

## State of the City Address 2009

Good afternoon Madame President Tona, Mayor Molzan, MP James Rajotte, MLA George Rogers, Regional Mayors and Councilors, Ladies and Gentlemen.

This year the City of Leduc is celebrating our 25<sup>th</sup> year as a city and what a city it is. It is a city that is so much more than a collection of people, houses and industry. It's a community built on strong values, a safe community, an active community, a caring community.

I am very proud to be your Mayor and I am blessed to be able to lead a hard-working, committed Council team who has a passion to enhance the quality of life for all residents. With us today are Aldermen Judy Archie, Terry Lazowski, David MacKenzie, Dominic Mishio, and Bob Young. As a Council we work very well with a dedicated administrative team led by our City Manager Paul Benedetto.

We are all aware of the serious economic situation occurring throughout the world. Although Alberta is affected, just like everywhere else, we are well positioned to weather the storm. Thanks to the constant promotion of this region by Pat Klak and the rest of the Economic Development team, we are more diversified than most. Almost 75% of our businesses export their products. We have a skilled workforce in place and we have an attitude that ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE. As I look around this room, I see business people that are cautious, but optimistic, smart people that realize that they are not in this for the short-haul, that have seen this movie before, or are new and focusing on the future. Businesses that believe in themselves and their products, not hiding in their shells as a turtle does, but meeting the future confident that this city, this region and indeed this province will pull through.

We are no different as a city. One eye focused on the storm, but the other eye firmly focused on the future. Despite a 21% growth in population in the past two years and the corresponding impact on emergency services, infrastructure, roads, parks, and all the other services that make this a great community to live in, we have held this year's tax increase to a minimum. I believe our City is well positioned to address the economic challenge, while also finding new opportunities to strengthen our community.

So what did we accomplish in 2008? I can tell you we got a lot done last year, much of which provides a strong building block for the future. Despite the downturn in 2008 we still had our second best year ever for a total permit value of \$212 million dollars. Building on the success of the community visioning day we held in 2007, which resulted in our four year Corporate Strategic Plan, 2008 was a year of action. Progress was made on all initiatives listed under each of the five sustainability pillars of Economic and Tourism, Social Wellness, Recreation and Culture, Environment and Infrastructure, and Governance.

Protecting our Environment is a big focus for our Council. We implemented the Curbside Blue Bag Recycling Program which has significantly increased our diversion from the landfill. The Leduc Environmental Advisory Board (LEAB) held an Urban Forest Tree Planting event and also partnered with the Leduc Representative and Canadian Tire in a Compact Florescent Light Promotion. The object was to get as many residents as possible to replace current bulbs with compact fluorescent ones ultimately reducing our carbon footprint.

In keeping with our consultative approach of listening to the community and asking for input we conducted several workshops, open houses and hearings. We also conducted a Citizen Satisfaction Survey. It is a testament to how great a community we are as 93% said they would recommend Leduc to their friends. You can check out the full survey results on our website.

We completed an Attainable Housing Strategy which was a community developed initiative designed to provide a solid understanding of the local housing needs and the City's action plan in addressing those needs.

We also initiated the Mayor's Task Force on Neighbourhood Design. The project was based on direction and vision given to us by local residents through two community workshops. Through the development of a strategy and design guidelines that will direct the development of new residential neighbourhoods we will ensure Leduc continues to be a unique, safe vibrant city that offers a superior quality of life to our residents. We are working hard to have the strategy and guidelines ready for implementation this summer.

On the recreation front we hosted a very successful Alberta Winter Games that saw 2500 athletes and coaches compete in 24 sports in Leduc and the surrounding region. With more than 2700 volunteers we staged one of the most successful Winter Games ever. On top of the financial legacy which has provided upgrades to the Leduc Recreation Centre, and Performing Arts Centre we have a living legacy of volunteers. Volunteers truly provide the stitches on the patchwork quilt that makes up our wonderful community.

Park space is important when building a community. Families look for well-planned neighbourhoods that are safe, esthetically pleasing and provide opportunities the whole family can enjoy. Last year 1.2 kilometers of new multi-way was added and Fred John's Park Playground installation was completed. This playground is fully accessible by individuals with disabilities.

Telford Lake continues to be a recreational focal point in Leduc and indeed the region. Partnering with the City of Edmonton to host the Rowing and Canoe/Kayak events for the World Masters Games in 2005 demonstrated the tremendous potential of this resource in our community. It has become the home of several paddling organizations from around our region and we hosted the Rowing and Canoe/Kayak events for the Western Canada Summer Games in partnership with Strathcona County. Thanks Mayor Oleson, and in 2008 we held two dragon boat festivals that look to become annual events.

And of course we started construction on the much needed Leduc Recreation Centre. A grand total of 308,000 square feet of fun fitness structured and unstructured sports and a great gathering place for the community. Added to the Black Gold Centre this combined complex will house a pool and leisure pool, three arenas, an eight sheet curling rink, two fieldhouses, a running track, a 7000 square foot fitness centre, and meeting space. You will be please to know we have contracts in place for all 25,000 square feet of Lease Space. The facility is 50% completed on time and on budget. It takes a lot of money to build an incredible project like this and I would be remiss not to mention the \$4 million dollar investment by the Province of Alberta, thanks George. And the \$4.5 million dollar contribution by Leduc County, thanks again Mayor Molzan and Council.

