

STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS

Mayor Ken Wiebe – March 15th, 2011

Robert Greenleaf, author and founder of the Greenleaf Centre for Servant Leadership said, “Not much happens without a dream. And for something great to happen, there must be a great dream. Behind every great achievement is a dreamer of great dreams. Much more than a dreamer is required to bring it to reality; but the dream must be there first”.

Mr. President, Executive and Members of the Morden and District Chamber of Commerce, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Before I get into where the Council sees the Town of Morden in the short and long term future I would like to recap on the year that was 2010.

-The news in the first few weeks of 2010 was very much the same throughout Canada, would Vancouver be ready for the Olympics, would there be snow, would the “Own the Podium” investment pay off, and foremost on everybody’s mind, do we have a team that is capable of winning Men’s Hockey Gold. Before all those questions were answered we had opportunity to host the Olympic Torch Relay, and in spite of the extremely cold weather, the citizens of Morden lined the streets and cheered the runners on and this euphoria was felt not only here but throughout the country, a great tone setter for the year ahead. And in case you missed it, yes Vancouver was ready, they trucked in the snow, we did own the podium and we did win hockey gold.

-Perseverance, patience and a lot of hard work paid off not only for the Olympic organizers and athletes but also for the Pembina Valley Humane Society as they were finally able to build their facility in the Industrial Park and had a grand opening in the month of May.

- 2010 was also Manitoba Homecoming year and while we did not win the opportunity to be the official host community, we did place in the top three which provided us with funding to host a homecoming party of our own.

-We were witness to what could have been a very tragic occurrence in June, the Milne Park Apartment fire. While there was no loss of life and property loss was substantial, in excess of 1 million dollars, it could have been a lot worse had it not been for the Morden Fire Department and the assistance provided by the City of Winkler Fire Department. The tenants were out on the street but with cooperation and community assistance everyone had a new address in a very short time. An example of the care our residents have for each other.

-Exner E-Waste, a European recycling company opened in the former Tupper Ware Plant. While they have encountered some start up challenges, we are providing guidance. The carbon footprint for recycling of E waste in Manitoba is huge as things are presently shipped to Alberta for initial disassembly and then Ontario for final processing. Exner has the technology to do this all locally and they are a business that has the potential to become a major economic driver not only in our community but the region.

-The Wading Pool, having out lived its best by date, was removed from the Morden Park and the Decor Cabinets Spray Park was built in its place and was very well attended during the summer. Designed with a recycling concept, run-off water is collected into a holding tank and this water is then used by our Parks Department to water flower beds and baskets through out the Town of Morden.

-The Morden Community Development Corporation, with some Federal financial assistance, was able to purchase an existing building in the Industrial Park and develop it into 9 affordable rental units to assist new start up businesses to establish themselves. At the grand opening, in July, the Morden Industrial Incubator Mall had 6 occupants.

- More development has started to happen at Pembina Connection with the new Saban Store. The sale of property to Homestead South for an 84 unit assisted living complex was announced in August, with construction to begin in the spring of 2011.

-After nearly three years of planning and \$153,000 spent, the BSI Insurance Skate Plaza became a reality. Due to complications the site at Youth for Christ was abandoned and a new site at 1st Street and Wardrop was selected. The site selection ensures that on any good day the plaza is well attended during any school day lunch hour.

-Civic elections were the talk of the town for most of the month of October. With 2 candidates running for Mayor and 14 candidates vying for 6 council seats, as one person put it to me "I think we got us a horse race". I believe this council has the elements to represent our community well.

-The New Tabor Home announcement was made by the Minister of Health, Teresa Oswald, in November and this, in conjunction with the Homestead South Assisted Living, will represent a significant improvement to seniors care in Morden. It has been many years that the Tabor Home board of directors has been lobbying the Provincial Government to recognize this need, they have been persistent and it has paid off.

-Organization and good marketing by our Rec Centre staff paid off as local businesses and individual citizens stepped up and contributed towards naming rights to the Rec Centre, arenas, play room, meeting rooms as well as seats and trophy cases, an opportunity to support the community and be recognized.

-I am pleased to recognize Access Credit Union, Huron Window Corporation, Winkler Morden Co-op, BSI Insurance, Decor Cabinets, Morden Chiropractic Centre and Vern's Carpets for their purchase of naming rights as well as the 100 businesses and individuals that made the purchase and installation of new trophy cases and the Winnipeg Arena seats such a success. Through confirmed grants, fundraising, in-kind donations, sponsorship and naming rights a total of \$1,329,603 was raised for our Phase 3 upgrade at the Access Event Centre, the BSI Skate Park and the Decor Cabinets Spray Park. As with any renovation to a 30 year old building, there will be surprises and we did run into a few at the Access Event Centre. With good cooperation between staff and the General contractor we were able to stay within the budget parameters. The total budget for the Phase 3 upgrades was \$3,300,000 and with the grants from the Federal and Provincial levels of government combined with our own fund raising and contributions from our General Reserve and Capital expenditures in 2010, we were left with a \$1,550,000 debenture to be paid over a 10 year period.

