



I think I've learned my lesson and won't be trusting rodents for weather forecasting anymore. Winter has refused to let up and with the first day of spring only a couple of weeks away it may not be done yet. I am very grateful for the efforts of our Public Works crew as they have moved a lot of snow and battled water breaks in the bitter cold. A couple of weeks ago our 1979 grader developed a transmission problem and is unable to finish the season. Considering the age and a huge repair bill, Council felt it would be wiser to replace the unit and the new (to us) machine should be here soon. In the meantime, staff have found ways to deal with the snow with the equipment they have. Thanks also go out to residents that have been affected by the water breaks for their patience and understanding.

Spring will eventually come and with it the possibility of a great deal of runoff from all this accumulated snow. If you've had water issues in the past, make sure your sump pump is working and ready to go. The areas hit by water breaks have quite a bit of ice to deal with on the roads and sidewalks and hopefully it will drain away fairly quickly.

The announcement on February 15<sup>th</sup> that PepsiCo was closing the Spitz plant near Bow Island and moving the operation to the United States came as quite a shock. Over the approximately 30 years since Tom and Emmy Droog started Spitz, the company became a very important part of our community as an employer and more. The Spitz brand has helped raise the profile of the Bow Island area, and the support given various community projects and causes over the years has been invaluable. After purchasing the company from Tom and Emmy in 2008, PepsiCo continued to grow the brand and not too long ago invested more money into the plant, leading us all to believe the future was bright for Spitz at Bow Island.

PepsiCo says this is a business decision that they feel they had to make for the future of the brand. Those are the difficult decisions that businesses have to make every day and it is theirs to make. Losing a business in a rural region is difficult for the communities involved but our concern is really for the people who work at Spitz; all 53 of them. For Bow Island and the County of 40Mile that is a very significant number of jobs to lose and we will feel the impact, but of course the greatest impact is on those individuals.

The goal of the County and the Town is to have this facility re-purposed to process other local Agricultural products, so we can get some or all of those jobs back. There are some great possibilities right now in processing of crops like peas, lentils, chickpeas, hemp and yes, cannabis. It has been interesting to note the number of inquiries this story has generated. Individuals and companies are expressing interest in not only the Spitz facility but in doing other projects in Bow Island and area. The Reeve and I have chosen to focus on looking for such opportunities and letting everyone know we are open for business and will do what we can to help keep bureaucratic delays to a minimum. I have been reminded several times recently by outsiders that Bow Island has a reputation for entrepreneurship; a reputation we must now capitalize on.

Like most municipalities in Alberta, Bow Island is preparing amendments to bylaws to deal with the legalization of Cannabis. Provincial and Federal regulations and guidelines regarding, production, processing and retailing of Cannabis have been announced. Once the bylaws have been drafted there will be public hearings before they are passed so your input can shape the final outcome.

I had a great time last night at the Susan Andersen Library fundraiser, *Are You Smarter Than a Librarian?*. Congratulations to the Library Board for putting on an event that not only raised some money for their programs but brought a good crowd of people together for a fun evening. The sponsors, including Medicine Hat Brewing, Hells Basement Brewery and Premium Sausage helped make the night a great success. Our Council team had a good time and offer our kudos to the winning team, even though they used ringers from the Lethbridge library!

Until the ice melts, please be careful out there and drivers please slow down...*Mayor Gordon Reynolds*