

# Ward 6

## UPDATE

November 2009

**Alan Dunn**  
Councillor, Ward 6

Office Phone: 780-464-8206

Fax: 780-464-8114

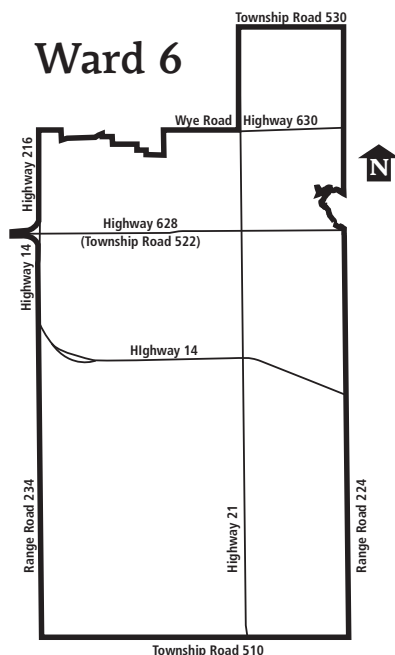
Email: [dunn@strathcona.ab.ca](mailto:dunn@strathcona.ab.ca)



**Strathcona**  
County

[www.strathcona.ab.ca](http://www.strathcona.ab.ca)

### Ward 6




#### Distribution of this newsletter

This newsletter is intended for residents of Ward 6, as shown on the map above. To economize, it is being distributed according to delivery zones established by Canada Post, which do not coincide with ward boundaries.

A limited number of households in Wards 5 and 7 may receive a copy as a result. If so, please enjoy the information and make note of the councillor for your area.

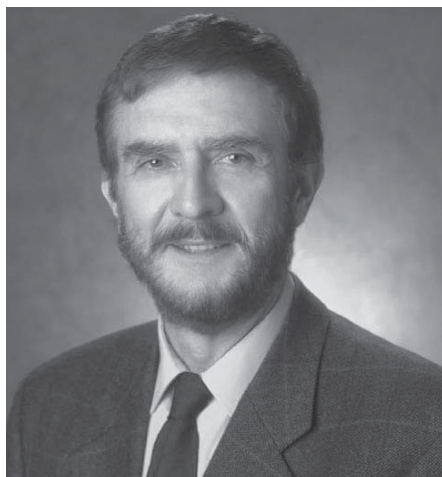
Ward 5, Councillor Jacquie Fenske, 780-464-8147

Ward 7, Councillor Glen Lawrence, 780-464-8003

 This newsletter is also available at [www.strathcona.ab.ca](http://www.strathcona.ab.ca).

**FSC logo**

### from your councillor



Councillor Alan Dunn

### Capital Region Board

The Capital Region Board (CRB), after a long and tedious gestation, is now a reality. Anyone who has followed my commentary over the past couple of years knows that I have not been a cheerleader for the CRB or the Radke Report that preceded it.

But, that was then and this is now. One can only sulk for so long before getting on with life. The Province has decided, as is their right, and the CRB is here to stay. To their credit, the 25 regional municipalities have for the most part taken a cooperative, pragmatic approach to the situation, working together in a spirit of mutual self-interest. The complexities of introducing another level of government into an existing system in a very short time demanded nothing less.

It was fortunate that the two largest and most influential municipalities—the City of Edmonton and Strathcona County—quickly decided to work together rather than permitting degeneration of the discussion into a pointless and ultimately destructive feud.

Both Mayor Mandel of Edmonton

and Strathcona's Mayor Olesen are enthusiastic supporters of their respective municipalities, yet these two strong-willed folks together with their teams were able to bury the hatchet and provide consensual leadership when it was badly needed by the region.

It is too bad that differing opinions are often sensationalized by the media, while fruitful backroom negotiations are rarely considered newsworthy, which is why few people know what has been going on over the past many months as the CRB takes shape.

