



**2023** was a busy year in Bow Island with lots of activities and events going on. Several of our regular and annual events were quite successful: Market in the Park, the Friday Market, the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Children's Festival, the Annual Slo-Pitch tournament, the EMC Gospel Jamboree and the Christmas Parade of Lights. Our very enthusiastic and dedicated Tourism Committee worked hard to decorate and promote the Town and brought back the Harvest Festival. They also created "*Pinpoint Pinto*" to highlight his travels and bring attention to our community. Blues at the Bow is celebrating their 30<sup>th</sup> season of creating excellent live music experiences at the Bow Theatre. The Troy Loney Charity Golf Classic returned for the 10<sup>th</sup> time, raising money for a new, accessible playground. The Kale Porteous Memorial Splash Park, the campground and the pool were all very busy this summer and we were very pleased to reopen the updated playground at Jubilee Park. The year was capped off by the very successful Island Vitality Skate-A-Thon that raised over \$20,000 for the replacement of the arena ice plant. The common thread with all these events is that they were organized and run by VOLUNTEERS who are dedicated to making our community stronger.

Our business sector continues to expand. Forty Mile Turf Seed began constructing a state of the art seed processing facility in the Airport Industrial Park that will be in operation by next fall. Lobo's reopened, Tim Horton's and Shell opened a combined location on Highway 3. Rainbow Gas and Apple Drugs underwent makeovers.

This past year the Town staff came together as a team to accomplish a great deal. Besides general maintenance, another 600 metres of water line went into the ground and there was quite a bit of new sidewalks and pavement installed. The parks, cemetery, campground and common areas have seldom looked better.

The community helped Dr. Woodruff celebrate his retirement after many years of faithful service. We were pleased to welcome Drs. Joy and Andrew Okoror to Bow Island this fall. Dr. Joy has taken on Dr. Woodruff's patients and will be joined by Dr. Andrew at the clinic and Health Centre in the spring. Sadly, we will be saying goodbye to Dr. Dhanani who will be leaving us at the end of January. Bow Island and area continues to be fortunate and grateful to have had so many dedicated doctors, nurses and support staff who have cared for our residents for decades.

**2024** is shaping up to be a busy year for Bow Island and area. I expect we will continue to enjoy our annual and regular events and have opportunities to gather as a community to enjoy new ones.

Barring more bureaucratic delays, construction should begin on the long-awaited continuing care homes in Westview this year. The Town is preparing to install the underground infrastructure for the care facility and the new housing development in Westview. There is a great demand for more rental spaces and in the next few months, we want to be engaging developers and contractors who may be interested in being part of this exciting expansion.

This year will see a major update to our Land Use Bylaw that should bring even more clarity and flexibility to the development and building process in Bow Island. This will be a benefit to developers and hopefully encourage more investment in much needed housing and help stimulate additional economic growth.

Capitalizing on grant funding awarded in 2023, preparations began in the fall to install a new liner in the swimming pool, which should extend the life of this very busy recreation facility. It was announced just before Christmas that grant funding has come through to support the replacement of the ice plant at the arena. This grant money plus the funds raised by Island Vitality will allow the Town to partner with Bow Island Minor Hockey to replace the 30-year old ice plant. Development of the Westview park and playground will begin in 2024. This area will ultimately include walking trails, benches, lighting, trees, irrigation and of course, the accessible playground. The financial impact has been significantly reduced by the fundraising initiative of the Troy Loney Committee and successful grant applications.

This year, Alberta Transportation will be hiring a consulting engineer to take another look at the alignment of Highway 3 at Bow Island. Our MLA, the Minister of Transportation, and Premier are all aware of the concerns of the majority in our community, especially businesses, with regard to the original *bypass* plan. Their priority is to finish the twinning from Taber to Medicine Hat as soon as possible to speed up the development of the Agri-food Corridor in the Southeast. Keeping the highway through Bow Island will be the quickest and least costly option in achieving that goal.

In 2024 Bow Island will continue to be a place of opportunity and growth. A place where people can make a good living, safely raise a family and enjoy life. *I wish you all health, happiness and peace in 2024. Mayor Gordon Reynolds*