

## **2016 State of the City Address**

FOR: MAYOR STEVE CHRISTIE  
WHERE: LACOMBE CHAMBER/SERVICE GROUPS LUNCHEON AT LMC  
WHEN: 12:00 PM ON January 20, 2016

### *CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen...

- Thank you for coming...
- As your mayor, I have the privilege of working with a diligent team of leaders who have been elected to make the best decisions for our community, and to ensure residents receive the best value for their tax dollars.
- As your City Council, we have a common vision – to help build a safe, vibrant and inclusive city, one that welcomes everyone to live, work, and play.
- I would like to take a moment to recognize my team for their hard work and dedication to public service ...please stand, Councillor Bouwsema, Councillor Rempel, Councillor Armishaw, Council McQuesten, Councillor Konnik, and Councillor Harder.
- Thank you. It is a real pleasure working with all of you.
- It gives me great pleasure to come before you again to talk about something I'm passionate about...the City of Lacombe.
- I am a proud Lacombean... I am proud of our community's long and rich history and I am excited about the future prospects for our beautiful city.
- Our community has been growing at a steady and sustainable pace over the past year, and I look forward to sharing with you some of the City of Lacombe's highlights in 2015, and to discuss our goals for 2016.

### **CELEBRATING OUR SUCCESSES**

- 2015 was a remarkable year for recreation and culture in our city.
- After a hugely successful Men's Provincial Curling Tournament in 2014, we followed up with hosting the Women's Provincial Curling Championship in January 2015.
- This elite event was organized by the Lacombe Curling Club and I want to recognize them again for their hard work and organizational prowess.
- By hosting these events, we have demonstrated our community spirit province wide and put Lacombe on the map as a contender for many more events of this magnitude.
- The City hosted its inaugural Parks Day Party on June 6, to celebrate our first-rate parks and trails system, and to honour the many contributions of the late Bill Nielsen and Larry Henderson.

- Bill Nielsen was remembered for his hard work in creating and maintaining many of our trails, and
- Larry Henderson was honoured for his contributions and dedication to Arts and Culture in our city.
- Another highlight of the year came about serendipitously; when after a summer of intense voting Lacombe was named as the winner of the Coors Banquet One Horse Town contest.
- On September 18, Lacombe's historic downtown was transformed into a spectacular outdoor venue, where over 1000 appreciative fans enjoyed the country music concert.
- During the concert our city was featured in a music video that exhibited the uniqueness of our community to the rest of Canada and the world.
- What a great way to remind us of what an exceptional community we live in!
- Every year, the City of Lacombe implements a collection of infrastructure projects - collectively known as the Capital Works Program - to maintain and upgrade Lacombe's major utilities and transportation systems in response to growth, physical infrastructure condition, and new regulations.
- The 2015 Capital Works Program included a number of road rehabilitation, underground utility and asphalt trail improvements.
- The bulk of this work consisted of a new roundabout in the intersection of College Avenue and C&E Trail – to alleviate congestion anticipated due to future growth in the area – and new traffic lights and road improvements on 63 Street.
- The City of Lacombe received a one-time special grant from the Government of Alberta to compensate for the closure of the 58 Street access to Highway 2.
- I am pleased to say that the roundabout project was funded completely by this grant, negating the need for municipal taxes and other municipal grants.
- The remainder of the 2015 Capital Works Program included:
  - Water main replacement on 52 & 59 Street ;
  - Water main upgrades on 49c Avenue and at Lacombe Composite High School;
  - Sanitary main replacement on 59 street;
  - Road re-construction on 52 & 59 Streets as well as Riviera Drive;
  - Some smaller road & sidewalk re-construction at various locations;
  - Installation of asphalt trails in the North West Recreation Area and behind Garden road;
  - Lane drainage improvements on Cobb Street;
  - Line painting on Woodland Drive and C&E Trail;
  - New concrete pad installations for bus stop shelters.

- The City also undertook other significant construction and renovation work on key municipal facilities.
- Much-needed fire & safety code upgrades began on the Lacombe Sports and Leisure Complex in the spring of 2015.
- Concurrent with the building renovations, crews undertook scheduled maintenance replacement of the Pool roof in the fall, and exterior wall repairs, re-sealing & painting throughout the summer around the Arena and Curling Rink.
- In mid-December, Council directed City staff to amend the existing Barnett Arena renovation to include five new dressing rooms, with one being designed for a senior men's or junior hockey team.
- Once complete, these upgrades will serve to enhance the facility for all user groups.
- The City is currently in negotiations with the Bentley Generals to re-locate the men's senior AAA hockey team to the Barnett arena & occupy a portion of this new space – bringing back a level of hockey not seen in Lacombe for many years.
- The City also broke ground on the new Lacombe Police Station in late July.
- This new facility, located in the Wolf Creek Industrial Park, will give our municipal police force the much needed space and modern technology to deliver quality, effective services to our citizens now and into the future.
- I am pleased to report that construction on the new police station is proceeding well. It is now approximately 30% complete, and we're looking forward with anticipation to its targeted completion in October 2016.
- Construction on the Fairview Cemetery expansion project began in early August, and scheduled work for 2015 was completed by the end of October.
- The project completed approximately half of the north parcel of the cemetery land, including roads, sidewalks, grading and drainage-related infrastructure.
- This additional space will provide a four-to-six year supply of interment options: 135 in-ground; 67 columbaria; and 44 Field of Honour spaces.
- The expansion of the cemetery resulted in the relocation of one ball diamond to Michener Park. The new diamond will be ready for the 2016 season.
- Other major initiatives in 2015 included road construction on 34th Street, north from our lagoons, which will serve as a leg of the city's future ring road. The remaining work – on the rail crossing and intersection of Highway 2A – is scheduled for completion this year.