We still have a long way to go; the biggest single piece of the puzzle, land use, requires ratification by the Province, which at the current rate of progress will not come before the New Year. It appears our Municipal Development Plan will be supported more or less in its current form by the CRB. That is the good news. The not-so-good news for those seeking development guidance is that a complex process may have added years to the planning horizon.

At least there have been significant decisions made: on October 15, the Capital Region Board agreed on Priority Growth Areas and Cluster Country Residential areas for the region. A major, largely undeveloped area of Ward 6 is the Colchester area bounded by Highways 21, 14 and 628, and the Henday.

This area will be part of a major Priority Growth Area, meaning that urban standard densities in the order of 25-35 residences per net acre will be possible. This will be good news to those seeking to develop land in the area, though not so good for those hoping to retain a more rural lifestyle. This decision will be one of several to be submitted to Municipal Affairs by October 31. The CRB requires

continued on page 2

# Ward 6

## UPDATE

continued from page 1

significant County personnel and financial resources as we always knew that it would. Provincial setup funding will end soon, leaving the municipalities with full financial responsibility for the new CRB bureaucracy. There are now four elected officials directly involved with CRB (including myself) along with many full- and part-time administration

staff. There will be a financial impact and therefore tax impact on the municipality.

Would we have been better off had the Province not imposed the CRB on the region? Probably, yet that question is no longer on the table. It's time to move on.



### 500 kV Powerline—more complicated

This is now referred to as the Heartland Transmission Line; it should really be known as the Tar Sands Transmission line as the main purpose is to provide electricity to Fort McMurray heavy industry; supply to the few remaining upgraders in the Heartland is but an aside.

No decision has yet been reached on the routing of this project; however, the situation has nevertheless become more complicated with the consideration of a Sturgeon County motion by the Capital Region Board to urge “proponents” to construct such powerlines only in existing Transmission and Utility Corridors (TUC).

As Sturgeon has no TUCs, such a resolution would neatly solve any of that county’s concerns about the whole issue, though only a cynic would suggest that the motion may be self-serving.

An amendment has been proposed to this motion “...that said lines must be buried underground in existing and proposed high density and Priority Growth Areas.” I am not sure where one would bury them if not underground, nor has anyone clarified what constitutes “high density”, still we appreciate the gesture and wish the amendment well.

A second and related motion is also under consideration by the CRB,

viz., “That the Capital Region Board send a letter to the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) requesting a deferral of the hearing to determine the need and proposed routing of Heartland Transmission Lines for at least one year to allow for a comprehensive evaluation of current and future economic, social and environmental impacts on the Capital Region and its residents.”

While one can sympathize with the sentiment of this motion, the twists and turns that have led us to this point can only be described as bizarre. Under the current rules, it would be the job of the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) to conduct a hearing to which all interested parties would be invited to present evidence as to both need and impact, therefore, apart from the requested delay, the motion is unnecessary.

### Bill 50 and its effect

However, the Province has recently proposed Bill 50, which is currently working its way through the legislative system. If passed into law, the Province would no longer be required to establish the “need” for these powerlines, nor, one must assume, the impact either. The CRB motion appears to be attempting to pre-empt Bill 50 by placing another layer of analysis above the soon-to-disappear AUC *Need* hearing.

A little more explanation of the implications of Bill 50 is perhaps in order. At present, the AUC makes decisions on regulated energy facilities, such as transmission lines, using a two-step process. *Need* is the first part; *Facilities*, the technical aspects and details, is the second.

Each of these—*Need* and *Facilities*—has been traditionally dealt with in separate hearings. By eliminating the *Need* hearing, the Province will save some time and some money. They will also avoid the inconvenience and embarrassment of exposing their plans to bothersome evidence that may not be to their liking—far better to make the decision behind closed doors.

The Provincial representatives suggest this is not different from decisions made, without public hearings, about highways and schools.

In reality, the difference is profound. Highways and schools are public facilities; transmission lines are not. Transmission lines are paid for with our money, but are owned and controlled by private investors. Furthermore, the profit return for these facilities is guaranteed through regulation.

