



December 19, 2018

News Release

Council Approves Jasper Arena Ice Plant Upgrades, Supports Proposed Utility Fees for 2019

At the December 18 regular meeting, Council approved the relocation and replacement of the ice plant and condenser for the Jasper Arena at an estimated project budget of \$3.7 million. Current equipment has reached the end of its useful life, and the relocation of the ammonia room (ice plant) away from the main entrance to Wildflowers Childcare and the Jasper Activity Centre was identified as a critical health and safety priority for 2019.

Council also supported a proposal to conduct a *Recreation Programs and Services Review* before committing to further recreation facility upgrades. The review will allow Council and members of the public to have a community conversation around which recreational services should be offered in Jasper, which ones should no longer be offered, and which new services should be considered. This exercise will take place in the first part of 2019.

"Council took a prudent and measured approach to dealing with capital requests for 2019, which are numerous and costly" says Mayor Richard Ireland. "Before borrowing money to finance additional repairs and upgrades to recreation facilities, Council wants to ensure the programs and services supported by municipal tax dollars reflect what the community needs and wants. We understand our assets need refurbishing, but we must consider how we fund them, what kind of revenue they generate and ultimately how we select sustainable recreation options for our community."

Council discussions on the 2019 capital budget will continue in the new year. Early approval of the arena ice plant and condenser relocation and replacement will allow Administration to initiate design and construction work on this specific item ahead of other projects.

Other capital items for the Protective Services, Operations and Administration departments were also approved, including a \$2.2 million investment in Jasper's wastewater treatment plant. This project requires a debenture (borrowing), and is reflected in the proposed 2019 utility rates. Council expressed support in principle by giving first and second reading to the new Utility Rates Bylaw, which is scheduled to be finalized at the January 8, 2019 meeting.

"The increase in utility fees is fair and reasonable and, importantly, bearable by the community and rate payers" says Deputy Mayor Paul Butler. "We are funding transfers to reserves from the user-pay rates, which I think is the right approach to funding our infrastructure needs over the long term. Council will

be looking for changes to the rate structure to fund our water, sewer, garbage and recycling in a more equitable way, but for the time being, I can support this proposal.”

In the past three years Jasper has experienced a record number of visitors, surpassing all previous annual counts since data collection began in 1930. Increased visitation places a heavy demand on municipal services and creates enormous challenges for staff to maintain appropriate standards of garbage collection, recycling, water provision, sewer collection, bylaw enforcement, emergency response and other municipal services.

With a population of approximately 5,000 residents, Jasper hosts close to 2.5 million visitors each year. Municipal facilities and services, intentionally oversized to accommodate our visitor demand, are paid for primarily by property taxes levied against local residential and commercial property owners. Provincial and federal government revenue and taxation benefits gained from tourism are not shared with municipalities.

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