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NOTES FROM COUNCIL

Dear Residents & Ratepayers,

November is a busier month for County Council. In addition to the two regular meetings there is always the Rural Municipalities of Alberta conference and meetings to review the interim budget for the forthcoming new year. For 2023, the County is forecasting a significant increase in its linear taxable assessment and consideration is being given as to how this might lower certain tax rates. Decisions will be finalized come Spring.

The November 5th fundraiser for the District 20 Fire Association was a great success, raising over twenty four thousand dollars for rural fire protection. Donations received toward the event were generous. Ryan Fleetwood was in fine form in his capacity as the auctioneer. Those in attendance—a full house despite the weather—enjoyed a delicious meal prepared by the association members. Their support for the auction broke previous records by a wide margin.

On November 11th I had honour of representing local government in the Champion Remembrance Day Service. This was held at the cenotaph across from the Legion. While it was a small service, it was meaningfully undertaken by all who participated in a shared act of remembrance.

The Rural Municipalities of Alberta Conference is an opportunity for municipal councillors to engage with government ministers, Members of the Legislative Assembly, as well as local government counterparts from other jurisdictions. The sessions are informative and one hot button issue this year was rural ambulance service response times. There seems to be

consensus that rural wait times are completely unacceptable. The anger arising from this lack of service has caught the attention of Alberta Health Services (AHS), with Vulcan County being one area where they commit to doing better. We'll find out.

As mentioned in previous write-ups, County Council received an independent third-party report on councillor remuneration in June of this year. It compared Vulcan County Councillor compensation across eleven other municipalities in Alberta, contextualising what level is considered reasonable or fair.

Over the summer I posted this report, along with my expense claims, on my website, encouraging ratepayers to let me know what they think. I was somewhat surprised that those who communicated with me seemed to support the ten percent increase that was recommended in the report. Notably, even with the policy driven cost-of-living adjustment for 2023, councillor remuneration in Vulcan County remains below the median and the average of the comparators. This remained the case when I adjusted the analysis by removing from comparison the two highest and the two lowest municipalities for councillor compensation. As such, it seems to me that the analysis is quite sound. While I voted to support the recommended increase to councillor compensation, I welcome the opportunity to explain my reasons in more detail.

Best wishes for an enjoyable Christmas and a Happy New Year in 2023. It has been an honour to serve in local government this past year.

Sincerely,

Christopher Northcott