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## NOTES FROM COUNCIL

Dear Residents & Ratepayers,

January has certainly been a busy month, despite there being only one regular meeting of council. Hopefully 2026 is off to a good start for all of you.

In December of 2025, I was re-elected as the Chair of the Board for the Oldman River Regional Services Commission (ORRSC). This has been a time of significant change for the Commission as our new Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Tracy Thomas, officially commenced work on January 12<sup>th</sup>. As such, the Executive Committee has set out mutually agreeable goals and objectives for her first year with the Commission. Fortunately, retiring CAO, Lenze Kuiper, has been facilitating a transition for the remainder of January. The two of them have been busy reviewing files and visiting member-municipalities. I joined them in Bassano on January 26<sup>th</sup> for a discussion with the Town Council on the budgetary direction that has been implemented, as well as the operating plan that was approved by the Board of Directors in December. Member-municipalities, of which there are 41, are the shareholders of the Commission, having an ownership stake in its future. The Commission is a non-profit corporate entity that reports directly to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, realizing significant cost-savings and the benefits of regional collaboration for members.

I was able to attend the Provincial Agricultural Service Board conference in Edmonton the third week of January. This is the one time of year when all councillors have a chance to engage with the business of agriculture service boards. This year's conference was organized by the northeast region and the theme was "Cultivating Resilience," how the industry can effectively adapt to change. One session was on

the advent of artificial intelligence in agriculture, bring with it a far greater degree of automation and precision for cropping inputs. Other sessions were on the economic impact of tariffs, long-term trends in climate change for agriculture in Alberta, landowner considerations for renewable energy installations, balancing agriculture and municipal development, as well as motivations and deterrents to a rural veterinary practice. All in all, it was a very informative conference.

Notice has been given for a public hearing on the proposed Parking Bylaw for Vulcan County. Please check it out online and reach out if you would like to discuss. There will be another public hearing on a Land Use Bylaw Amendment regarding battery energy storage systems. Again, please reach out if you have any concerns.

We received word at the end of January that the provincial Assessment Services Branch incorrectly issued Vulcan County a supplementary taxable assessment of \$285.2 million dollars for 2025. Where we thought we were gaining an additional \$2.5 million in tax revenue from linear assessment, the energy generating facilities in question were not in fact commercially operable as of October 31, 2025 (the condition date for purposes of supplementary assessment). That was not certified until November 25<sup>th</sup>. This is unfortunate as we will now not be able to realize a significant budgetary surplus that we thought we were getting in 2025 and our supplementary assessment bylaw will need to be revised. I have been getting inquiries about this from ratepayers.

There was a retirement party for Colleen Dickie this past month. With scheduling challenges, it was not possible to recognize her retirement until now. I wish her and her husband well as they move to be closer to family and thank Colleen for her years of service.

Sincerely, Christopher Northcott