

Urban Municipalities Task Force “The Regional Story”

Everywhere in North America citizens deal with the consequences of failed regional planning: stress from being caught in traffic gridlock; health issues due to environmental degradation and the loss of prime agricultural lands; and rising taxes that support sprawling urban, industrial, or commercial corridors, all while receiving little or no local services. Regions follow this path whenever communities within the region engage in piecemeal one-off planning. When these local well-intentioned plans are not supported by a regional vision of sustainable communities it becomes nearly impossible for the region to recover. The cost to correct these planning mistakes becomes prohibitive. Eventually communities within the region become trapped in a spiral of unsustainable plans driven by competition for growth as each community searches for new sources of revenue.

In contrast, good regional planning accepts the reality that established boundaries between neighbouring municipalities are not walls that allow one community to act in their own interests. Instead, regional partners need to work together at local levels to collectively manage the costs and risks to the environment, to social and economic development, and the impact on neighbouring communities. In short, good neighbours cooperate. When neighbours don't cooperate, when they pursue their own self interests without consideration and respect to others, they end up making everyone including themselves worse off. They put everyone's future, including their own, at risk.

We cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of principled regional development and planning that is inclusive and responsive to all stakeholder needs. The municipalities in the Calgary Region have one opportunity to get regional planning right. We are committed to a collaborative approach in which we join together to develop our region with a positive vision: a place for opportunity and growth with vibrant communities and towns, built in a *fiscally responsible* manner with supportive services, fair taxation, equitable funding for municipal service delivery, and supported by healthy distinct wilderness and agricultural areas.

Regional cooperation builds bridges between neighbours and complements existing community visions. It does not reinforce the building of walls. Regional cooperation is about leaving a legacy and preserving our heritage. It is about having a well-developed regional vision and choosing a future that honours communities, our agricultural heritage, and the environment shared by all citizens today and well into the future.

Key Speaking Points

1. Regional planning must be built on a foundation of fiscal responsibility;
2. Poor regional planning adversely impacts citizen's quality of life, health, and sense of well-being;
3. Growth for the sake of growth makes it impossible to correct planning errors;
4. One opportunity to get regional planning right;
5. Regional planning should serve needs of all stakeholders;
6. Collaborative approach to develop region and create fiscally responsible, vibrant communities, supported by fair taxation, and responding to agricultural priorities;
7. Regional planning focuses on balancing economic and social development with the protection of wilderness, natural and environmentally sensitive areas, and farmlands.