



# Advocacy plan

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# Advocacy priorities

Leduc County Council is committed to advocating on behalf of its citizens to move priorities forward and protect the best interests of the municipality. The 2022 Corporate Plan identified a goal to develop an advocacy plan for Council that would help build relationships with other levels of government and agencies as well as raise awareness of Leduc County priorities.

## Advocacy priorities

At the June 23, 2022 workshop, Council identified the following five advocacy priorities:

- ▶ Broadband/high speed internet
- ▶ High load corridor protection through the City of Beaumont on Highway 625
- ▶ Nisku Spine Road funding
- ▶ Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF)
- ▶ Vantage Pointe communal wastewater system



# Broadband/high-speed internet

## Background

Leduc County recognizes the importance of accessible high-speed internet, which provides access to learning, helps businesses grow and remain resilient and connects families.

In 2021, a Broadband Strategy was approved by Council. The strategy outlined the requirements necessary to meet the County's broadband needs over the next 10 years.

Council originally selected broadband/high speed internet as an area of focus specifically for the Nisku Business Park to support economic development opportunities and drive both development and redevelopment in the Nisku Business Park.

In August 2022, a private company approached Leduc County regarding the installation of fibre in Nisku Business Park. Due to private industry filling the need for broadband in Nisku Business Park, Council shifted its focus to improving broadband/high-speed internet access in rural Leduc County.

## Timeline

### August 2022

- ▶ A private company approached Leduc County regarding the installation of fibre in Nisku Business Park. Administration worked with the company to support the future installation.
- ▶ Drawings and plans were received and approval is in place for work to begin by the end of October 2022.
- ▶ The work will take place in two stages:
  - ▶ The installation of underground fibre from Nisku to Beaumont.
  - ▶ The installation of above ground fibre that will utilize existing power poles within the Nisku Business Park.

### September 2022

- ▶ Council directed administration to focus on advocating for broadband/high-speed internet in rural Leduc County.

### August 2023

- ▶ Leduc County provided a letter of support to Videotron/Freedom Mobile for their grant application for funding from the Government of Canada for rural broadband. This is a significant project, connecting Edmonton to Red Deer, Calgary, south to Medicine Hat.

## Ongoing actions

- ▶ Monitor the Government of Alberta's website for broadband funding opportunities.
- ▶ Develop a rural broadband program to utilize grant funding once an application process is released by the province.



# High-load corridor protection

## Background

Leduc County is home to several economic corridors that are integral to new and existing businesses and industries in the province, including Highway 625.

Highway 625 is part of the provincial high load corridor, which consists of designated highways that have had overhead utility lines raised to accommodate loads up to nine metres high, unless noted otherwise.

Nisku has a series of high load corridors designated through the traffic bylaw, such as Nisku Spine Road, that are utilized by companies with over-dimensional loads that travel both from and to Nisku. In Nisku, the traffic signals have bases that can rotate, which allow the signals to move out of the way to allow over-dimensional loads through.

After the 2019 annexation with the City of Beaumont, jurisdiction of the lands on both sides of Highway 625 became the City's. The City is now planning new non-residential development on the south side of Highway 625, enhancing the opportunity for additional direct points of access from private lands onto the highway.

It is administration's understanding that the City of Beaumont is completing a functional planning study\* on its portion of Highway 625 to add more access points – located at Range Road 243 and 50 Street and Range Road 241 and 50 Street – to the highway. These two points would be in addition to the access point that exists at Range Road 243 and 60 Street.

The current access point at 60 Street, Beaumont, was supposed to be in place temporarily until the ring road in Beaumont was complete; however, after the ring road was complete the access point remained in place. This access point was granted by Leduc County when it was in our jurisdiction (pre-annexation).

Adding additional signals will slow high-load traffic significantly and affect key businesses in Nisku Business Park.

*\*To date, Leduc County has not been involved in the functional planning study.*

## Timeline

### April 2023

- ▶ Leduc County Council met with City of Beaumont Council on April 17, 2023 and discussed the need to protect the high-load corridor and shared concerns about any additional access points on Highway 625.

### May 2023

- ▶ Leduc County and Beaumont administrations discussed the City of Beaumont's forthcoming Innovation Park Area Structure Plan (ASP). At this time, Leduc County became aware of another potential direct access to Highway 625.

### August 2023

- ▶ Leduc County Council sent a letter to City of Beaumont Council to express concerns about additional access points.
- ▶ A copy of this letter was also provided to Brian Jean, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Rick Wilson, Minister of Indigenous Relations at meeting that took place on Aug. 15, 2023.