We, the public, get the cost and the risk; the private owners get the profit. And now we are being told that we are not even to have the opportunity to decide whether we want to play or not. We are assured that the views of the public “...will be considered.”

Well, that is what public hearings are for, and they do the job far better than comment cards filled in at an open house whose short, anonymous lives from mail slot to shredder are measured in hours. I think it important that folks realize what a profound attack on democracy Bill 50 truly is.

### RETA Forum planned for November 24

A forum is being planned for 7 p.m. November 24 at Hall D at Northlands. About 5,000 people are expected to turn out for this. If you can possibly be one of them, I urge you to attend.

## Celebrating our agricultural roots



At the vintage tractor pull held in August near Ardrossan.  
From left, Councillors Alan Dunn, Linda Osinchuk, Peter Wlodarczak and Vic Bidzinski.

## Highway 21 twinning

By the time you receive this newsletter, the long-awaited Highway 21 twinning should be complete – the project deadline was November 15, 2009. Judging from the questions I have had from residents, the scope of this project is still not well understood. Here is some clarification:

- **Speed limits:** From Hwy. 16 to the Whitemud (Hwy. 628) the speed limit used to be 100 km/h, except near the traffic lights at Baseline and Wye Road where it was 70 km/h. The limit is now 80 km/h for the entire section. This is a permanent change and has been decided for reasons of intersection safety, with the added bonus of reduced noise to be endured by residents on either side of the highway. The 70 km/h limit on Wye Road (Hwy. 630) East of Hwy. 21 will be extended further east to protect the access to Wye School at 1st Street.

- **Access:** Two new signalized intersections will be provided at Lakeland Drive North of Baseline Road and at Whitemud (Hwy. 628/RR 522). Two “channellized” intersections (i.e., stop signs with storage between lanes for left turns) will be provided at the existing accesses from Ranchlands and Country Club Estates. All other accesses will be permanently closed to be replaced with service roads.
- **Off-leash park:** Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation is completing the new intersection at Hwy. 21 to be compatible with future twinning of the Whitemud/Hwy. 628. There are no near-term plans for completing the latter. The County continues to improve the parking, access and amenities in the off-leash park as planned under the Open Space and Recreation Facility Strategy.

---

## Conflict of interest: It's time to consider new policies

We in the political realm are now well into what we irreverently call “the Silly Season”, that period a dozen or more months before a municipal election during which it often appears that municipal officials pay as much attention to getting re-elected as to doing their jobs. (The next municipal election takes place October 18, 2010.)

Much of this is harmless nonsense involving scrambling for media attention or grabbing any microphone in sight or schmoozing through endless reception lines. There is, however, a more worrisome side to this three-year mating game.

There can be significant costs and therefore financial risk associated with elections. In my case, the costs have been modest, being limited to a few signs and brochures. Also, I treat myself to two new tires for my mountain bike. I, as can many of my colleagues, finance a low-budget campaign largely from my own resources.

This cheap approach is not viable for the larger urban wards and certainly

not for the position of mayor. To get elected as mayor requires cash, and lots of it.

There are a few ways of getting the money, but the one that concerns me here is donations from private corporations, often those with a particular axe to grind in the municipal arena. I am speaking of course of the development industry with its investors, consultants, partners and other interested parties.

These folks are in a high-stakes, high-risk industry where the difference between huge returns and bankruptcy can turn on a single Council decision. They clearly have a keen interest in the makeup, behaviour and election of Council. While the majority in this industry are honest, ethical business women and men, it is unreasonable to expect that their financial input will not have an impact on a candidate's behaviour should she or he be elected.

You can bet the signatory of a

four- or five-figure cheque will have no problem having her call returned. Who is to say that the influence would not go beyond that, unconscious though it may be.

It is time that Strathcona County consider financial conflict of interest policies much like those in other jurisdictions. Even the Province has announced that such legislation is under consideration.