We are well underway in our sponsorship campaign headed by John Holmlund and just recently announced that the Mix Family has generously stepped forward to sponsor the Aquatics Centre, hereinafter to be called the Mix Family Aquatics Centre. Thank you to the Mix Family Lorne, Tina, Terry, Dawn and Linda. Many other components have been sponsored, just not announced yet so before it's too late, talk to any of us on Council and we will be happy to get you or your business involved.

In order to achieve the objectives we completed or initiated in 2008 we had to have the awareness the understanding and the support of the provincial and federal governments. Along with regular meetings with our MLA George Rogers and our MP James Rajotte we personally met with more than a dozen Ministers and departments of both Federal and Provincial Governments. At every opportunity we talked about the vitality and rapid growth of our community, the prospects for the future like Port Alberta and the Agrifood industry and the financial issues we face. We made significant progress on the need for the 65<sup>th</sup> avenue interchange as a vital link east and west in our community, access to Port Alberta and Leduc Common and as a bypass to HWY 39. In a crucial step forward we convinced Alberta Transportation to add a functional plan for the interchange to the scope of the Queen Elizabeth II study to be completed this summer. We continue to pursue moving the timing of this project from mid-term to short-term in the provinces' 20 year infrastructure plan.

Speaking about relationships, the City of Leduc continues to take a leadership role with the Capital Region Board. The board is comprised of the 25 municipalities in the Capital Region. Its mandate is to provide growth plans in the areas of Land Use, Regional Transit, Geographic Information Services (GIS), which is data-sharing in a visual way and Attainable Housing to the Minister of Municipal Affairs by March 31, 2009. The City of Leduc and the south region, our area, is well represented. I am honoured to be the chair of the GIS committee, Mayor Molzan is the chair of the Housing committee, and we are both represented on, or members of, the Land Use and Transit committees. We are near the end of our task and I can honestly say that real progress has been made. The 25 municipal leaders have worked extremely hard on these complex issues while maintaining the integrity of their respective communities.

We continue to have a close relationship with Leduc County. As well as being our partner for the past 25 years in the Leduc/Nisku Economic Development Authority we have been working together on several initiatives. We undertook a review of our 1989 Recreation Cost Share Agreement. The result is a new agreement that recognizes Leduc's role in the provision of Recreational and Cultural opportunities for the region. The renewed cost sharing agreement will significantly enhance recreation, libraries and culture ensuring that these important pieces of the regional community are sustainable over the long term. It includes the aforementioned one-time Leduc Recreation Centre capital cost and sponsorship contribution of \$4.5 million dollars. This is a significant amount that deserves recognition.

Understanding the importance of the International Airport, the Nisku and Leduc business parks, the emergence of Port Alberta and the potential of the Agri Food industry due to the Alberta Food Research Centre, the City of Leduc also agreed to participate in a Sustainable Growth study with Leduc County. The study looked at the anticipated growth in population and jobs. We erased the borders and concentrated on identifying the best places for residential, commercial and industrial development for the next 50 years. That study is now complete and has led us into negotiations for a new Inter-municipal Development Plan with Leduc County.

What's in store for 2009? After a number of years of dialogue the Province of Alberta finally started the transfer of responsibility for Ambulance service into the health care system. While the details of the new governance structure is not yet determined, Council, administration and our EMS personnel have remained diligent and are working hand in hand with the province's transition team to meet the needs of our community. Leduc has always enjoyed top of the line EMS and Fire services and as this provincial initiative moves forward we will make sure that there is no compromise in the service you as citizens receive.

We will continue to aggressively pursue issues of importance like the 65<sup>th</sup> avenue interchange, Port Alberta and our share of infrastructure stimulus dollars. In the last six weeks alone we have met with the Minister of Infrastructure, the Treasury Board President and the Solicitor General, as well as our MLA George Rogers, our MP James Rajotte, and the Federal Minister of State, Transport, Rob Merrifield.

In January Leduc undertook its first Safe and Secure Communities Workshop. It brought together all our helping agencies like social services, AADAC, Family and Community Support Services, RCMP, both school boards, Justice, etc. Twenty-three people in all attended to look at what we are doing well, what is missing and suggestions to improve. The input was invaluable and we are moving forward in 2009 with a program to bring a new outreach initiative to Leduc. As this initiative progresses you will be hearing more from City Council.

On March 7, we will be conducting our second Community Visioning Day. Many of you in the room were there in 2007 when we developed the 2007-2011 Corporate Strategic Plan. This time we want to concentrate on a long range plan. What do we want our community to look like 20, 30, and 50 years from now. There are only

110 spots available so don't delay in letting us know if you're interested in participating.

The current economic situation while having a lesser impact in Alberta and particularly our region will affect us nonetheless. We will continue with financial measures like our three-year rotating zero-base budgeting process in all City Departments, the practice of including four citizens on our budget committee and our yearly review of service levels, programs and processes. We will also continue to consult with our citizens before embarking on any service level increases when there are budget implications. As a fast growing community we cannot avoid budget increases, but we can manage the impact on our residents. We must constantly strive to balance the cost of providing the right services that this community demands and deserves with the need to be fiscally responsible.

2009 promises to be a busy year with challenges, opportunities and reasons to celebrate. I'm looking forward to the grand opening of the Leduc Recreation Centre and of course we will continue to celebrate 25 years as a city.

We are ready to meet the future with optimism and a passion to make this community even stronger.

Thank you.