



WORDS from **WOODLANDS**

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County gearing up for 2009

Jim Rennie, Mayor

With the New Year underway, I would like to share some of the exciting plans Woodlands County has slated for 2009.

This year's project highlights focus on infrastructure, economic, recreation and emergency services developments that aim to increase the quality of life for residents.



A major infrastructure project on the plate this year is the paving of a 5.5 km strip of the Old Blue Ridge Highway, with construction set to begin in the spring. We are confident that this \$6.5-million project, our largest project of the year, will help reduce the amount of road maintenance needed on this well-travelled road over the long-term. Woodlands County will also purchase six new graders, which will replace our current fleet, for optimum road-network maintenance.

On the economic development side of the spectrum, I'm looking forward to the formation of a committee with the University of Alberta to aid with developing the meteorite-impact crater site. This crater is the only known crater exposed to the surface in Alberta and is very well preserved, therefore providing an excellent resource for planetary research. To have such a remarkable piece of science in our area is astounding and we are excited to share this fascinating landmark with the rest of the world.

An exciting recreation-based project on the agenda is the construction of Phase 1 of the indoor-riding arena at the Westward Community Centre. The new arena will provide local riders and those from out of town a secured activity location no matter what the weather – a true strength for our equine community. Another recreational enhancement to note is the construction of new docks at both Schuman and Goose Lakes, just in time for summer.

Our emergency services teams will also see improvements this year, with fire departments in Blue Ridge and Fort Assiniboine receiving new tankers for enhanced fire-protection efforts. We are also planning to introduce a brand new rural ID system that will see each household in the County receive a new emergency ID number to increase efficiency for police, fire and ambulance teams when finding properties in the instance of emergency situations.

As in previous years, Woodlands will continue partnering with neighbouring municipalities and community groups to bring world-class events to the area, such as the Whitecourt Trailblazers' Sled Invasion and the Whitecourt Rodeo, hosted by the Whitecourt and District Agriculture Society.

I am confident that 2009 will be another productive year for Woodlands County, and I anticipate these projects will help lead to a brighter future for our residents.

For more information about the 2009 Woodlands County projects, or any other County matters, feel free to call me at (780) 778-8400 or email me at jim.rennie@woodlands.ab.ca.