

# 2015 State of the City Address

FOR: MAYOR STEVE CHRISTIE  
WHERE: LACOMBE CHAMBER/SERVICE GROUPS LUNCHEON AT LMC  
WHEN: 12:00 PM ON MARCH 18, 2015

## *CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen.

- As you all know, I'm passionate about Lacombe and the fundamentally Canadian values of democracy, freedom and tolerance that our community was built on.
- As your mayor, I have the privilege of working as part of a team whose job is, to make the best decisions for our community.
- Council's vision is to help build a safe, vibrant and inclusive community that welcomes everyone to live, work, and play.
- Lacombe has a long and rich history, as it pre-dates the formation of Alberta as a province.
- The founders of our community would be pleased if they could see how far we have come: from our humble beginnings as a stopping house in 1883; to a village in 1896; to a town in 1902; and finally to a proud little city in 2010.
- Lacombe has been growing at a steady and sustainable pace, and I am excited about the future direction and prospects of our beautiful city.
- I look forward to sharing with you some of our City's highlights over the past year, and to discuss our goals for the year to come.

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- In 2014 we conducted a Municipal Census for the City of Lacombe and the official population is 12,728, distributed throughout 4800 homes.
- Due to the success of our most recent census we will recognize an extra \$250,000 in government funding as our increase in population is 1021 people.
- Following the success of the Solid Waste Pilot Project in 2013, the City launched a residential Blue Box Recycling Program in April 2014, which be reviewed this year.
- At the end of 2014, residents had diverted more than 358,000 kgs of recyclables from our landfill. Congratulations AND Thank you to all who participate in this program.
- The Lacombe Spray Park renovations were completed last spring with the addition of grass and shaded areas. I was pleased to witness many, many families enjoying the newly renovated facility throughout the summer months.

- One of our key initiatives identified in the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan was to develop a regional transit system.
- We worked collaboratively with the Town of Blackfalds and the City of Red Deer to successfully launch, BOLT Transit.
- This regional bus service now connects our three communities, and provides an affordable and accessible quality of life benefit, to all those who use it.
- Long awaited upgrades to Maple Drive were completed last fall, making the road safer for pedestrians and improving traffic flows through the College area.
- This project has been in the making since 2002, and I am glad that we are able to work together with the CUC to see it to completion.
- Site services at the Len Thompson Industrial Park are complete and the area is ready for light industrial development. Just a side note.....Lots are now listed & up for sale....
- The 15 acre industrial park has lots with layouts designed to provide future businesses with high visibility along Highway 2A, and easy access along Len Thompson Drive.
- City staff completed The Wolf Creek Basin Study in 2014, which is a comprehensive stormwater strategy for municipalities in the Wolf Creek and Whelp Brook watersheds.
- The plan provides development guidelines to ensure future developments maintain the capacity and integrity of the streams within the drainage basin and to help mitigate future flooding.
- We have hosted two major curling events in our city and the success of the men's and women's provincial curling championships give evidence to what we as a community can accomplish when we all work together.
- I would like to acknowledge the tireless contributions of the over 200 volunteers & of course Mr. Don Gullekson, Lacombe's 2014 Citizen of the Year, and I thank them all for their commitment to our city.
- Looking forward, we can expect a busy and productive year, as we start implementing planned initiatives, and a number of capital projects get started.
- The 2015 Budget was approved in December, and the property tax rate currently shows a 4.89 percent increase.
- This budget is responsive to the needs and preferences of our citizens, and was established through public consultation, as well as collaboration with community organizations.
- The 2015 Operating revenues are just over 30.5 MILLION dollars and at the end of the year will realize a 705 DOLLAR surplus.

