



A few weeks ago, Bow Island was very fortunate to welcome a second new doctor to Town. Dr. Raheem Dhanani has joined Dr. Woodruff and Dr. Tawfeeq at the clinics and hospital. Dr. Dhanani is originally from Pakistan and has trained and practiced in various parts of the world including East Africa. He brings with him a wealth of experience in rural medicine and training medical students. Like Dr. Tawfeeq he is happy to be part of our community and eager to be part of our quality healthcare team. At present his youngest daughter is completing Grade 12 in Edmonton so Mrs. Dhanani has remained in Edmonton with her for the time being. I am sure everyone will do their best to make Dr. Dhanani feel welcome.

January 1st the Carbon Tax will rise again in Alberta, adding \$.0224 to a litre of gasoline and \$.506 /Gj of natural gas. This is based on the government raising the tax on carbon from \$20 to \$30 per tonne, which is a 50% increase in the carbon tax but this will not, as some are claiming, mean a 50% increase in utility bills. Many of us are still not convinced this tax is going to be a positive thing for the Province but I don't think it is helpful to exaggerate the impact on individuals. No one wants to pay another tax but please don't panic when you hear these reports. On a related note, the government is supposed to announce in the next few weeks, the successful bidder for the first contract to supply renewable energy into the grid. Several local projects are hinging on this announcement after about a two year (or more wait) but it is expected that the next round of bids and contracts will come quite soon after. Once these contracts are announced the communities in this region, including Bow Island, will ramp up efforts to capitalize on spin-off benefits during the construction and operational phases of these projects.

The recently proclaimed revision to the Municipal Government Act (MGA) still does not address predictable funding for municipalities. This continues to be a big issue for all municipalities and one we continue to press the government to address. They are, of course, claiming they have fallen on hard times, although spending does not seem to be a big problem for them. Our new and incumbent Councillors have been receiving training on various aspects of municipal government, including the changes to the MGA. Council has looked at the first draft of the operating budget for 2018 and work will begin in the new year on the capital budget. The MGA now directs us to do 3 year operating budgets and 5 year capital plans. This is a useful exercise for all Councils and Administrations to go through, however, without a predictable funding model the capital plan is pretty much a guess and a wish list. I must say that this is not a new problem, but it is very frustrating that progress made a few years ago on this key point seems to have been erased.

There was much discussion last month at the Urban Municipalities conference about the legalization of cannabis. The Province has announced the basis of its framework which can be found at: <https://www.alberta.ca/cannabis-legalization.aspx> Municipalities have the right to regulate, through zoning, the location of retail outlets and production facilities. The Feds will regulate and control the licensing of production and the Province will control the licensing and regulations around retail. The Province will be the sole wholesaler of cannabis to the retailers and will be the online sales source within Alberta. Retailers will not be able to also sell alcohol, tobacco products or drugs and the distances between such stores will be regulated as well. There are possession limits in the proposed Provincial regulations and legal consumption is limited to persons 18 and over, similar to alcohol. There is, of course, opposition to the Federal legalization plan. Law enforcement, healthcare, social services and most municipalities would, at the *very least*, like to see the implementation pushed back until issues like public safety, workplace safety and education plans are addressed.



As you prepare for your Christmas celebrations please remember those in the community who are struggling. Give what you can to the food bank and/or the Joy of Giving campaign and as always show that we are a kind and caring community. On behalf of the Town Council and Staff, my family and I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Mayor Gordon Reynolds