- After much consultation with the public, the City constructed a permanent off-leash dog park at 5363 Len Thompson Drive. The park is now open to the public, and further upgrades to the facility will continue as funding becomes available.
- In July, the City contracted Aquatech Canadian Water Services to conduct a city-wide fire hydrant flushing program to maintain water quality in our municipal water distribution system.
- The flushing program helped to remove sediment and minerals from the water distribution pipes, and tested the main lines for adequate water flow and pressure.
- On a related note, technicians replaced 1034 old residential water meters with new, more accurate radio-read meters in 2015.
- I am pleased to inform everyone that this replacement program is proceeding well, and is on track for completion in 2017.
- The City introduced the annual Trash to Treasure Week, a community-wide celebration of reducing, reusing, and recycling held the week before the Fall Community Clean Up Campaign.
- Trash to Treasure Week provides residents with an opportunity to extend the life of their gently-used possessions, so that unwanted but reusable items don't end up in the landfill.
- And through its Affordable Housing Strategy, the City made progress in attracting much-needed affordable housing options to Lacombe in 2015.
- We partnered with Habitat for Humanity Red Deer Region for their first affordable housing project in Lacombe.
- To help kick off the project, the City of Lacombe and Habitat for Humanity were honoured to welcome the Honourable Lois Mitchell, the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, on her first official visit to Lacombe in August.
- Habitat volunteers are building two new duplexes in the MacKenzie Ranch subdivision, which are due to be completed by summer 2016. Thank you to all those who have & will be volunteering in this exciting project.
- Once complete, the new homes will provide safe, new and affordable housing for four local families.
- The City also partnered with Central Alberta Youth Unlimited for their YU-Turn Supportive Living Project.
- The YU-Turn Home, which opened in late 2015, is a skills development home that offers a family setting, along with individualized supports, to allow accepted applicants the opportunity to become holistically healthy, fully independent community contributors.
- The City of Lacombe worked hard in 2015 to lay the foundation for future growth through responsible planning.

- The Municipal Development Plan Update - Growing Lacombe - was adopted in mid-June.
- The plan sets out land use patterns and policy for new development. It is the blueprint for the City's growth until 2036.
- We also began a review and update of the Land Use Bylaw last year. The Land Use Bylaw has not been updated for over a decade, and a number of new regulations warrant a review.
- Once completed, the review will ensure that the Land Use Bylaw aligns with the recently adopted Municipal Sustainability Plan, the Municipal Development Plan and the Heritage Management Plan.
- We also continued with efforts to preserve our built heritage in 2015.
- The Lacombe Blacksmith Shop Museum was designated as Lacombe's second Municipal Historic Resource in September.
- This designation will ensure the protection and preservation of an important part of our community's history for future generations.
- The City's Heritage Management Program was recognized with an Award of Merit from the Alberta Professional Planners Institute, who acknowledged Lacombe as a leader in the field of heritage planning.
- Our City was also recognized in a couple of other areas:
- In April, BOLT Transit was presented with a Community Economic Development Award by Economic Developers of Alberta.
- The award honours Alberta communities and individuals for excellence in Business and Investment Attraction, Business Retention and Expansion and Community Development.
- In November, Lacombe received a Communities Choosewell Award for Developing Healthy Policies.
- This award is in recognition of our efforts to create a healthy workplace culture and for promoting healthy communities through proactive planning policies.
- I would also like to recognize our protective services – our firefighters, and our police members – for their efforts over the past year.
- The Lacombe Fire Department responded to 268 requests for service in 2015. The department met or exceeded the service levels more than 90 percent of the time. To help improve & maintain these service levels, Lacombe Fire hired a full time Deputy Chief of Training and Operations in 2015.
- Last summer, the Lacombe Firefighters Association shipped a decommissioned fire truck and firefighting equipment to the city of Caazapáa in Paraguay.