I believe that the current policy of revealing the amount and source of donations should be expanded to include all donations and that a donation cap should be implemented. I hope to have Council put something into place before the election next fall.

It is said that it is not enough that justice be done; justice must also be seen to be done. The electorate is entitled to the confidence that their elected representatives are not subject to pecuniary influences. Clear, effective policy would go a long way to ensure this.

## Municipal jurisdiction: a fine balance

Although I have talked about this before, I believe this issue deserves a bit more discussion.

Some residents believe that the municipality does not intervene in certain areas that it should, particularly where there is an impact upon immediate neighbours.

Provincial legislation through the Municipal Government Act outlines quite precisely the extent to which a municipality may meddle in the lives of its citizens. The other orders of government, Federal and Provincial, guard their own powers jealously as we have found several times in the past few years.

When residents are unhappy, the first call they make is usually to the County. We know more about local conditions and County officials tend to be easier to

find. Difficulty arises when residents are unaware of the municipality's jurisdictional limits.

While Strathcona County departments are very good at assisting callers to find the right place for help or even facilitating the process, there are nevertheless some things that we simply do not have the legal power to remedy. When we point this out, County officials are inaccurately accused of "passing the buck" for what is nothing more than an acknowledgement that as much as we may wish to help with a problem, it may not be within our power to do so.

Often, even though it may be within our jurisdictional powers, there may not be a bylaw or regulation to cover a particular situation. This

is often true in the rural parts of the County where there is a long tradition of independence—landowners expect to do as they please on their own property without interference from government. It is a long-standing principle of democracy that governments may not make up rules as they go along.

The municipality must tread a fine line between the desires of those who object to any interference in their lives and those who seek a rule-based society with every detail of life subject to minute scrutiny. Then there are those who seek rules for others and complete freedom for themselves.

The only thing that we can predict with certainty is that the suite of rules that we settle on will not please everyone.

## Taxes

During my rounds, I am still getting the usual negative comments about taxes, usually prefaced by the comment, "We get NOTHING for the taxes we pay!" Well, here is an update of the information I provided in February this year.

This is the approximate yearly cost to the average single family residential property in Strathcona County for some municipal services.

	Yearly cost
Fire, Ambulance, Police & Bylaw	\$347.52 /year
Transportation (maintenance, repair, improvements)	\$529.56
Recreation, Parks & Culture	\$364.08
Transit	\$264.84

This is based upon a current, average assessment value of \$437,000. Of the tax you pay, 61 per cent goes toward municipal services such as these. Of the remainder, 36 per cent goes to the Province for education.

These are average values for the entire County. The cost of providing services to rural areas is actually significantly higher as distances are greater and density lower.

## Cellphone Bylaw earns Newsmaker of the Year



Left to right: Associate Editor Ryan Frankson and Publisher Derek Pyne of the Sherwood Park-Strathcona County News; Councillor Alan Dunn; Chamber President Chris Dugan

At the 2009 Sherwood Park & District Chamber of Commerce Business Awards, the Cellphone Bylaw was selected for the Newsmaker of the Year award.

This is awarded to a Strathcona County business or organization that made significant headlines in the newspaper. The story or event should affect the community in a positive

manner making Strathcona County a better place to live, work, and play.

Certainly, the Cellphone Bylaw qualifies as such, and I was pleased to accept the award on October 24 on behalf of Mayor Cathy Olesen and Strathcona County.

To read more about the winners in all nine categories, visit [www.sherwoodparkchamber.com](http://www.sherwoodparkchamber.com).

## Electronic Ward 6 Update



I am considering adding an electronic distribution list for this newsletter. Not everyone in Ward 6 has access to high-speed internet, so this would not replace the hard copy delivered as

fourth-class mail by Canada Post.

I need some feedback. If you like the idea, you could let me know by email and I'll put your address on the list; if, in your view this would just be more spam, I need to know that, too. ([dunn@strathcona.ab.ca](mailto:dunn@strathcona.ab.ca))