

Background Notes from the Mayor's Desk - March 25, 2015

What is happening on Main Avenue (Highway 27 through town) to address safety for pedestrians?

After much hard work by the Corridor Enhancement Committee and the Chamber of Commerce to propose a "Pilot Project" to address pedestrian safety concerns, Alberta Transportation has recognized the issues and taken on the responsibility for the project. Alberta Transportation is now gathering data to work on a long-term, permanent solution to the question of Main Avenue West that takes into consideration the safety of pedestrians along with the flow of traffic and economic activity.

This is good news - and potentially not so good news in our current economic downturn. The Sundre project will take its place on the priority list in the provincial "hold the line" budget.

This is a community issue that really needs your attention. With a provincial election coming, please ask each candidate for plans to make this project a top priority, not just for Sundre, but for the provincial high load corridor that is passing through our community.

Since Alberta Transportation decided to change Highway 27 through Sundre from two lanes with parking, to four lanes without parking, residents have continually complained of safety concerns while walking on sidewalks with large trucks passing by, less than a metre away. This is not the fault of truckers. Police have been monitoring trucks for speeding and they have not found that speeding trucks are the problem. The problem is that there needs to be more space between the road and the sidewalk.

There is more than public pedestrian safety at stake here. The Chamber of Commerce estimates that over \$15 million has been lost to businesses in our downtown since Highway 27 was changed from two lanes to four. There are currently 19 vacant storefronts in our downtown - and we are in an economic downturn with our local businesses bravely struggling to make ends meet. Our businesses need our help. If we are not able to attract businesses to our community, and support those businesses we are lucky to have in our area, taxes must go up. Growth means taxes can be kept more manageable.

The redefining of Highway 27's lanes through Sundre needs to be done as soon as possible. The safety of pedestrians cannot wait. In our "healthy, active lifestyle" climate, we want a "walking friendly" downtown that encourages us all to shop locally, and encourages visitors and tourists to stop, wander, and enjoy the amenities our community has to offer.

At a Mayor's Caucus meeting I attended two weeks ago, I listened to the Deputy Minister of Alberta Transportation speak about the mandate of his department. He said Alberta Transportation does not just build roads. Their goal is safe transportation networks that support economic development in our province. With your help reminding potential provincial politicians of these goals, and their responsibilities, we might just be able to move forward quickly to keep pedestrians safe, and support our businesses.

Please call me at home at 403-638-3535 if you would like to talk further about this very important topic.

Terry Leslie, Mayor
Town of Sundre