

## **Alberta Association, Canadian Institute of Planners Annual Conference**

Banff, Alberta

Tuesday, October 28, 2008

### ***Check against delivery***

This morning, I flew from Edmonton to Springbank.

And from my seat, 21,000 feet above the province, I had a bird's eye view of the landscape.

I just love flying, because every time I fly, I really gain a new perspective of the province.

It's almost as if municipal borders don't exist.

As I passed over our farms today, they seemed to connect like a patchwork quilt – a seamless patchwork. It was truly an incredible sight.

As I flew over our cities, I was able to see the footprint they leave and the profound impact they have on the land.

So, as farms blended into cities, and the Rocky Mountains appeared on the horizon, I really had the opportunity to think about how the decisions we make today are leaving a legacy.

That's right – a legacy.

And, being a farmer, I can assure you that I know first-hand that the course of action we take today can and will have lasting effects.

More than 100 years ago, buffalo roamed freely on my land.

And, on my land, there's a lake.

The buffalo made trips to and from the lake for water.

It's just amazing to me that today – more than 200 years later – I can still clearly see the large crevasses the buffalo left from making their way to and from that lake.

This got me thinking – and made me very aware – if buffalo can leave such a lasting imprint on the land, just think about what we are doing and what we are capable of doing.

The decisions councils and reeves make today, decisions that are influenced by information you – our planners – truly leave an impression on the province.

So, it's imperative that we take a long-term view and look squarely to the future so that we can manage growth pressures and increase our municipal sustainability.

In Alberta, we have strong communities.

And, as our Premier says, these great communities don't happen by accident.

They are a direct result of civic leadership thinking boldly about building for the future.

Think about what this means.

It means new levels of cooperation and vision are needed to plan infrastructure for the future – not just one or two years ahead, but 50 years from now and further.

And it's you – our planners – who have a significant role to play in building that future.

As I witnessed from 21,000 feet today, we're leaving a mark on the land, making the work you do so important.

The connectivity you bring to your jobs each and every day is critical to building strong communities, which is a priority of this government.

Alberta has experienced unprecedented growth.

While we may be in interesting economic times, most experts agree that Alberta will fair better than most regions and that Alberta's population will still increase to about 5 million over the next two decades.

Regardless of what lies ahead, we know that infrastructure and public services must be better coordinated than they are right now.

We need to make the right decisions.

If we don't, Albertans will experience the worst realities from a lack of insight – traffic gridlock, competing land uses and bridges to nowhere.

If we do, we can plan and invest together in the infrastructure our citizens need.

We need to think beyond single projects and remember that we're building Alberta's municipalities: connected, vibrant communities.

I can assure you that will make a real difference that will benefit all Albertans.

Because sound planning is a critical issue in all parts of the province.

Without planning and coordination, industry won't come, people won't stay – and we'll lose jobs and investment.

We need to assure businesses that are contemplating multi-billion-dollar investments in our province that Alberta has plans in place.

We need to assure people who are thinking of moving here that they will have places to live, with efficient public services and safe communities to raise their families.

This is where the important work you do comes in.

And with it, a major responsibility lies in your hands.

In times of economic instability that is being experienced by other countries, and even in other provinces, you have remember to do what's right for the land, but also what's realistic for your budgets.

You have the resources and tools available to do what's right, but it's important to use them wisely and responsibly.

Because Alberta must continue to have great municipalities.

I'm proud to say that I'm seeing some excellent examples of municipal planning.

Earlier this month, I had the honour of handing out the 2008 Minister's Awards for Municipal Excellence.

Each year, Alberta municipalities set new standards of service delivery by being attuned and responsive to citizen's needs.

And 2008's award recipients were no exception.

There are many great examples of planning in Alberta.

I'd like to highlight two of this year's award winners:

Strathcona County's new "Centre in the Park" that provides Sherwood Park residents with an innovative, pedestrian-oriented downtown core.

And, the Village of Nobleford that just four years ago was experiencing a declining population, was able to inject new life into the community with a sustainability plan.

This plan is working to bring new business to the area and there is a new sense of optimism in Nobleford.

Planning is key in getting major initiatives off the ground.

Current government initiatives such as updating our provincial water strategy, and producing a land-use framework – to evaluate and minimize the impacts of development on air, land and water – would be non-existent.

Planning allows the Capital Region Board to look strategically to the future and create a long-range growth plan for the region.

In addition, the Calgary Regional Partnership has made sustainable planning the cornerstone of its vision and mandate.

This is why one of the most important programs in my ministry right now is the Municipal Internship Program.

I love this program.

Just last year, we launched a new stream of the Internship Program for Land Use Planners.

This two-year pilot program for recent graduates in land use planning aims to increase the number of trained planners for Alberta's municipalities.

If we want to make the right decisions, which we do, we must invest in the next generation of Alberta's planners.

To make the program work, it is vital we have the support of municipal sponsors to mentor this new generation of the profession.

Building a sustainable province is essential.

And it's you – our planners – who have the know-how and passion to build our future.

Alberta's landscape is constantly evolving, as I notice each and every time I fly.

To ensure the landscape is something we're proud of 100 years from now, we need to continue to work together.

Your plans are key to building great communities.

And I encourage you to take that 21,000 foot perspective with you to work each and every day.

The plans you make are long-lasting and leave a legacy.

So, when you're making your plans, think about the footprint they'll leave.

Remember the trails the buffalo left on my land, and plan thoughtfully.

