

Message from Municipal District of Bonnyville Reeve Ed Rondeau

Over the past month our Council has been in mediation talks mandated by the Minister of Municipal Affairs Ray Danyluk with our three neighbouring municipalities: City of Cold Lake, Town of Bonnyville and the Village of Glendon.

Throughout the mediation meetings the Municipal District of Bonnyville took the stance that the M.D. had been, and will continue to be, a leading rural municipality in the province. Three years ago the M.D. established a Regional Community Development Agreement which shared, through an agreed upon formula, the economic growth of the region with the urban municipalities within its boundaries that provide services to M.D. residents. This generous agreement, which was in addition to other cost-sharing partnerships it maintains with each neighbouring municipality, was unique in the province. Entering into the mediation talks, the M.D. made it clear it was willing to continue with this cost-sharing agreement – enhancing and making changes to meet the needs of our neighbours and the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

On September 3 and 4 the four municipalities will sit down to look at two proposals placed on the mediation table. The M.D. of Bonnyville has presented an enhanced nine year cost-sharing Regional Community Development Agreement that will provide Cold Lake with slightly over \$1 million annually, The Town of Bonnyville with \$744,761 and the Village of Glendon with \$115,212. This amount will increase in 2013 as the mill rate used to calculate the amount of money the M.D. will give to the neighbouring municipalities will increase to 1.0 mills, an increased cost sharing of 33 per cent from the old agreement. This formula is all based on the “Non Residential Assessment” and is not reflected on “Residential” tax rates. Once again the M.D. of Bonnyville has taken a leading role, as this new agreement would be the most lucrative inter-municipal cost-sharing agreement in the province.

While the mediation meetings have been tedious at times, especially when the municipalities hashed out their old baggage, the parties at the table did learn about the financial stresses each community faces. All of the four municipalities deal with unique issues. Some of the solutions can be found through regional cooperation – others have to be dealt with as individual Councils. Throughout the mediation meetings the M.D. has placed the needs of our rural ratepayers as a priority – whether those ratepayers are agricultural producers, acreage owners, hamlet residents, businesses or corporations. Some of our ratepayer priorities can be met through regional partnerships – many others are unique to a rural municipality.

The M.D. of Bonnyville is an established municipality with strong rural traditions. Third and fourth generation families have chosen to base their roots in our community and Council is committed to maintaining the rural lifestyle that is so attractive to our founding families. Council is also committed to building the future viability of the M.D. of Bonnyville and its enviable lifestyle by attracting new residents to our farms, acreages and hamlets; building up our business community; and creating a dynamic regional tourism industry by promoting summer tourism featuring our multitude of campgrounds and lakes and highlighting Kinosoo Ridge Snow Resort during the winter.

Our five year plan presented during the mediation meetings demonstrated our desire to maintain our regional leadership. The M.D. is committed to constructing and maintaining the road network to encourage increased residential and industry access. This

road infrastructure is crucial to maintaining the non-residential tax base that benefits the whole region. Road construction and maintenance is the core of our business retention and attraction program as these highways are essential for a growing industrial tax base. The M.D. is also focused on upgrading the water and sewer infrastructure in the hamlets of Ardmore and Fort Kent to accommodate an increased population base as the location and lifestyle of these communities is a prime draw for industrial employees.

In terms of culture and recreation within our own boundaries, the M.D. is committed to maintaining its 15 community halls and recreation societies that are the centre of their individual rural communities. In 2010 the M.D. will have completed the new chalet at Kinosoo Ridge Snow Resort – a facility that provides winter recreation for the surrounding municipalities, as well as northeastern Alberta. In the summer the M.D. maintains 10 campgrounds on eight lakes, which are popular draws locally as well as being the centre of our summer tourism marketing campaign.

The M.D. of Bonnyville is always conscious of the fact that it must be a good neighbour, but it is also committed to being a regional competitor for business attraction and residents. Council believes that through cost sharing, delivery sharing and project partnerships the M.D. can help maintain the viability of our neighbouring municipalities and build this sector of northeastern Alberta into a regional economic powerhouse. The large urban centres of Cold Lake and the Town of Bonnyville, and the smaller Village of Glendon, benefit from servicing the M.D.'s growing population, and the M.D. in turn reaps benefits from the close regional partnerships that have been established with those municipalities.

The M.D. of Bonnyville Council continues to be committed to the needs of our ratepayers. At the same time we strive to continue to be a good neighbour.