically, she said changes to reverse onus mentioned in the petition have

already been ruled out by the federal government.

Coun. Garth Frizzell said he would support it being put online and for the city to run a campaign to generate support and signatures for the petition.

Coun. Ron Polillo asked whether there could be both a paper and online petition at the same time. Depenau said they would have to choose one or the other.

Coun. Trudy Klassen said she felt it would be simpler to run the e-petition and said it would be a "sad day" if they couldn't come up with 500 signatures.

Vote summary

Council approves the submission of a petition on public safety to the House of Commons worded similarly to the draft presented on Dec. 15.

Council approves Mayor Simon Yu as the petitioner and members of council sign on as supporters of the petition.

Result: both approved unanimously.

RCMP seize firearms and drugs

MATTHEW HILLIER
Citizen Staff

RCMP stepped up enforcement efforts this weekend, making four arrests and seizing drugs, weapons and other items.

The first seizure occurred on Dec. 12, when RCMP officers executed two Controlled Drugs and Substances Act warrants at homes on the 200-block of McIntyre Crescent.

Inside, investigators seized ammunition, drug trafficking paraphernalia, various weapons and a small quantity of suspected methamphetamine. No arrests were made during that investigation.

Later the same day, officers executed a warrant at a home on the 1300 block of Pearson Avenue as part of a stolen property investigation.

RCMP found a firearm, a small quantity of suspected illegal drugs and two stolen motorcycles. No arrests were made in that investigation.

The following day, officers were told about two people sleeping in a vehicle on Third Avenue.

After investigating, police seized various weapons, a replica firearm, illegal cigarettes, more than \$1,000 in cash, drug trafficking paraphernalia and nearly 10 grams of suspected fentanyl, cocaine and methamphetamine.

The driver was issued a 24-hour driving prohibition. Both people were released pending laboratory results and charge approval by the BC Prosecution Service.

RCMP ended the weekend with an arrest on Dec. 14 after a traffic stop on Highway 97 North near Fifth Avenue.

Officers found the driver of a rental vehicle in possession of body armour, and he was arrested. He was released at the scene with a future court date, and the vehicle was returned to the rental car company.

The investigations are ongoing, RCMP report.



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Happy New Year!



Although at this point, after what 2025 gave us, we'd settle for a slightly boring 2026