

## Letter from Division 2 Councillor

The students are out on their summer break, the rain is finally falling, and the tax man has sent out his assessments. All these things were inevitable, but the one I receive the most questions about is the last.

What happens to the money we collect as taxes each year? The answer is shown in detail on the Mountain View County website, and summarized with your tax assessment. Money is collected for school taxes, and for requisitions for Commissions and Boards. Of the remainder of the money accounted for each year, one of the largest amounts is spent on Operational Services.

Operational Services are the face of Mountain View County. The people and machinery working on roads and infrastructure, as well as the people in Agricultural Services are all part of Operational Services.

I am sometimes asked why certain work cannot be done on certain roads, "because I have been paying taxes on this property for years." Depending on the number of residents on a road, taxes may or may not pay for the entire business of building, grading and ploughing that particular mile.

Most of the evidence from various reports indicates that over time the least expensive all season road is asphalt pavement, which we have on many provincial highways. Chipseal, which is nice to drive on when it is new and very painful to use when it is time to rebuild it, is more expensive averaged over the years of its service. Gravel is the least expensive to build, maintain, and rebuild but does have some problems with dust and ability to carry heavy loads. The cost of a mile of gravel road is about two residential taxpayers' contribution per year.

That means that our private property taxes are probably not paying for much more than roads, while we also enjoy community services, including peace officers, FCSS, disaster services and hall board support among others; planning services to ensure safe, sustainable and thoughtful development; and the rest of operational services, including agricultural services such as roadside mowing, environmental farm programs, and other agricultural advocacy.

What pays for these services? There are other taxes. The largest of these is the linear taxes (taxes on products brought through the county in pipelines or through wires). As petroleum products account for the largest part of this income, we are quite dependent on the oil and gas industry. Our strategic plan shows direction towards diversified economic development to mitigate this.

There are also industrial/commercial taxes paid by businesses, which help support the work of the county. Again, economic diversification is very important. For this reason, the county supports home-based businesses within certain parameters, and encourages larger businesses to locate in specified industrial parks which are planned to support such commercial activity.

Taxes do seem to be inevitable. However, the services the county provides through these funds benefit everyone. Building and maintaining a road privately would be a very costly initiative, far beyond what most taxpayers pay annually in taxes. And road building is not all you get from your taxes. Most taxpayers understand that. If you wish to know more about County budgets and

spending, check the Mountain View County website, or read the supplements that came with your tax assessment.

Speaking of events which are inevitable, the Cremona Day parade was excellent this year. The soap box racers were an exciting new addition, and there were many interesting floats and other entries. The most exciting part of the day was the fireworks. Weren't they amazing? Thanks to the firefighters who work so hard every July 1 to make Cremona Day extra special for all of us.

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