

President's Report -2016

It is my honour and privilege to present this report to you in my capacity as President of the High River and District Chamber of Commerce for the 2016 year. It has been a year of challenges, successes and changes but overall High River and the Chamber has continued its path forward. I am personally very proud of the progress that the town, its businesses and its residents have made during 2016. While there are always challenges and we acknowledge that not everything is perfect, I feel strongly that for the first time in about 30 years we actually close to having a direction to move in and goals to work towards as a community and everyone in High River deserves credit for making that happen.

As your Chamber, we have tried to improve the ability of you, as members, to have better access to opportunities for networking amongst your fellow members and to give you better access to information that affects your business and life in High River. Our monthly luncheons have changed focus over 2016 to support that by allowing more time for members to network by reducing the agenda items each luncheon as well as focusing our speakers and presentations on items that have an affect closer to home for all of us (such as regular presentations by the Town Economic Development department, council and the Mayor, etc). Your chamber board feels that this is an important area of focus as the strength of the Chamber comes from the ability for members to know each other and have open communication among the group and to have easy access to the correct and timely information on important issues rather than being stuck with the rumor and innuendo that circulates at many points in time. We will continue this focus in 2017 and try to build on what we have started in 2016.

The Board has also focused on strengthening the partnerships with other organizations in the area to ensure that all entities are clear on what the mandate of each other are and, where possible, work collaboratively to drive the success of High River forward. The relationship between the High River & District Chamber of Commerce and Town Council, Town Administration, and other service providers in the area (such as Community Futures, Bow Valley College, etc., have never been stronger in the past several decades and we look forward to building those relationships even further in 2017. Overall, we are all working to the same goal so seeing all of the groups working together is very encouraging for the future of the town.

We have also worked on building a partnership with the Okotoks & District Chamber of Commerce to leverage our resources and membership. We have held a few joint events in 2016 (General Hillier presentation for example) and we will continue to build on those plans in 2017. Both chambers have very strong resources and given the continued regionalization of the area it only makes sense for the two groups to work together. We are presently applying for grants from the Alberta Government to help us drive the 2017 speaker and presentation plans of your chamber and we are excited for some of the things are in the planning stages.

Your board consists of 10 very dedicated and hardworking individuals. We have 7 individuals who have graciously let their name stand to serve another year on the board and have 3 new individuals who have come on to assist in the growth of the Chamber in 2017. We welcome Angela Piovesana (owner of Red Bag) Jennifer Avery owner (Academy of Learning High River College). Mr. Steven Charland, owner Steven's No Frills. We welcome Angela, Steven and Jennifer to the board. We also thank Archie Hall, Trent Moorman and Penni Tebbs for their work on the Board over the past year.

The 2016 local Shop 'N Win campaign starts December 1 and looks to build on the strong growth we saw in that campaign in 2015. If you have not already signed your business up for this program please contact the Chamber office as soon as you can and they will assist you with the registration process. We thank the businesses that participated in 2015 for their support and look forward to welcoming you back to the campaign for this year. Even if you do not participate in the campaign, please ensure that you get out and support your local businesses this Christmas shopping season and support them all year long.

Your Chamber has been focused on our mandate of lobbying governments on issues that matter to you and affect your businesses and lives here in High River. We, along with the provincial Alberta Chamber organization, lobbied various levels of government regarding the support programs of rural doctors to ensure that it stays in place, minimum wage changes, Bill 6 and other issues that have arisen that are of importance to you and your business. While not every effort has resulted in successes or change in government policy that we hoped for, they certainly heard our message clearly and we will continue to represent you as strongly and as loudly as we can to ensure that your voice is heard. We encourage you to let your board know of the issues that are important to you so that we can represent you as best as we can.

The upcoming year will be one full of challenges but will be one that will be an exciting year of changes as well. As noted earlier, we will continue to focus on strengthening the partnerships with other organizations and government bodies to help move the plans and mandate of the Chamber (and its members) forward. We are your Board and this is your Chamber. Our success can only come from the strength and effort of its members. Our biggest request of you, the members, for 2017 is to be engaged. Please attend the Chamber events as much as you can, please talk about the Chamber with your fellow business owners in High River and area and if they are not members please ask them to become members. The engagement of the members of the Chamber is critical to us moving forward and to the Town as a whole moving forward. The flood of 2013 taught us that complacency is not an option and this is a mantra of your Board. We will continue to push for positive change in the Chamber, the Town and in every aspect of business and life in High River and request the support of you to do so. There are many opportunities in front of us so now is the time to reach out and grab them.

I thank all of you for the opportunity to serve as your President for the past year and I hope to have the opportunity to do so going forward. I also wish to thank my fellow board members and Lynette McCracken, your Executive Director, for their strong support and hard work over 2016 as well. Please reach out to them as well and thank them for their efforts as well. I wish all of you the best for 2017.

Respectfully submitted,
Steven Muth
President