



Like all **Provincial budgets**, the one that was introduced last week contains good news and bad news. The good news for our region is \$152million over 3 years to twin Highway 3 from Medicine Hat to Whitla. As for healthcare in Southern Alberta the budget includes: \$59 million over the next three years (towards a \$445 million total investment) for developing a catheterization laboratory at the Chinook Regional Hospital in Lethbridge, and enhancing intensive care unit (ICU) capacity at the Medicine Hat Regional Hospital and Chinook hospital • \$35 million over three years to develop the Rural Medical Teaching School at the University of Lethbridge • \$2 million over three years to fund the Centre for Community Wellness project at Medicine Hat College, providing modern and integrated learning space.

The bad news includes a sizable Provincial deficit, and the downloading of more costs to the Town, such as an increase in the education property tax, an increase in Provincial policing costs and less money in the Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF). I remind you every year that the Town is forced annually to collect the education property tax and forward it to the Province. Our total Education Tax requisition is up 17% and while some of that is the result of our growth, you will see this line on your tax bill has increased over last year. The amount the Province charges us for policing will rise 25.3% this year and will rise every year for at least the next 5. Previously municipalities with a population less than 5000, paid nothing but this has been rising steadily for a few years. This year it will be \$139,098.84; quite a jump from 0 a few years ago.

Total property assessments have risen significantly this year, partly from growth but more from rising prices. On the growth side, much of the current construction won't be counted until next fall after it is completed. In the meantime, part of the increase in operating costs is due to the work being done installing services, roads and sidewalks to those new properties. The budget always includes putting money into reserves, especially money from lot sales. This year Council has directed Administration to transfer less to offset a potential large increase in taxes, since we know the big growth factor will come in the next budget. This year's budgets have been approved but the tax rate bylaw has not yet. You will see an increase depending on the change in your property value and of course the Province's education tax. More to come in the next few weeks.

Some of the items in the **Capital Budget** include: sidewalk replacement, paving and patching, road upgrades, demolition of the old shop, replacement of the water main on 1st Ave west, engineering of a new water line on 2nd Ave East, repairs to the Arena foundation, renovations at the Strom building equipment upgrades. The total capital approved is just over \$2 million, with a little over half from reserves and the rest from grants.

The original **Urban Hen bylaw** allowed for a maximum of 5 licenses for the keeping of up to 4 hens. Council has been advised that this has worked quite well with no issues being found so **first reading** has been given to an amended bylaw increasing the number of licenses to 10 but still with a maximum of 4 birds. If you have any concerns or have experienced issues with the plan over the last 2 years, contact the office or fill out a complaint form in the Bylaw section of our website. The bylaw will come back to Council this month.

Visitors may now book and pay for campsites at Centennial Park **online**. The link is on the Town's website.

[Bow Island campsite reservations](#)

The last update of the Town's **Municipal Development Plan** was in 2010, and a new plan has been drafted. There is a link to a survey about the plan and the plan itself on our website. Council would appreciate your feedback. There will also be a public information session and public hearings before it is adopted, so watch for announcements about those. The **Recreation survey** link is still active so if you haven't filled one out yet you will also see it on the website.

March came in like a lamb, let's hope it leaves us with a lot of moisture! *Mayor Gordon Reynolds*