



I led off the last newsletter with some comments about snow removal and the challenges our crew faced keeping up while battling water breaks. Those water break repairs continued into the next week during which time there was a lot of thawing and freezing that resulted in some terrible ruts on the streets. The “new” grader didn’t arrive as soon as promised so a contractor was finally hired to come in and try to deal with the layers of ice and deep snow. Snow piles left on the streets by people with tractors and loaders compounded the problem as once piled in the cold weather, the snow couldn’t melt quickly. We are very appreciative of the people who hauled their snow away and certainly thank everyone who worked hard to keep their sidewalks cleared. The Town hauled a great deal of snow for over 3 months and during this melt in early March simply did not have the resources to keep up while trying to restore water services. Could all of this have gone better? Certainly, with some different or more typical spring weather. Could it have been handled better? Possibly. Management and staff will review this season and make recommendations for the future.

Everyone at the Town is sorry to hear about the recent serious accident that befell local businessman, fireman and community volunteer, Pete Giesbrecht, while vacationing in Mexico. He is recovering in hospital down there and hopefully will be home soon. Best wishes and prayers to Pete and his family.

At the March 26th meeting Council gave first reading to the amended Land Use Bylaw, to allow the production and processing of Cannabis in the industrial area on the east side of Town. Before these amendments can be passed there will be a public hearing on April 23rd prior to the Council meeting. Later on, in preparation for the legalization of recreational cannabis there will be more changes to the Bylaw regarding retail sales in Bow Island. Such businesses will have to be operated under strict Federal and Provincial regulations, but the Town has a say in how many can be allowed, hours of operation, where they can be located and if any will actually be permitted. We will certainly be looking for public input on those changes to the bylaw as well.

Every year around this time municipalities like ours wait to see what the Provincial budget has in store for us. Just before the budget was tabled, the government announced a good-sized payout under the Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI). This is a key grant program that we use for capital projects such as rebuilding water lines etc. This “extra” money turns out to be an advance on future MSI payments, so the government could show it on last year’s books. They will claw it back through reduced payments over the next few years but essentially the funding will remain the same for now. Calgary and Edmonton had their MSI funding reduced in exchange for special funding for two large transit projects.

The portion of the MSI program that is earmarked for operations will expire in 2019. The capital program will expire in 2021/22. The government announced in the budget that they plan to legislate a replacement for MSI by the end of this year. The goal is to create a funding model that is predictable and sustainable, allowing municipalities to make plans for replacement and maintenance of infrastructure. All municipalities have been pushing for this for a long time. Having the formula legislated should take away the typical uncertainty of grant programs that we are forced to compete for and that can be cancelled without warning.

Most of the other municipal grant programs remain the same in this budget so the Town can now finalize its new budget too. We are waiting to hear how much Education Tax the Province will force us to collect from property owners this year. In recent years our mill rate has been quite stable but increases in assessment and the Education Tax, two things the Town has no control over, have resulted in some overall increases in taxes.

Don’t miss the Bow Island-Burdett Chamber of Commerce Spring Trade Show on the 13th and 14th at the Servus Credit Union Arena. Friday the show is on from 1 to 8 pm and Saturday 10am to 5 pm.

Here’s hoping that Spring will actually start soon!

Mayor Gordon Reynolds

