

# MD wants more involvement at regional level

By Krista Conrad

Staff Reporter

The MD of Foothills is taking steps toward more collaboration within the Calgary area ahead of the formation of a regional growth management board.

MD staff and council members will be attending more steering committee meetings and workshops of the Calgary Regional Partnership (CRP) beginning this fall.

Director of planning, Heather Hemingway, said it's important the MD have a voice at the table.

"My understanding is that the Province is actually working through the CRP on some of the issues," said Hemingway. "The Province is asking the CRP to establish transportation infrastructure priorities.

"It concerns me a great deal, that the conversations are being had about where the Province needs to make the big moves on transportation and we're not even getting that discussion."

Hemingway said the MD cannot hold any positions on CRP committees because it is not a voting member, but it can participate in discussions and be informed of projects and activities within the region.

The MD initially withdrew from the CRP in 2009 over concerns over voting rules, loss of autonomy and development corridors. The MD began discussing the possibility of rejoining the partnership in 2015, but the provincial government threw a curveball into the game when it announced the creation of growth management boards for the Edmonton and Calgary regions.

While participation in the CRP has always been voluntary, membership in a growth management board would be mandatory.

Mayor Larry Spilak said attending CRP meetings is very important for the MD as changes are made and the Province continues to work toward a growth management board for the area.

"It look as though the



SUZANNE OEL

MD of Foothills Coun.

provincial government is going to be looking at the CRP membership to help put the policies together for the growth management board," said Spilak. "I think because of that it would certainly be helpful for some members of the MD to be present at those meeting and participate in the discussions."

He said the MD has been missing out on some important conversations by not being a member of the partnership, but despite discussion at council, returning to the CRP has not happened yet.

Coun. Suzanne Oel said she would like to see the MD of Foothills become a voting member of the CRP again, she said the MD has remained involved over the past seven years since it left the partnership.

Without being a member, she said the MD has continued to attend meetings and be involved in discussions.

"We haven't been disconnected, but we're still not a full member," said Oel. "I would like that to happen. We're kind of in limbo."

She said collaborating now shows the spirit of the MD of Foothills and its willingness to work with its regional urban and rural partners.

The greatest benefit of auditing steering committee meetings is to have the opportunity to bring the interests of the MD and the Foothills sub-region to the table, she said.

"I think overall, fostering the communication is a really big deal, and we're being welcomed to the table," said Oel. "To me, it's about being at that table and representing our residents, and not having their interests missed."



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