- This year's Capital Budget is slightly under 21 Million dollars in new capital projects that reflect a number of priorities including:
  - Intersection upgrades at 63 Street and Highway 12
  - A roundabout at College Avenue and C&E Trail
  - A city-wide paving and sidewalk replacement program
  - The development of an Affordable Housing Strategy
  - Next stages in our trail development
  - The annual fleet replacement program.
- We are also moving forward with renovations to the Barnett Arena & Kinsmen Aquatic Centre in order to bring the building up to current fire and safety code standards.
- We are moving into Year 2 of a 4-year program to replace all manual-read water meters with a more efficient radio-read system.
- I am very pleased to report that ground work at Lacombe Market Square, formerly known as Wolf Creek Crossing, is well underway as they prepare to build a new commercial shopping center.
- This exciting new development will attract new businesses and visitors, encourage economic growth, and increase business and employment opportunities for residents of Lacombe.
- An area in the Len Thompson Industrial Park has been identified as the most suitable for the development of an off leash dog park.
- The 34th Street Upgrade Project – which will serve as the northeast leg of the city's future ring road, is planned for completion this year - with the exception of the railway crossing.
- The new Lacombe Police Facility is nearing design completion, and we are looking forward to construction beginning in the spring.
- Photo Radar will continue in Lacombe as it helps increase traffic safety by augmenting traditional traffic enforcement.
- We have ample evidence that proves the benefits of this program and one is, a 26 percent drop in collisions in 2014 as compared to 2013.
- Construction on the Fairview Cemetery Expansion will begin in 2015. However, the expansion of the cemetery has resulted in the need to relocate the adjacent ball diamonds.
- The current diamonds will be available for the 2015 season, while construction of the new diamonds in Michener Park will begin this summer, and will be completed for the 2016 season.
- The City is commencing the development of an affordable housing strategy to address the housing needs in Lacombe.

- We have budgeted 1.2 MILLION DOLLARS to go towards affordable housing, of which 951 THOUSAND is provided by the province.
- Lacombe will receive just over A MILLION DOLLARS for capital funding this year, as part of our share of the 400 Million dollars in additional MSI funding recently announced by the Government of Alberta, we won't apply these funds to projects until after the Provincial Budget is announced on March 26<sup>th</sup>.
- As a part of the Federal Governments New Building Canada Plan, the City will apply for funding for two projects. The application will be seeking funds from the recently announced 2015 Build Canada for Small Communities grant program.
- These new funding sources, once secured, will allow us to make additional investments in our city's infrastructure.
- Now, my one election promise to voters when I was first elected as mayor was to attract a hotel to Lacombe, and finally, last fall I was pleased to deliver on that promise by announcing the construction of the Best Western Plus Inn and Suites in Michener Park.
- Construction on the hotel started in September, and it is scheduled for to open for business in late summer or early this fall.
- Once complete, Lacombe will boast a brand new 83 suite hotel with a swimming pool and water slide, a fitness centre, conference space, and a boardroom.
- Even with the current economic downturn, people from across the country and around the world continue to flock to our province in search of a better life for their families.
- In order to deal with the increased pressures on our civic infrastructure, the City has developed Imagine Lacombe - our Municipal Sustainability Plan – with input from more than 1200 citizens.
- This comprehensive plan provides guidance for the development and alignment of all municipal and government plans, policies and decisions.
- As we look to the future, we must consider development on lands surrounding our city.
- The City and County are scheduling an Inter-Municipal Development Plan Review in 2015.
- The plan looks at land use and servicing of land at the edges of the city, and how we can work cooperatively for that development.
- While we maintain and upgrade our infrastructure to meet current and future demands, we continue to provide support to the many community events that are uniquely Lacombe, We currently host 5 major festivals;
  - Lacombe Days
  - Encore Art Exhibit and Sale

- Lacombe and District Harvest Festival
- Light Up the Night
- Music in the Park Festival

- These events attract many artists, performers and visitors to our community, which keeps us vibrant, and inclusive. I foresee Lacombe becoming a vital cultural hub in central Alberta in the years to come. Especially with the C4 group hard at work.
- Of course, none of these events would take place without the commitment and dedication of our volunteers, service clubs, and huge support of our local business community.
- So once again thank you all for your unwavering support!

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- As you all know, we live in a beautiful city, recognized nation-wide for our historic buildings and heritage homes, our murals and green spaces.
- We are proud of our Edwardian downtown streetscapes and our DESIGNATED historic sites – most recently the Flatiron Museum and St. Andrew’s United Church.
- Lacombe’s Main Street was named Best Street in Canada by the Canadian Institute of Planners.
- In 2014 the city of Lacombe was ranked as the FOURTH BEST SMALL CITY in Canada in which to live by Money Sense Magazine.
- We can ALL be proud of these and all other accomplishments over the past few years!
- In closing, I would like to thank Council, city staff, and everyone here for your commitment to making Lacombe a prosperous and vibrant community.
- Municipalities with thriving business communities – and more importantly, strong positive relationships with business are highly resilient.
- As we move forward, WE MUST continue to work together to meet NEW challenges and NEW opportunities with creativity and enthusiasm!
- Forget NUMBER 4... TOGETHER let’s make LACOMBE the BEST PLACE in Canada to live, work and play.
- Thank you.