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NOTES FROM COUNCIL

Dear Residents & Ratepayers,

Members of council, along with our MP, Martin Shields, as well as key personnel from the Oldman River Regional Services Commission, Benchmark Assessment, and Vulcan County Administration took a rather diverse bus tour of Vulcan County on July 5th. We toured the fully operation 465 megawatt Travers Solar Farm southwest of Lomond. It is jointly owned by Greengate Power Corporation and Copenhagen Infrastructure Projects, spanning 3,330 acres. We then visited the construction laydown yard for the 494 megawatt Buffalo Plains Wind Farm which was recently sold to Copenhagen Infrastructure Projects. This project, when fully constructed, will span approximately 17,500 acres and include 83 turbines, being the largest single phase wind project in Canada. From the laydown yard, we were taken to the construction site for one of the first turbines, giving us an appreciation for the scale of the concrete pad that will be poured. While these pads could never be fully reclaimed, we were told that they will likely be used for a much longer length of time than any one turbine tower. A single pad could be used to support successive towers.

After lunch in the Arrowwood Museum provided by Center Street Eatery, we toured the Aspen Crossing Campground near Mossleigh, the latest phase of which includes a swimming hole and beach. This latest phase brings the total number of camping sites up to 380, providing employment for 90 individuals, and includes a multitude of spinoff services. From there we headed northeast of Milo to see A Stone's Throw RV campground. Offering 167 fully serviced sites, a community garden, a fishing hole, kids play area, store, and very nice washroom facilities, seasonal campers are also offered free winter storage of their RV. One thing that council could likely review

in the future is the assessment model we rely upon for taxing campgrounds that choose to develop here. The trick to any form of taxation is to apply a reasonable model that does not overly discourage economic growth and the kind of economic activity that will benefit our communities. Campgrounds do bring significant long-term benefit, however, their initial start-up investment is huge and one of their biggest operational expenditures quickly becomes the property taxes that they pay. It is also worth appreciating that growing the number of visitors to our region increases our overall visibility, as well as the likelihood that some visitors will choose to make one of our communities their permanent home.

The July 5th tour finished in Vulcan at the fire training tower where we were given a demonstration of the training that can be provided. This tower is not only used to train local firefighters but is rented on a regular basis to outside departments. Earlier this year, Council approved an upgrade to this facility that will soon be undertaken to maintain its long-term usefulness. All in all, the tour was highly informative and gave us a first-hand look at some rather significant items coming before County Council.

If you have not had a chance to participate in one of the Fire Smart wildfire prevention sessions yet, there is one coming up in Milo on August 13th, just prior to the Lions Barbecue and Show'n Shine that same day. This series of public education events has been offered throughout the spring and summer, across the county, and had a very good turnout at McGregor Lake Country Estates on July 22nd, where I attended as the local councillor. We are now entering that precarious time of year when the risk of wildfire is at its highest.

Sincerely, Christopher Northcott