

**STATEMENT TO THE COMMUNITY AND CITY COUNCIL
OCTOBER 29TH, 2007**

Mayor Norm Boucher

Fellow Council Members, Staff, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of our Aldermen and myself, let me thank the public for putting their trust in us. Congratulations to you all for wanting to contribute in making Medicine Hat a better place in the next three years!

To Mayor Vallely, Aldermen Smith, Hirsch, Cocks and Speers, we thank you and your families for representing us and for your devotion to others! The 1000 plus employees of the City have followed your direction and we are all better for it! Thank you!

Now, what do we see as pressing issues for our citizens in our term of office? First, let's understand our leadership role for our Council. It is broken down in two fundamental points: The rule of democratic representation and the principle of accountability.

As leaders, we are required to focus on four points:

- Set a high standard
- Lead by example
- Challenge ourselves
- And challenge others to do their best

To provide democratic representation, we must debate openly all the affairs of our municipal government. The only exceptions for a closed council are legal matters, staff issues and negotiations. Our citizens have a right to witness politics in action. The principle of accountability is to our citizens and ourselves. So, let's start right now in building relationships with eight new members of council, so transparency results.

Sanja and I came to the conclusion that Medicine Hat will provide our best quality of life of any place we know. Having stated this, we can improve on several avenues.

First, I do not accept that some residents do not have access to city water when we are sending it to outside locations. We must change a bylaw that restricts this. Water is vitality of life.

Secondly, we have heard of city red tape in all kinds of negotiations with our residents and businesses. I understand standards and service requirements. Again, a number of bylaws were drafted and passed creating a lack of flexibility on how our staff can provide this service. I would remind everyone that we now live in a world of equity and not equality. One approach does not fit every situation all of the time.

We have heard repeatedly that our Transit System needs fixing. I know that most people in Medicine Hat are in love with their vehicles. However, many rely heavily on public transportation. It must be expanded to cover Sundays, longer operational hours, and all vital areas of the City. Council will review a report on this in the very near future. Status quo on this vital need is not an option as we grow.

I have listened to many people, as you all have, on our utility billings. It is very important that we refine what we present to our consumers. While it would be nice to supply all utilities at a reduced rate, our citizens understand that there is a cost for such services. Administration fees, service fees, delivery charges and any other abstract costs are confusing to them. I suggest we draft a simpler billing process and we ensure we keep the cost of our utilities affordable in comparison with other communities. This has been and should remain a Medicine Hat advantage. I also state that we must engage in an alternate source of energy right away, to ease the pressure on our natural gas supply and dependency.

Medicine Hat remains a safe city. One only has to notice the superb dedication of our firefighters this summer. The Medicine Hat Police Service has also impressed with the number of drug arrests this year. This Council will have to debate the possible building of a fourth Fire Hall in Crescent Heights, as that area is in full growth. I also appreciate the legislation for strong actions against repeat offenders and drug criminals, which Prime Minister Harper is advancing. Our city should be well served by ensuring that our citizens safety and security be higher than the present sixth priority.

For several years now, our Council took the approach that what is good for the Region is good for Medicine Hat. Since we are the biggest community in this region, I would rather we invest in ourselves and others in the region will benefit. The bottom line for an increase in Economic Development for Medicine Hat itself is a need to do business better than we have done. It is not enough to state that we, as a city, are open for business; we must deliver and invite potential industries to Medicine Hat. We must make bigger parcels of land available for these industries. Better salaries and quality of life is at stake for our young families. I have read the statistics that our work force unemployment is hovering around 3.7%, but what should be considered more important is the take home pay. One has to bear in mind that the average Medicine Hat residential sale price in September was \$247,804.00. Food, fuel and taxes have also risen. Our environment must be conducive to welcoming new workers and striving for the return home of Medicine Hatters who are contemplating a move here!

With the help of Classic Construction Ltd., we are the envy of many other communities. Affordable Housing is a need that cannot be denied. We thank our partners in this vision and we look forward to furthering the project.

On the issue of a 24 Hour Border Crossing, I have asked Mr. Vallely to help out. He has volunteered his energy and time to see it to a successful conclusion.

On the aspect of an Arena/Event Centre, the City has already invested time and efforts to see its viability. As I have said before, we will continue to search the answers to know if we need and/or want this Event Centre. A committee will be announced to pursue the vision for this Event Centre.

It is very evident that we, baby boomers, are having difficulty accepting the approach of the next generation. They are for quality of life, and not very interested in overtime. Technology is a fact of life for them and they are very critical of the environment. So, how do we welcome their energy? First, I will continue the Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee that Mayor Vallely created. The City is placing final touches on a recruitment and retention policy. This policy must reflect the needs of this next generation to ensure their development and our commitment is a match. The next generation will produce strong leaders, if we help them out and accept them as who they are.

The City has been working at implementing a Constructive Culture for several years now. We, in this Council, must recognize the benefits of a Constructive Culture. Simply put; we can yell from our perch and give direction, but if the work force is not engaged, recognized, celebrated, unified or dedicated to service, we are not as effective as we can be. In our case, most of the work is done by others!

As indicated earlier, our leadership must include our dedication to our work force, trusting they will do their best, even though some mistakes may surface. If we are truly a learning corporation, these mistakes will be corrected and eliminated. We must empower our people to the lowest level possible to ensure service and decisions are prompt, effective and affordable. We must oversee that success is celebrated, communication is enhanced and our people are willing participants in supplying service and following the direction we provide.

I want to close by stating that I am very pleased with the mix of experience and energy from a political side, as well as a business side for our new Council. We must challenge each other, for our city depends on it and if we are to be recognized as a good government.

Thank you and good luck to all!