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Regional partnership continues to evolve to face and shape the future

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Echo Editor
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Airdrie Echo — In front of more than 100 representatives from 15 member municipalities, Airdrie Mayor Linda Bruce officially stepped into the role of Calgary Regional Partnership (CRP) chairperson Friday.

At the first official general assembly since voting last spring to formalize the partnership, CRP members reflected on how far they had come and looked ahead with eager anticipation.

"As the new chair, I see my role as keeping the projects of the partnership on the front burners of the various levels of governments," Bruce said, "and to continue to search out new projects and funding opportunities.

"All the while, I must keep both Airdrie's and the partnership's best interests at heart," she added. "It is definitely a balancing act."

At the meeting, the CRP welcomed guest speaker Roger Gibbons, of the Canada West Foundation, who has consulted with the partnership from the beginning.

Over the past few years, Gibbons – a University of Calgary political science professor – has offered his expertise on such topics as regionalization and amalgamation, as well as sustainability and regeneration, Bruce said, and spoke Friday about whether or not the CRP's next step would be to evolve into a regional government. However, Bruce said, although the concept is a fascinating one, the partnership has no intention of moving toward governance.

"We're interested in regional cooperation," she said.

Calgary Mayor Dave Bronconnier also spoke to the assembly, outlining concerns that the CRP stay focused on projects, rather than becoming an advocacy group, Bruce added.

For Airdrie Alderman Shawn Howard, the meeting provided a more in-depth introduction to the CRP, a group with which he will become more familiar through his position on the city's regional partnership committee.



THINK REGIONALLY, ACT LOCALLY: Airdrie Mayor Linda Bruce receives congratulations, after being officially elected chairperson Friday at Calgary Regional Partnership's fall annual general meeting.

Karen Lazaruk photo

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"I've certainly been very impressed with the concept itself," Howard said. "There are a lot of these issues that don't end at your city border." Because his business background has already allowed Howard to establish relationships with people in neighbouring municipalities, the new alderman said that his interest has been piqued by the partnership concept, whether working to attract new business to the region or dealing with water issues.

"It's that kind of approach," he said.

With CRP's aim at sustainability – environmental, economic, social – for Howard, the most memorable comments from Friday's meeting came from Sanford Big Plume, T'suu T'ina Nation chief, who emphasized the importance of taking the long view.

"We're not inheriting this land from our parents, we're borrowing it from our children," Howard said, quoting Big Plume.

During Friday's event, the CRP adopted its 2005-07 business plan encompassing a wide range of projects.

In the introduction, the plan states, "The regional vision supports local autonomy, while emphasizing that local goals can often best be facilitated through regional cooperative approaches." With that sentiment in mind, highlights of the business plan include:

- o Emergency response enhancement – This includes GPS mapping, a project which is struggling to keep up with growth. When the M.D. of Big Horn and the Town of Canmore joined CRP last year, Bruce said, the scope of the GPS mapping project greatly expanded.

"It is more than just adding a little bit of information once in a while," Bruce said.

Also on the agenda is work toward the development of a seamless emergency communication system.

- o Regional waste management strategy – The next phase, Bruce said, is working toward a long-term goal of removal of organic waste from the waste management stream.

- o Regional sustainability strategy – In pursuant with Calgary's Imagine Calgary 100-year visioning process, the partnership would be aiming at conceptualizing the community going forward over the next century, Bruce said, putting Calgary and CRP in an elite group of municipalities and organizations around the world.

"It's quite a place to hang your hat," she said.

CRP Members

City of Airdrie

City of Calgary

Town of Black Diamond

Town of Canmore

Town of Chestermere

Town of Cochrane

Town of High River

Town of Okotoks

Town of Strathmore

Town of Turner Valley

M.D. of Big Horn

M.D. of Foothills

M.D. of Rocky View

Township of Redwood Meadows

T'suu T'ina Nation

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