

Victoria undecided on arena process

By Vernon Morning Star

Published: **September 27, 2015 01:00 AM**

Updated: **September 27, 2015 07:277 AM**

Provincial bureaucracy continues to stall Greater Vernon's plans for a new arena.

Regional District of North Okanagan officials met with Community Development Minister Peter Fassbender during the Union of B.C. Municipalities convention about Victoria signing off on a proposal for a new ice sheet so a borrowing referendum can be held.

"The paperwork appears to be on someone's desk," said director Akbal Mund.

RDNO hoped to hold a borrowing referendum in November 2014 but the provincial government blocked that process because Kal Tire Place is owned by the City of Vernon.

To conform to ministry guidelines, the new strategy is for the regional district to borrow the funds and own the twinned ice sheet at Kal Tire Place. A long-term lease would place it in the hands of the city.

However, a referendum date can't be set until the ministry agrees to the proposal.

Director Mike Macnabb suggests approval has been delayed because staff positions within the ministry have changed.

"There are new deputy ministers, etc. We have things before them, so what happens now?" he said.

Greater Vernon's goal is to replace the 78-year-old Civic Arena, which requires significant upgrades.

While at UBCM in Vancouver, local officials pursued a number of other issues with provincial ministers and municipal counterparts.

"You try and get your point across and they have been very receptive," said Mund, who was at his first UBCM as Vernon's mayor.

"If we get some results back, it will show that it worked. I have been making lots of contacts. You hear about other people's problems and their solutions."

RDNO met with Education Minister Mike Bernier over the Vernon School District's reduction of busing in Cherryville and rural Lumby.

"The ministry agreed that there are problems but it's up to school districts to set their budget," said director Rick Fairbairn, adding that a provincial committee will look at rural busing.

Okanagan Basin Water Board also met with the Ministry of Environment to push for increased action to stop invasive mussels from appearing in local lakes.

"We were reassured that they are looking at this as a priority," said Fairbairn.

Find this article at:

<http://www.vernonmorningstar.com/news/329591411.html>