



Mayor’s Monthly Message

May 2020

Information & Resources:	Federal information & income supports	www.canada.ca/coronavirus
	Provincial information (including gathering restrictions, protections for renters) & income supports	www.alberta.ca/covid19
	Industry specific information for Alberta’s “Relaunch”	https://www.alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx
	Lethbridge Region Economic Recovery Task Force	www.chooselethbridge.ca/recovery

A key decision point for Council this month was around the tax rate bylaw for 2020. **Council and administration have worked hard to hold property taxes flat and deliver a zero increase for most Stirling residents.** (There are sometimes slight fluctuations in your property taxes based on the assessed value of your home which can go up or down from year to year.) We know times are tough with the economic impact of the coronavirus across our region and it was important not to increase the tax burden on residents when innovation, efficiency and other savings could be identified. My thanks to our small but mighty administrative and public works teams for their continued efforts to deliver a high level of service and contain rising costs. The tax rate bylaw also included a deferral of tax payments without penalty to September 30. This provides an extra 3 months for those residents who need a little extra time this year. Residents are still encouraged to pay taxes on-time by June 30 if they can. Monthly installment plans are available - contact the Village office to find out more.

The one exception to the above will be the minimum tax rate. Alberta Municipal Affairs performed an audit of the Village last year and one area of change identified was to eliminate multiple types of minimum tax rates. The 2020 Tax Rate Bylaw eliminates the “vacant property” minimum tax category in accordance with that provincial direction and will instead maintain a general minimum tax for all properties (whether vacant or improved) at \$975.00. A detailed backgrounder on the tax rate bylaw and 2020 budget is available on the Village website here: <http://stirling.ca/archives/7574>.

The public health orders issued to combat the coronavirus will impact summer activities in our community. Council was forced to cancel July’s annual festivities for Settler Days as well as make the difficult decision not to open the pool this year. The Stirling Historical Society also announced the cancellation of the Annual Community Garage Sale. The silver lining this month despite these announcements was the move to Stage 1 of Alberta’s Relaunch Strategy.



Page 2

A number of businesses have been able to reopen or scale up their operations. The Village office and ATB agency will also reopen to in-person customers beginning Monday, May 25th. The province is expected to announce that Stage 2 of the Relaunch Strategy will be implemented on or around June 19th with Stage 3 to follow sometime during the summer. Keep an eye on the Village website for updates and announcements as we are able to reopen facilities and restart programs at each phase. A local guide to the relaunch strategy can be found here: <http://stirling.ca/archives/7339>

This month Council also launched a public engagement survey to better understand our community's perspective on the potential changes to alcohol licensing that could come with the passage of Bill 2 by the Government of Alberta. If passed, the bill would amend the Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Act to remove a legacy section of the legislation that dates back to the era of prohibition in Alberta. The removal of that section in the law would open up the possibility of permanent liquor licenses in communities like Stirling where they are currently banned. The change in the legislation still provides a way for a municipal council to either support or object to a new license request for the first application but that decision becomes a precedent for all future applications. The survey results indicates a pretty even split in Stirling with roughly 46% of residents opposed to increased liquor licensing and about 54% either supportive or indifferent. It is not clear when the legislation might be passed by the Legislative Assembly but Council thought it was important to have a better understanding of the community's perspective on this issue. I would like to thank all 335 residents who took the time to share their comments and complete the on-line survey. You can review a summary of the survey results including written comments on the Village website here: <http://stirling.ca/archives/7646>.

The weather finally seems to have turned a corner with a mostly pleasant Victoria Day long weekend. There is no doubt that this summer will be a little different with many popular festivals and events cancelled across our region. A continued closure of the USA-Canada border to non-essential travel has also forced people to adjust their plans through June. We are fortunate to live in an area that has seen relatively low rates of COVID related illness. Our region has been impacted by the economic consequences of shuttering businesses but continues to have the lowest unemployment rate in the province and is relatively well positioned to recover.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trevor Lewington', written in a cursive style.

Trevor Lewington

c: (403) 330 3701 e: Lewington@stirling.ca