- 27th of December, the World Under 17 Challenge hockey game between Atlantic Canada and the Czech Republic was played at the Access Event Centre on the ice of the Huron Window Corporation Arena in front of 845 very enthusiastic hockey fans, 90 of whom were sitting on Winnipeg Jets seats. The year ended much like it started, the citizens of Morden coming out to support a community event.

-The challenge for the newly elected Council of 2010 is to become acquainted with the duties and responsibilities of a councillor. Our first challenge was of course finding a new CAO, a major task for a green council. It quickly became evident that we were in agreement on the process and requirements. We found the candidate best suited for the position.

What is in store for 2011?

-The Homestead South Assisted Living facility, the Tabor Home commitment announcement and the completion of phase 3 at the Access Event Centre are major accomplishments in our Strategic Plan. The investment for Homestead South is from outside the community and is very significant. This one permit will result in a 1.8% growth in assessment to the Town of Morden for 2011 – 2012. When combined with the new Tabor Home we will realize an investment in our community of over \$50 million.

-We have seen continued growth in our residential sector and with 70 immigrant families scheduled to arrive from Kazakhstan and Russia this summer, as well as some new business and industry start ups, we anticipate the growth in the residential sector will continue.

Our incubator Mall, which opened in July, has already seen one tenant vacate and move into a building of their own and I am happy to report that the Mall is now fully occupied.

-With growth, comes a requirement to expand town boundaries and add to infrastructure and that will be one of the priorities for this council. To support the growth we need an expansion of our sewage system with a major trunk line and lift station. The Pembina Connection commercial site, with the addition of Assisted Living and Tabor Home placement is generating a lot of interest. We anticipate some major announcements in the near future. To that end we are developing a long term Financial Plan to establish time lines that will enable us to accomplish our short term and long term building aspirations. I can tell you that at this point, though not finalized, we do anticipate a tax increase for 2011.

-The growth in the RM of Stanley and the Town of Morden has caused a severe shortage of licensed daycare spaces and this is having an impact on decisions by immigrant families and professionals from outside our region on where to settle. Licensed daycare facilities require substantial capital input however, every dollar spent on child care generates a \$1.58 in economic benefit to the province. This council has the political will and is committed to working with the Morden Community Child Care Centre and business stake holders to expand and meet this growing need.

-Regional development is a topic that continues to generate much discussion and there are projects that, in conjunction with our partnering communities, the City of Winkler and the RM of Stanley, are not possibilities but probabilities. We are open to discussing corridor development,

- a hotel/conference facility with an attached indoor aquatic centre,
- a bicycle and walking path,
- a transit system connecting Morden and Winkler,
- regional airport development and probably the biggest issue,
- waste water treatment.

We are on a projected 8 year limit on our lagoon and Winkler will require an expansion in 3 or 4 years. The provincial government does not appear receptive to lagoon expansion however when the subject of regional waste water treatment is mentioned the attitude changes. There has been some engineering work done on this and we would like to see this moved forward quickly. This is a substantial project, however when partnered with the Federal, Provincial and our three civic governments it becomes doable. There would be an economic impact to our communities which is short term. Waste water that is released back into the environment minus the ammonia and phosphates is a long term win for the environment.

- In the last 10 years we have completed more than 32 kilometres of trails and sidewalks. This summer will see more additions to the walking and biking paths in Morden and as the community grows it is planned to have all areas of Town connected with a pathway system. The planning will be done by the citizens of Morden with guidance from a firm that is in the business of designing these systems.

- We have acquired 40 acres of land on the west side of First Street north and have a conceptual development plan for a variety of sports activities. We see the sport of soccer expanding and with scaled development we will be ready to meet the need. Baseball is a sport that has a long history in Morden and the Province of Manitoba. We have a resident in Morden that has played a key role in the placement of the Manitoba Baseball Hall of Fame at the Access Event Centre. He has nurtured this project while continuing to coach and develop athletes in a variety of sports. Because of his passion for sport in general and baseball in particular, we have decided that it would be fitting to name Diamond 3 the JOE WIWCHAR FIELD. The sign installation and formal naming will take place this summer.

This council will continue to work with;

- the Chamber of Commerce, to provide an environment that promotes healthy growth of our business community,
- the Fossil Discovery Centre, the Corn and Apple Festival, and the Morden Tourism Marketing Team to ensure that Morden continues to shine as the jewel of south central Manitoba, a place to not only visit but to live, to work, to play and to raise families.
- the South Central Regional Library and the Pembina Hills Art Council and Gallery, organizations that compliment our education system and a venue for our local artists to market their products.

Thank you to the Morden and District Chamber of Commerce for giving me this opportunity to address, on behalf of council, issues that are important to the future of Morden. In closing, I believe Morden is very fortunate to have a group of employees that are dedicated to serving their community. For their dedication and professionalism, thank you. Thank you also to the citizens of Morden for your continued patience and support as we work to make Morden a community we can all be proud of.

Our plan is ambitious but with good management, strong leadership and community support, I believe together we can build a future for Morden and Morden for the future.