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NOTES FROM COUNCIL

Dear Residents & Ratepayers,

As you might be aware, the District 20 Fire Association (Champion) has submitted a grant application for the initial phase of construction of an equipment storage building adjacent to the fire hall. It is anticipated that this first phase of construction will provide a closed-in, sealed, and insulated building for approximately \$250,000.00 and, as such, the association has applied for fifty percent of that funding from the Community Enhancement Funding Program (Small Project). The fundraising efforts of the association over the last few years continue to raise money for this project. This new building will provide off-season and year-round storage for certain types of equipment that are used infrequently, thus freeing up space in the fire hall for regular maintenance and training. It is thought that other features of this new facility will eventually include a bulk water storage capacity, as well as additional storage capacity for other community groups who require space for their items. There will be a benefit for other groups in the Champion Community and not just the fire protection service.

In December, I was elected as the Board Chair of the Oldman River Regional Services Commission. Having served on the Executive Committee for the Commission for the past three years, 2025 is year where significant budgetary planning and changes to the fixed membership fees was required. For those of you who are not aware, the Commission has forty member municipalities, nine of which are rural, and is responsible for providing planning service to its members. The commission advises municipalities on the development and implementation of their land use bylaws and statutory plans. It undertakes all subdivisions, as well as running the Chinook Subdivision and Development Appeal Board and

the Assessment Review Board. Members may also benefit from the Geographic Information System (GIS) that provides technical detail and asset management for each municipality, including any cemeteries that they operate.

In December, the villages of Lomond and Milo submitted a project proposal for a Community Growth Initiative under the Intermunicipal Development Plan that they each negotiated with Vulcan County. Over many years, the dealer-operated post offices in these communities have operated at a significant loss to the dealer. In Milo, the dealer is the Village of Milo and their minimum annual shortfall of revenue from expenditures is approximately \$10,000. The owner of the grocery store in Lomond also incurs a significant annual loss. Last year, the Lomond vendor was prepared to surrender the post office unless something could be done to curb this loss for a service that is locally available to everyone. While the villages are prepared to cover their share of a subsidy for this service, they are asking the County to cover the cost for their ratepayers (based on the physical location of post office box holders). The villages believe that access to a post office is a critical service for their communities when it comes to community growth in a rural area. While I personally agree with the merits of the proposal, I am interested in hearing from those impacted by local post office service in the Milo and Lomond communities, as well as County ratepayers in general. With the recent postal strike, we are all aware of the challenges faced by Canada Post. Unfortunately, local access to a post office is still a necessity for many, including businesses and seniors. Other municipalities have taken action to support local post office access. Please let me know what you think. The proposal is on my website and comments are enabled.

Sincerely, Christopher Northcott