

## Council's Winter Message

As this is being written Mid-November, realization that Christmas and the New Year are only but five and six weeks respectively away, gives one time for reflection of the past year.

It definitely has been a crazy year with COVID-19, radical weather, bumper crops (grain & hay) like some have not seen in their lifetimes and an early winter that came with several blasts. We, in Willow Creek, have been resilient as usual and while reflecting back, can say we made it through everything and we will go forward with hope for all the best in 2021.

The Council of the M.D. along with its Administration and staff have accomplished much despite a few hiccups thrown at us by the Provincial Government, the economy, and COVID-19. Let's update and highlight some major ones:

1. The rural and urban municipalities managed to convince the Provincial Government to not proceed with any of the four suggested scenarios from the "Review of the regulated assessment models for wells, pipelines, and wellhead machinery and equipment". However, we cannot be complacent as we realize nothing remains status quo; therefore, the M.D. must be proactive in looking at a Property Tax Policy in the future so we are not so dependent on the linear taxation.
2. Granum joined the M.D. as a Hamlet and we welcomed the cooperation of its citizens and volunteer groups to form the Granum District Community Board which makes strategic decisions to better prioritize public funding for community educational, recreational, historical and cultural programs looking at the needs of Granum District; this includes consideration of programs, services and facilities the M.D. funds within the community for the benefit of all municipal citizens. Who knows better than the good people of Granum what they need and how to get it done. Much infrastructure work is being done now and in the future.
3. In order to keep the Library operating in Granum, the Council formed the Municipal District of Willow Creek No. 26 Municipal Library Board.
4. A new Website [www.mdwillowcreek.com](http://www.mdwillowcreek.com) was created to improve communications and accountability. It offers on-line applications such as Burning Permits (which is handy on the weekends when the Office is closed), etc. Have a look especially at Council's **Strategic Plan 2020-2024** - Council identified key strategic priorities which were categorized under Community, Accountability, Economic Growth and Diversity, Municipal Infrastructure, Collaboration. Example: One priority was to "Identify opportunities to assist community groups" - provide administrative guidance to community groups - i.e. assist in accessing grant funding. This Strategic Plan focuses on what the Council sees as needed by the M.D. residents and gives direction to our Administration. It is not static and that is why it is important for our citizens to have a look and tell us, your Council, what you think may be needed out there. Believe me, it is listened to - this Council works for all of its citizens.
5. The Claresholm Industrial Area has seen and will continue to see growth in economic development with the availability of water (especially for fire suppression), the transfer of the Airport and runway properties from the Town of Claresholm and the resurfacing of the runway. The M.D.'s lower taxation and costs of doing business has attracted these businesses and they then contribute to more tax revenue.

6. We continue to work with our urban counterparts within the M.D. on the Intermunicipal Collaborative Framework (ICF) regarding:  
Recreation – a regional sub-Committee is looking at recreation regionally. A mediator has been selected (funded through a grant) to help work through the process.  
Joint Economic Development  
Policing (continue to meet with the R.C.M.P.)
7. Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDPs) – With deadlines looming in 2021, we continue to negotiate with the Towns of Claresholm and Fort Macleod (Mediation pending) to try and protect the rights of our agricultural operations.

Although COVID-19 has shut down a lot of things – sadly; we could not host our Annual Open House Meeting and Barbeque in June nor the Ag Service Board’s “Legacy of Our Land” Banquet this Fall – it did not shut down the spirit of the citizens of Willow Creek nor that of your Council.

Be Safe. Be Kind. Be Thankful. Be Hopeful.

Wishing everyone a very BLESSED MERRY CHRISTMAS!

M.D. of Willow Creek No. 26 Councilors

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