



Christopher Northcott,
Councillor, Division 6
(403) 423-0158
Christopher.Northcott@vulcan.ca

NOTES FROM COUNCIL

Dear Residents & Ratepayers,

As a practise, we normally try to do Councillor Reports in the agenda of the first meeting of every month. My councillor reports can also be found on my website following my expense reports. In these reports, I provide a brief summary of business from the service commissions or committee meetings to which I have been appointed by County Council and attended over the previous month. I also provide some detail on constituent concerns or items of discussion that will have arisen over that month. Please check them out on the website and feel free to phone or email me if you have any questions.

There was one regular meeting of County Council in January due to the holidays at the start of the month and the Agricultural Service Board conference near the end. This is the second time I have attended the Agricultural Service Board conference since being elected in 2021 and I found this conference to be much more informative than the one I attended in 2022. This year we learned about conservation easements, both the personal benefits and public interest, as well as how the use of conservation easements can have a roll in farm succession planning.

We also learned about agricultural tourism and the success that has been had through Open Farm Days which is the third week of August. Funding is available through agricultural societies and representatives from Alberta Open Farm Days worked with 170 registrants last year alone. Of that, 152 provided agricultural attractions to 52,000 visitors travelling around the province.

John Knapp, a 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. Mr. Knapp noted that climate will impact other areas around the globe differently, with some significant loss of existing production projected to occur. However, by and large, this is not the case for Canada. There is a lot of water flowing through Alberta and projections of a warmer climate actually opens up further forms of niche production in specific areas (i.e. orchards and vineyards being developed in the Alberta, in very specific circumstances). Historically, Mr. Knapp noted that Alberta has benefited from its research capacity and egalitarian culture where big farmers and small farmers associate in the same communities and work cooperatively.

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. Honeybees compete for food with native bees with 300,000 colonies consuming the same amount of food for 100,000 native bees.

For Council business, we are working through year end reporting but have recently reviewed and approved a renewed Intermunicipal Development Plan with Lethbridge County. The County has one of these plans with every adjacent municipality and all need to be reviewed.

Sincerely, Christopher Northcott