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Bronconnier sends message to CRP

Darryl Mills

Wednesday December 08, 2004

Cochrane Times — Leaders and other representatives from across southern Alberta spent their morning in Cochrane on Friday, Dec. 3 as the town played host to the Fall General Assembly of the Calgary Regional Partnership.

The organization gathered to look at where it has come in the five years since the idea was first dreamed up, where it is today, and what lies ahead. Guest speakers included provincial heavyweights like Lyle Oberg, now minister of infrastructure and transportation, and Rob Renner, minister of municipal affairs, as well as local leaders such as Okotoks Mayor Bill McAlpine and T'suu T'ina Nation Chief Sandford Big Plume.

But, on this day, the big fish in the little pond was Calgary Mayor Dave Bronconnier. When it comes to Calgary and the Calgary region, other than Premier Ralph Klein himself, Bronconnier is the big fish around here. And, he brought with him a message reminding all members of the voluntary partnership just what the Calgary partnership is supposed to be, but also a cautious emphasis on what it is not.

"As we move forward and evolve, we must work together collaboratively and cooperatively, but it is important that we understand our roles," Bronconnier told the room full of mayors, reeves, councillors, and administrative staff from throughout the region.

He spoke of the teamwork involved, including the benefits that will come to the whole region with Imperial Oil's upcoming move to Calgary, and the Calgary Regional Partnership efforts at the recent trip to Toronto to woo potential new residents of the area.

"But, as we move forward as a region, it is important we recognize what we are not," he said. "We are not another overlay of government. We cannot have three or four bodies speaking on behalf of the members of the partnership."

He pointed out the partnership should remain a collaborative effort that focuses on areas such as transportation issues, commerce, land use and infrastructure issues throughout the corridor.

Airdrie Mayor and Chair of the partnership Linda Bruce said Bronconnier's concerns were heard by the partnership.

"We understand Mayor Bronconnier's concerns, and I had a little conversation with him afterwards to make sure there is no misunderstanding between him at the City of Calgary and the rest of the partnership," Bruce said. "I think at this point he feels very comfortable we are both on the same page and moving in the right direction."

Bruce said the group will remain true to its goal of coming together on specific projects rather than trying to function as an advocacy body. She did, however, highlight the critical role the partnership can play for all municipalities involved.

"Fundamentally, if you look at what has been done throughout the country, we have had amalgamations in Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, Cape Breton," she said. "With amalgamations you create a very, very large regional



government.

“What we would like to do is maintain the integrity of each of our communities, but work together so we have the efficiencies, can be effective, and be able to provide the best product we can to our taxpayers.

“If you will, so they can get the biggest bang for their buck.”

As much as Bronconnier had strong, serious words, he also made it clear he believes in and supports the partnership, and its critical role.

“It is vital to the success of Calgary, which means it is vital to the success of the region that the partnership works on a project-by-project basis, but it doesn’t speak as the voice of the region.”

He praised the efforts of members of the partnership who went to Toronto, presenting not just Calgary, but the benefits of the entire region to the hundreds of curious there and offered a humorous quip.

“The best question I got in Toronto was from a woman who said she and her family only had \$900,000 to spend on a house, and asked what kind of property they could get in Calgary.

“I told them, ‘anyone they want.’”

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