

## **Mayor Deb Higgins January 10, 2014**

Even though it began with what seemed like a never-ending winter and the possibility of flooding once spring finally did arrive, 2013 proved to be a good year for the City of Moose Jaw.

Development in housing across the City continued throughout 2013 with progress in both the private and City subdivisions. These developments have grown into active neighbourhoods within our community and continuing demand will mean ongoing activity in all areas well into 2014.

After much discussion and planning, we were all pleased to see the groundbreaking for construction of the new regional hospital in 2013. Substantial progress was made over the summer and if you haven't as yet taken a minute to drive by the site, I would suggest you do. The facility has taken shape over the summer with expectations for the facility to be completed on schedule for a 2015 opening.

Building permits and business licenses are a good indicator of economic activity in the City and 2013 was a banner year in both categories. In the first nine months of 2013, the value of building permits was up 43% in the average monthly value of building permits for the same period experienced in 2012. The local economy was performing at a record-breaking pace with its rolling average value of building permits at \$8.8 million per month, the highest in the City's history. Overall, the City issued 321 building permits in 2013 with a total value of \$96,126,945.45 or \$28,018,239 above 2012 totals. The City issued 276 new business licenses in 2014 compared to 191 in 2013. Definitely a good year!

Mosaic Place and Yara Centre continue to show their value to our community. Whether you're a participant or a spectator, these facilities are proven centres of activity and contributors to economic spin-off for the community. 2014 will be as busy as ever with Mosaic Place playing host to Hockey's National Midget Championship, the Telus Cup, in April, and a packed schedule of entertainment and concerts.

With a strong foundation for continued growth and development, 2014 promises continued growth in Moose Jaw. Economic development will not occur without the people to drive the activity or the infrastructure to support it.

With that in mind, Council has focused our attention on "fix, build and develop" with our number one priority being infrastructure. We know we have challenges but we also have a number of advantages to deal with those challenges, namely, a solid system of reserve funds and a lower debt level than many Saskatchewan communities.

We are planning for the future by developing an overall utilities plan to guide our future work plans and considerable realignment has been done within our 2014 budget to focus City resources on meeting the needs of our community. Not at the expense of community programs, but by refocusing our attention on basic services needed within the community.

2014 will continue to see activity in housing developments and continued interest and activity in the Grayson Business Park. Even with a slowdown in the potash market, K+S Legacy Potash mine is moving ahead just north of the City and work continues promoting the Moose Jaw-Regina Corridor as a cost competitive area to do business in the mid-western region.

SIAST is showing a strong commitment to our community as they are well into the process of a request for proposals to determine the options for a student residence here at SIAST Palliser Campus. While we are still waiting to hear from the province more detail of the announcement almost two years ago to close Valley View Centre, we continue to work maintaining services and trained staff here in our community.

For our younger citizens, this spring we will see the accessible playground in Wakamow Valley, as well as a new playground at Elgin Park with water features. Another initiative well received by our younger residents is the Bike Skills Park to be built just west of Yara Centre. Quality of life is so important to recruitment and retention of families to our community; these parks add to the quality of life for those young and young at heart.

The activity and projects announced and planned for Moose Jaw and the surrounding area will bring workers, families and new and expanded business opportunities to our community. It is a privilege to serve as your Council at this exciting time in Moose Jaw's history.

Deb Higgins  
Mayor