- The community of 12,000 people was without adequate fire response equipment. The donated equipment will enable those local firefighters to deliver safe and effective fire and rescue services to their city and beyond.
- Please join me in applauding our volunteer firefighters for their humanitarian efforts.
- It was also a busy year for the Lacombe Police Service, and I would like to thank police officers for their bravery over the past year in putting themselves in harm's way in order to serve and protect citizens.
- In August, Lacombe Police, together with the Lacombe Traffic Safety Committee, and the Lacombe & District Mothers against Drunk Driving Chapter launched a "Report Impaired Drivers" (RID) awareness program to help curb drunk driving in our city.
- Impaired driving is a serious crime and threat to public safety, and we want to encourage residents to report suspected impaired drivers or vehicles being operated in an unsafe manner.
- I would also like to thank constables Michelle Wilzer and John Hubbard for their quick-thinking actions in saving a one-year old from a residential fire and reuniting her with her grateful parents.
- While we had a lot of successes, 2015 was not without its challenges, one being the flooding emergency at Mary C. Moore Public Library at the end of March, which forced the facility to close its doors for necessary repairs and renovations.
- Thanks to the heroic efforts of library staff, they were able to re-establish basic library services in a temporary kiosk at the LMC until the Mary C Moore opened in mid-August.
- I want to thank everyone who helped to keep the library service going during this difficult time, and I want to thank residents for their patience and understanding during the construction period.
- It makes me proud to be a part of such a committed and hard-working group of people, who rise above adversity to find innovative solutions to problems, and who go above and beyond to help our citizens.
- When I was first elected mayor – back in the day - my one promise to voters was that I would work hard to attract a hotel to Lacombe, and I was thrilled to be able to help deliver on that promise with the fall opening of Best Western Plus Lacombe Inn & Suites.
- The hotel is only one of the many exciting new additions to our growing city.
- Did you know that by the end of September 2015, more development permits had been issued than had been issued for all of 2014? The total value of issued permits in 2015 was almost 46 million dollars.
- It was also a growth year for residential building permits: 144 permits were issued in 2015, almost double the 75 in 2014.

## **THE YEAR AHEAD**

- Looking forward, we can expect 2016 to be a busy and productive year, as we start implementing planned initiatives, and a number of capital projects get underway.
- The 2016 Budget was approved last month, which allows the City to maintain our current operational service delivery levels.
- Council has worked diligently to prepare a prudent budget that promotes sustainable practices for today as well as looking forward to our future requirements.
- It is responsive to the needs and preferences of our citizens, and was established through public consultation and through collaboration with community organizations.
- The 2016 Operating Budget is balanced, with total revenues and expenses, just under 32 million dollars.
- The municipal property tax rate increase is estimated at 3.6 percent & will be ratified in April after a final review of assessment & the province sets the education tax rate. Our residential utility account will see an increase of approximately \$11.35 / month for an average household in 2016.
- The 2016 Capital Budget has slightly over 14 million dollars in new capital projects, including:
  - The 2016 Capital works Program, which includes upgrades, replacement & re-construction of existing infrastructure.
  - Installation of pedestrian lights at Woodland Drive and Maple Bay.
  - The final phases of the Safety Code upgrades & expansion at the Barnett Arena.
  - Upgrades to the Lacombe Police Service's radio system and the acquisition of CAD equipment for a local Police Dispatch Service
  - Annual fleet and equipment replacement programs
- Written submissions were once again accepted from residents and evaluated by Council for inclusion into the budget.
- Eight ideas were shortlisted by Council, and after careful review, the following public suggestions were approved for inclusion in the 2016 Capital Budget:
  - Right-hand turn lane on Woodland Drive at Highway 2A
  - Drainage control from Fairway Drive and 58 Street on 54 Ave. was added to the Snow Clearing Policy

- As Council, we appreciate the public bringing forward their submissions for consideration, and we will continue to incorporate this inclusive process into future budget cycles.
- As far as carryover work from 2015, I am pleased to say that the bulk of the pool and arena renovations are scheduled to be completed this year, and we look forward to finalizing the entire project in 2017.
- We are continuing work that started in 2015 with Lacombe County to review and update the Intermunicipal Development Plan.
- The plan looks at how we can work cooperatively with Lacombe County on land development matters along our mutual borders. We expect to complete this work this summer.
- We also partnered with the County last year to conduct an Airport Facility Review. We have commissioned a study to look at future governance, capital infrastructure requirements, and business operating models for the Lacombe Airport to ensure it is sustainable into the future.
- Now, while we work to maintain and enhance our built infrastructure, and
- lay the foundations for future growth through responsible planning,
- we will continue adding to the richness of our community by supporting the many community events that are uniquely Lacombe,
- Lacombe is fast-becoming a vital cultural hub in Central Alberta...this is exemplified by the C4 group, who are hard at work trying to bring a performing arts centre to Lacombe.
- The City currently hosts 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, creative, and inclusive.
- Of course, none of these events could be successful, or even take place, without the commitment and efforts of our volunteers, community organizations and service clubs, as well as the vital support from our local business community. Please join me in thanking you!
- In closing, once again, I would like to thank Council, City staff, and everyone here for your part in helping to make Lacombe the prosperous and vibrant city it is today.
- It is widely accepted that municipalities with thriving business communities are more successful and sustainable.

- Municipalities work to create the right conditions and opportunities for local businesses to be successful, and
- Businesses that prosper breathe new life into the community, providing jobs for residents and shopping opportunities for consumers.
- As we enter into a new year, WE MUST continue to work together to meet challenges and opportunities in the year ahead with creativity and enthusiasm!
- Thank you.