

Major Announcements For All of Raymond 2023



March/April 2023 has brought two major announcements that I feel need some extra clarification to not only those who reside in Raymond, but also to those in our fringe area, in the County of Warner, who also call Raymond home, which makes up 20% of our student population in the Raymond schools.

On March 31, the Government of Alberta officially announced the building of a new High School in Raymond. Minister of Infrastructure Nathan Neudorf, along with our MLA Grant Hunter, were here to officially confirm the government was investing \$37.6 M in our town. Recognizing the fact that Raymond is growing and that schools here are at maximum capacity, a new school was essential to be built to accommodate the growing numbers.

Back in 2018 Westwind School Division came to Council addressing the critical need of a new school. To ensure that the new Raymond school is a top priority for the government, many points need to be addressed. A suitable “shovel ready site” complete with sewer and water infrastructure close by needs to be submitted with the Westwind’s application. 20+ acres, access to greenspace, a working relationship between the School Board and Town all figure in. The total cost of the site, infrastructure, roads and sidewalks are to be borne solely by the town. Numerous trips and emails to the Ministers of Education and Infrastructure were made by Council to reemphasize our situation.

The congestion of our local schools helped convince Council to look for an alternate site in town that best met those needs. Many sites were proposed, but after 9 months of deliberation, Council decided that the 20 acre parcel south of the Victoria Park Sportsplex would be the most ideal, not only for our children and for the future, but also to convince the government that our need and location for a new school should be on the top of their priority list.

In choosing this site made the moving of the Rodeo Grounds to a new location inevitable. Concepts of keeping the Stampede grounds at the same location but sliding it west, or turning it around, or moving it south on the same property were all discussed. A 70+ year old grandstand that engineers advised had the high probability that it couldn’t be moved without significant damage played a factor in our deliberations. This latest elected Council had the task of finding a new site for the oldest stampede in Canada recognizing that this is our heritage, and we are proud of it.

The Ron and Joanne Heggie family approached Council with the generous donation of 14 acres of land on the northeast side of town, within the town boundaries, to build a new rodeo ground which would keep the tradition of Canada Day celebrations and rodeo going forward. 122 years of history with the last rodeo at the old site will be happening this year! 2024 we will be having a Stampede at the new location. Grants will be applied for and leveraged, in time facilities will be built to host numerous events throughout the year at the new location. In the coming months, not only will you see activity and witness the buildup of the new stampede grounds but you will also see the new High School being built with a completion date of 2027.

These two announcements are fantastic for our town. Not only will our children have a new school which relieves capacity pressure on our existing schools but it will be around for 50+ years for the future of Raymond residents! The stampede which was first started to bring Raymond residents together, town and rural, to celebrate Canada Day will continue! It’s a win-win for Raymond!

Mayor Jim Depew & Council