

M.D. of Bonnyville Media Release

Reeve urges senators and MPs to vote “Yes” to Bill C-48 and Bill C-69 amendments

June 17, 2019 – Municipal District of Bonnyville Reeve Greg Sawchuk has written a letter to all Canadian Senators, and Members of Parliament in the House of Commons, urging them to acknowledge the importance of the oil and gas industry to Canada, specifically to the Bonnyville/Cold Lake region, and asking them to vote “Yes” to Bills C-48 and C-69 amendments.

“After attending the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Conference in Quebec City, I realized that the majority of people in the eastern provinces have no idea how drastically the economic downturn is affecting their fellow Canadians in Alberta. They also don’t realize that the oil and gas industry here in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake region operates side-by-side with neighbouring communities in a highly cooperative partnership.”

Sawchuk says residents should start sending personal letters to Senators and MPs representing constituencies in B.C., and the provinces east of Manitoba, telling these representatives how the economic downturn is affecting their lives. Also, let them know that without amendments to Bills C-48 and C-69, the economy in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake region is projected to worsen. Senator contacts can be found at <https://sencanada.ca/en/senators-list/> and the list for House of Commons MPs is at <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members?view=List>.

In his letter, Sawchuk told the Senators and MPs that without the amendments, Bill C-48, also known as the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act, and Bill C-69, if passed, will be devastating to the local economies of northeastern Alberta. “Many of the 40,000 people who live and work in the region, affectionately known as the ‘Heart of the Lakeland’, are already facing dire economic circumstances because of the recession. The passage of these two bills will send many families into a downward economic and physical spiral from which they may never recover.”

He went on to describe the area. “The Municipal District of Bonnyville, Town of Bonnyville and the City of Cold Lake are considered the lake country of Alberta. We are a tourist destination for the major urban centers of Edmonton and Calgary. Our multitude of pristine lakes, surrounded by boreal forest filled with birds and wildlife, are a huge attraction for people who want to enjoy water recreation adventures, or a weekend filled with the relaxing ambiance of campfire lit nights.”

Say yes to amending Bill C-48 and Bill C-69 - Continued on Page 2

Sawchuk told them that “co-existing in this enviable space is an oil and gas industry that employs thousands of residents, as well as workers from elsewhere in the province and Canada. Within the M.D. of Bonnyville alone there are 18,000 wells that the industry has placed so as not to disturb residents of neighbouring towns, acreages, and hamlets. Consultation and cooperation are the operating words of business in our neck of the woods.”

He went on to say that “industry works with residents, municipalities, First Nations and Metis Settlements in a cooperative manner to ensure that the environmental footprint of their business is minimized. Ensuring the ongoing attractiveness of the region is a significant goal for the industry, as it is an incentive for trained workers to make their home here. Industry has long worked with our local Indigenous population to create jobs, develop business partnerships, provide ongoing training and offer scholarships to local students. Cold Lake First Nations operates over 40 businesses tied to the oil and gas industry, employing its own members and others from Indigenous communities in British Columbia and Saskatchewan. They are nationally recognized for their unique partnerships with the oil and gas industry, winning many business awards for their cooperative endeavours.”

Sawchuk described how the recession is affecting residents. “Unfortunately, the latest recession, with its drop in oil prices and the increasing differential between West Texas Intermediate (WTI) and Western Canada Select (WCS) has taken an incredible toll on families in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake region. In 2018 more than 11 percent of home sales were foreclosures. We have seen increasing business and personal bankruptcies, along with many businesses closing their doors. Increased support services have been put in place to help people deal with these large losses and the cost to an individual’s mental health.”

Should Bills C-48 and C-69 pass without the Senate amendments, our region will face increasing devastation. An industry, that has proven to be the best in the world environmentally to its neighbouring communities, will pick up and move its operations to a more inviting locale – one that perhaps does not require such stringent standards, wiping out any environmental benefits that were beneficial to the Earth.”

He emphasized that “the economic benefits that this region had passed on nationally and provincially through taxes, and eventual equalization payments, will cease. The impact of hindering the industry in this small corner of northeastern Alberta will hit our population first, but it won’t be long before the negative repercussions roll right across the country.”

He ends with imploring the Senators and MPs “to make the right decision and vote to protect the livelihood of residents of northeastern Alberta and many workers from across the country who make up our large shadow population.”

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