

## Onoway EDC Report to Council for February 22/24

### **Progress to Date-**

This report was prepared just after our last EDC meeting. I was able to put the final numbers together. Currently the committee consisted of one Councillor, the Mayor, the CAO and me. I am sharing today with the Council the information I've gathered. Unfortunately, I could not get in to see Council till March 28/24.

Over a year ago on the resurrection of the EDC I mentioned some key points. They were, Economic Development starts right here in these Council Chambers. The seeds you sow today grow the future. I also said how important the attitude and what that attitude is, among Ratepayers and Businesses.

Over the last few months, I have had meaningful conversations with both Ratepayers and Business owners. I will share the results later in my report.

### **Update**

February 21/24 EDC Meeting Highlights.

Discussion on EDC makeup. Recommend to Council to appoint the Chairperson and the Committee appoint the Vice Chair. Committee being comprised then of 5 members in total.

Recommended to replace all "Village" wording to "Town."

Annual reports to be submitted by October 31 of every year to give council time should there be need for Budget increases, or changes.

Finalizing of Business Breakfasts for Spring and Fall as recommended to Council. First being April 12, then October 11/24.

Finalized Business Storefront Refresh Grant application for rollout this year.

Scheduled regular EDC for the first Thursday of every month.

## **Results of discussions with Ratepayers and Businesses.**

I have had many conversations with Business owners. I ask the same questions every time when speaking with Business owners. Here is what I ask.

How many employees do you have? Can you tell me how big your payroll is?

Where do they live?

Are your employees active in the community?

How much business does your Company do right here in Onoway?

Does your Company bring in outside money to the Town?

Do you own or rent here in Onoway?

What keeps you here in Onoway?

One business that I thought is a perfect example of what we need to have and keep here in Onoway. Their Payroll is just under \$1,000,000.00 It has 8 full time employees. Half of them live right here in Onoway and the other half live just outside of Onoway. They also mentioned how engaged their employees were by the volunteering they do with many of the local community, and he said the majority shop locally.

Next, I asked them if they would share how much business they do locally by spending here in Onoway. He said we buy most of our fuel at the Petro Can station right here. We buy as many services and products as possible locally. He said we understand the importance of keeping our money local. He shared that it's around \$1,000,000.00 as well.

They said they do business in many different areas. I said that means you bring in outside Money here to Onoway? They said yes.

I asked to understand the type of economic impact they have, do you rent or own? They said they rent.

Then I asked them what keeps you here? They said this is the perfect place for us. We can access most everything we need locally or close by. Our clients continually show their appreciation of what we do. We have had offers to move to Barrhead and even Drayton Valley. Our hub is here.

I thought to myself, now that is a perfect example of Economics 101.

Between the payroll, for easy figuring \$1,000,000.00 and what they spend here in Onoway \$1,000,000.00, the math says \$2,000,000.00 is injected directly into this local economy every year from this business. There is a saying that every dollar spent locally usually circulates 4 to 7 times within the community. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business recently issued a released stating that every dollar spent at a local small business an average, 66 cents of that dollar stay local.

Do you agree this is what we want for Economic Development?

I do! It is very hard to entice new business to move here to Onoway. I've over the last several months tried hard to convince those with business ventures to move here.

## **Ratepayer Discussions.**

Immediately after our initial meeting of Council when you appointed me as Chair of EDC, I began on a journey to establish strong points and weak points in relation to the views of Ratepayers and Business owners relevant to the Town. This will guide our EDC recommendations to Council. Focusing on Awareness, Growth, Viability, Value for their Tax dollars, and Amenities. Again, I asked Seven relevant questions related to the five areas I was focusing on.

How long have you lived or been in business here in Onoway?

Have you even contacted by, or had conversations about Town business by any Mayors or Councillors?

Are you aware of the Onowaves in the utility bills?

Do you see the need for both Business and residential growth?

Do you think the Town is viable and aesthetically appealing?

Do you feel your current taxes are fair?

If you could ask for one thing for the Town, what would that be?

The average years that residents live here in Onoway is ten plus years. A smaller percentage, but still significant are over forty years living in Onoway. In the case of businesses, the average time in business here in Onoway is 33.6 years. Noted some as long as 60 years and new ones of two or less years.

The response to being approached by Mayors or Councillors, 95% never remember any contact with any Mayors or Councillors in the last 5 years. Respondents said its difficult to remember beyond that. Some business owner said yes, and indicated it was at the 100-year Business Breakfast celebration.

The Onowaves question, 86.5% said they never see them, as someone else opens and pays the Bill. From that I did ask a side question. Where do you see information from the Town then? 92.4% see information occasionally in the local Bulletin.

Both residents and Businesses unanimously agreed that Growth in all areas is essential. Industrial growth came up several times as well.

Is the Town viable and aesthetically appealing. This question I broke down into two parts. Is the Town viable in your opinion? 92.1% said if more businesses leave and new ones do not come in it will be difficult for the Town to maintain the status quo. On appealing most were happy. Seven comments were about the condition of several store fronts.

On Taxation, 100% understood the need, and 100% said they cannot afford higher taxes. They did comment they feel growth would help keep taxation at current levels.

The resounding comment for one thing they could ask for is more amenities for the young and older children. I asked as an example. Comments came back, more recreation, indoor and outdoor at Eastridge Estates, Rodeo Grounds, and a Pool.

I move my report to Council.