

## Ward 1: The backbone of our community

### from your County Councillor Vic Bidzinski

Our citizens today are asking a lot of very pertinent questions. They need and want answers. People today enjoy the greatest quality of life in our history and are reluctant to see any changes that may interrupt or adversely affect this; but along with this enjoyment must come the realization of the cost.

We have just completed our annual budget deliberations and I would like to clarify my decisions in that process. I always believed I was elected to represent all the residents in Strathcona County according to their wishes. I would first like to commend our staff for their hard work and dedication in putting together this budget. This is a very challenging year due to the transition between a very hot economy and where we stand today. While we employ staff to formulate the best budget possible for our needs the final direction and decision always lies with us as your elected representatives.

While we make the decisions, how do we as elected representatives determine the wishes of our residents? We must always remember this is their budget, not just our wishes. I believe their position must be instrumental in determining the services we provide. After all it is everyone's quality of life that is affected.

The answer from my perspective is communication between residents and their council. This means not only one way. Residents and elected officials have a responsibility to each other. Both parties must avail themselves of opportunities to listen and understand the magnitude of all options. While I understand it is a two-way street, I also believe your elected officials must bear the brunt of any responsibility as we are the ones who make the final decision.

Not only must we understand but we must also go out of our way to ensure we truly understand our residents' needs. I do not have all the answers but I am a firm believer in the power of unified minds. It is imperative we are all communicating with each other or something will suffer.

I have always taken the time through door knocking, phoning, my newsletter, town hall meetings, etc. to find out the direction my residents wished me to take. This budget was no exception. From initial discussions to the final approval on December 9, my position has been one of a 5% or less increase in our municipal taxes plus a minimal increase in our utility rate.

On a lighter vein, I really enjoy this time of year. It is always pleasing to see so many people doing so much for those less fortunate than themselves. I wish we could make the Christmas Spirit last throughout the world all year round. I do know in our community this spirit does last due to the concerted efforts of so many volunteers giving so much of their time, energy and goods. Thank you to all of you who do so much to ensure we live in the best community in the world.

On behalf of myself, my wife Susan, our children and especially my grandchildren Tyler, Calvin, Carter and Dylan, we wish you and yours a very Blessed Christmas and a Joyous and Prosperous New Year!

Vic Bidzinski is Councillor for Ward 1 and can be reached at 780-464-8005 or [bidzinski@strathcona.ab.ca](mailto:bidzinski@strathcona.ab.ca).

### Snow clearing

Responding to the wishes of our community for improved snow clearing, Council approved some changes that should result in some streets being plowed sooner.

Collector roadways (Priority 3 roads such as Main Street and Strathcona Drive) will be plowed within eight days following 15-21 centimetres of snow accumulation. The previous standard was 20-30 centimetres.



Residential streets (Priority 4s) will now be plowed when there is 10 centimetres of compacted snow. The previous standard was 12 to 15 centimetres. Snow will be windrowed and cleared as conditions require.

In some years, compacted snow on residential streets has created deep rutting. To address this, the County may clear these streets if there is seven centimetres or more of compacted snow on or after February 1.

Road and weather conditions vary greatly from year to year, and it is difficult to establish a policy that addresses all circumstances. The changes we have approved are a positive direction and another step in continuous improvement.

### New Year's Eve Festival

Wednesday, December 31  
4 - 8 p.m. at Broadmoor  
Lake Park

Family activities.  
Fireworks at 8 p.m.

### Transit increases in popularity

#### Many routes busier than ever before

The new transit routes that started in August expanded service to 11,000 more residents. Overall, Strathcona County Transit reports the public response to the changes has been very positive.

The new routes provide better connections and on-time performance. Service to major destinations such as Millennium Place, County Hall, Sherwood Park Mall, and business and industrial parks has been enhanced.

It is estimated ridership is up about 12 per cent over last year. Improved services, together with fluctuating gas prices and the successful student U-Pass program have contributed to this rapid surge in riders. The route to the University of Alberta, for instance, is now at 900-plus riders a day.

It's great to see more people choosing transit. With transit becoming a very popular service, also comes challenges. Buses are fuller, which is good, but in some cases, especially during the rush hours, there is standing room only. For some long-time riders, having to stand is a new reality. Having passengers stand on buses is safe and legal, and has long been the norm on many transit systems—now it is the case on some Strathcona Transit routes.

Currently, the entire fleet is in service during rush hour. While six new buses will be arriving in 2009, several are to replace older buses. Within its resources, Transit will look at options to try to ease the commuter rush-hour pressures as much as possible. The challenge is to best balance the growing demands for transit within Strathcona County's whole system of local and commuter needs.

### Proposed electric transmission line

I would like to expound on the potential exploitation of the Transportation and Utility Corridor as a possible location for a 550 kV transmission line through the area.

The Transportation and Utility Corridor is the corridor sometimes referred to as the "green belt" west of Sherwood Park adjacent to areas including Village on the Lake, Westboro and Woodbridge Farms.

While an open house held by the Alberta Electric System Operator on June 18 seemed to put the plans into the background, I am not for an instant convinced the plans will not proceed toward construction of the line.

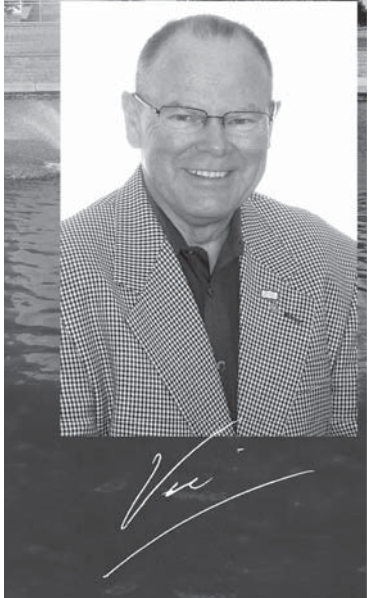
I will be putting forward a motion in the near future that

Council outline our position on this concern in a public venue and support this position with whatever resources are needed to get our point across.

However, because of the new Capital Region Board and its role in identifying utility corridors, we may not have a choice in determining whether a transmission line is built in the corridor. If this is the case, the only position I will support is that this transmission line must be placed underground.

I would appreciate your support for my position and would ask that you contact me if you have any comments or other alternatives.

# 1 Ward



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