

Municipal District of Bonnyville No. 87

Reeve's Message

Spring is a time for renewal, both on the farm and in politics.

Our local producers are preparing for a new year in the fields. Calves are running around and we are seeing the first shoots of green popping up from the earth. Soon farmers will be planting crops. As always, the result from all this work is left in nature's hands. We've had some fairly good crops in the last few years in the Municipal District of Bonnyville and we look forward to another good year.

Politics is a little different. The result is in our hands. A vote, is a vote, is a vote and yours is important. Many people in different parts of the world have to fight on a daily basis to obtain the right to a free democratic vote or to maintain that right. We in Canada have been blessed with that right, and sometimes we forget how precious that privilege actually is.

As many of you know, I was denied the right to vote in the local nomination process to choose the Bonnyville/Cold Lake Constituency candidate for the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party. However, I will vote in the upcoming provincial election. Everyone who has the right to vote should exercise that right to help select the candidate of their choice. Sometimes the choices that are offered to us are not what we see, personally, as a good choice. Remember, if you do not like the choice for who you believe may make up the government, then by all means, vote for the opposition. A strong opposition helps to make a good government.

Provincial elections, and the viewpoints and decisions of local candidates, are crucial for the residents of the Municipal District of Bonnyville. As Reeve, it is important that I stand up for the right to govern ourselves. I feel it is important to stand up for our residents, to make sure that we maintain our autonomy.

For years, a few local urban politicians have pushed for a move towards Regional Government. What does that mean for you, as residents, and taxpayers, of the M.D.? Regional Government would mean that the neighbouring urban municipalities would take away a large amount of tax dollars from the M.D. Your services within the M.D. would be reduced and your taxes would go up. Residents have to remind themselves that no one would want to take the M.D. over, or amalgamate with us, if there wasn't any money in it for them. Many of our older residents can attest to that. When the M.D. was considered a poor municipality, our neighbours were not clamouring to regionalize. When the time comes to vote in the provincial election, remember to check out what the candidates represent and know if they will work for you or against you, then vote accordingly, but please vote. Remember, the choice is yours. You decide how we, your M.D. Council, will govern your municipality.

Currently, the M.D. of Bonnyville has one of the lowest Residential tax rates in the province. The 2015 Residential mill rate is 2.7663. Mill rates double this are common throughout the province. If we don't stand up and fight against regionalization of the M.D. with its neighbouring urban municipalities, then you can expect your taxes to double.

The 2015 Non-residential mill rate is 15.5000. This higher mill rate is required to maintain the road infrastructure in the M.D. While the M.D. benefits from industrial development, there is also a high price to pay. There are a lot of maintenance costs to keep our roads in good repair. The large loads and increased traffic take a heavy toll on roads that were not built for this type of activity. Regional Government would also mean tax increases for industry, as tax dollars would have to be shared with other municipalities and therefore the Non-residential mill rate would have to be increased to make up the difference.

This year's budget once again demonstrates the constraints M.D. Council faces annually. The largest portion of the budget is slated for road maintenance and construction. Council continues to manage the M.D. in a frugal manner. Council's priority is to deliver services to M.D. residents, while collaborating and partnering with community organizations and neighbouring municipalities to enhance services for all residents throughout the region.

Now that the budget is passed, the M.D. is getting ready for its busy season. Road maintenance will be ongoing, as well as the upgrading of roads. Please obey all the caution signage on our roadways. This year, the M.D. will delay doing MG-30 dust suppressant applications to roads until after the wet season (probably end of June) to see if we can eliminate some of the sloppy surfaces. If we have dry weather, the MG-30 sets better and we eliminate some of the application problems.

So, as some residents are planning holidays, others planting crops and we are maintaining the roads, let's hope for a great and successful spring and summer season.

Reeve Rondeau