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## COUNCILLOR REPORT

Councillor activities and updates for January 2025.

- The January edition of “Notes from Council” is on my website:  
<https://christophernorthcott.com/category/notes-from-council/>
- Attended the one Regular Meeting of Council on January 15th.
- Attended the meeting of the Twin Valley Regional Services Commission Board meeting on January 9<sup>th</sup>. Finalized budget and reviewed year-end transfers.
- Attended ORRSC Executive Committee meeting on January 9<sup>th</sup>, as well as represented the ORRSC Board at the Council meeting for the MD of Taber on January 14<sup>th</sup>. We discussed the budget overhaul that was required for 2025.
- Attended the Ag Service Board Conference in Edmonton from the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> and found the presentations to be much better than the last time I attended my first year on Council.

Kim Goode of the Alberta Land Trust spoke about conservation easements in Alberta, how land can be put in (and for what benefit) and how it can be taken out (for public interest). She also spoke about how conservation easements have a place in farm succession planning.

Tannis Baker spoke on Agriculture Tourism and the success of Alberta Open Farm Days which is the third week in August. She noted that there are grants available to agricultural societies for culinary experiences tied to local food sources. This is seen as an opportunity to get people traveling around Alberta, being 52,000 in Alberta agriculture tourism last year. Three representatives with Alberta Open Farm Days working with 152 farms and 170 registrants to pull it all together, including insurance, promotion, and event coordination.

John Knapp, former Deputy Minister with Alberta Agriculture spoke on global trends and impacts on agriculture. This was a very interesting presentation as he looked at projected birth rates and population trends. Among other nations in the world, Canada has tremendous food security and is a net exporter by far. He noted that climate will impact other areas differently, with some significant loss of existing production. However, this is not the case for Canada. There is a lot of water flowing through Alberta and a warmer climate actually opens up further



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forms of niche production in specific areas (he predicts some orchards and vineyards being developed in the Alberta of the future). Historically, Mr. Knapp noted that Alberta has benefited from its research capacity and egalitarian agricultural culture (which it still has, for now).

Megan Evans of the Alberta Native Bee Council spoke on the importance of insect biodiversity and the wide variety of bees, of which there are 375 varieties. The loss of biodiversity is a ticking time bomb due to the use of neonicotinoids, an insecticide coated on seed before it is planted in the ground. Ms Evans noted that there is strong evidence that this harms bees, however, Canada has chosen not to ban its use but requires clear labelling when used. She explained how native grasslands remain a biodiverse habitat for bees but that these are being harmed by invasive species. Specific diseases get transferred to bees and comprehensive monitoring is required. Honey bees compete for food with native bees with 300,000 colonies consuming the same amount of food for 100,000 native bees.

Heard the end of the presentation on farmer mental health and was told it was excellent. Had a chance to network with some councillors I hadn't seen for a bit. A small trade show but some good information was available. Kelly Malmberg's company had a booth.

- Attended the SAEWA Board meeting on January 24<sup>th</sup>. It was a good meeting and discussion. With respect to prior correspondence with members, clarity will be forthcoming for members and entities that own the solid waste on behalf of members.

#### Constituent Matters:

- Attended Village of Champion Council Meeting to provide some perspective on their interim operating budget and how they move forward with it between now and final budget.
- Attended the District 20 Champion Fire Association meeting on January 8<sup>th</sup>. Submitted a CFEP Small grant application on their behalf on January 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Received a follow-up call from Joe Mclean, Manager for Lake McGregor Country Estates Community Association, regarding Vulcan County's access to municipal pricing and how that might assist with the operations of their community.