### September 2023

- ▶ On Sept. 15, Leduc County Council sent a letter to the Honourable Devin Dreeshen, Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors, about the protection of the Highway 625 high-load corridor. The letter also requested the Minister meet with Leduc County Council to discuss other transportation-related items.

### January 2024

- ▶ On Jan. 17, Leduc County Council and administration met with the Honourable Devin Dreeshen, Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors, to discuss the protection of the Highway 625 high-load corridor, Nisku Spine Road grant funding and the Vantage Pointe communal wastewater distribution system.

## Recent successes

- ▶ At the November 2023 Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) fall convention, Leduc County Council brought forward a resolution\* for the protection of high-load corridors.
- ▶ On Nov. 8, resolution 14-23 – Provincial High-Load Corridor Protection – was carried and RMA will work with the Government of Alberta to protect and coordinate the provincial high-load corridor network with Alberta municipalities.

*\*Resolutions are crucial to RMA's advocacy efforts. They allow members to have a direct role in the advocacy process by identifying priority issues that require action by other levels of government.*

*Resolutions are typically directed toward the provincial or federal government, and seek changes to legislation, regulations or policy, address funding or program issues, or encourage alternative policy approaches related to a specific rural municipal issue or concern.*

## Ongoing actions

- ▶ Work with RMA to advocate for the protection of the provincial high-load corridor network.
- ▶ Advocate for the province to protect the provincial high-load corridor network.



# Nisku Spine Road funding

## Background

Leduc County is home to the Nisku Business Park, which is located just south of Edmonton in Alberta. Together, the Nisku and Leduc business parks form the second largest energy manufacturing industrial park in North America and the largest in Canada.

Nisku Spine Road is a north-south roadway in Leduc County that supports the Nisku Business Park, Edmonton International Airport (YEG), the cities of Edmonton, Leduc and Beaumont and surrounding region. The road is designed to accommodate oversized and over-dimensional vehicles in and out of Nisku and provides an alternate route from the City of Edmonton through Nisku to communities south of Leduc County.

Once complete, the road will run from 41 Avenue SW in Edmonton south to 65 Avenue in the City of Leduc.

Currently, Nisku Spine Road consists of four paved lanes that run from 41 Avenue SW in Edmonton south to Township Road 510 in Leduc County. Two paved lanes continue south from Township Road 510 to Airport Road. There is one gravel section of Nisku Spine Road remaining, which runs from Allard Avenue to 65 Avenue in the City of Leduc.

Leduc County is advocating to increase Nisku Spine Road from two lanes to four paved lanes from Township Road 510 to Airport Road.

## Timeline

### June 2022

- ▶ Council directed administration to advocate for funding to increase Township Road 510 to Airport road from two lanes to four lanes.

### September 2023

- ▶ The design for the section of the Nisku Spine Road between Allard Avenue, Leduc and Township Road 500 (65 Avenue, Leduc) is underway, being led by the City of Leduc. Since this is a boundary road, this project will be cost-shared 50/50 between the City of Leduc and the County.

### January 2024

- ▶ On Jan. 17, Leduc County Council and administration met with the Honourable Devin Dreeshen, Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors, to discuss the protection of the Highway 625 high-load corridor, Nisku Spine Road grant funding and the Vantage Pointe communal wastewater distribution system.

## Recent successes

- ▶ In 2024, Leduc County and the City of Leduc will partner to pave the last gravel section of Nisku Spine Road, which runs from Allard Avenue to 65 Avenue in the City of Leduc.
  - ▶ This section of road will cost **\$3.2 million** to complete, which will be split equally between both municipal partners.
- ▶ The completion of this section of road will:
  - ▶ Reduce traffic on Airport Road and the Airport Road interchange by connecting 65 Avenue to the new interchange.
  - ▶ Provide an additional connection to Edmonton International Airport (YEG).
  - ▶ Improve access to the Saunders Lake area.
- ▶ In 2024, Leduc County will complete a four-lane design for Nisku Spine Road from Township Road 510 to Airport Road. The estimated costs to increase this section of road from two lanes to four lanes is **\$38 million**. Once designs are complete, Leduc County will look to partner with the Government of Alberta to complete this project.

- ▶ Anticipated long-term economic benefits associated with the development on adjacent vacant lands include:
  - ▶ A GDP impact ranging from \$1.9 billion to \$3.8 billion.
  - ▶ 16,340 to 32,680 person-years of construction employment.
  - ▶ A labour income impact ranging from \$1.2 billion to \$2.3 billion.
  - ▶ \$136 million to \$271.9 million in production taxes.

### Ongoing actions

- ▶ Investigate grant funding opportunities to increase Nisku Spine Road from two lanes to four lanes from Township Road 510 to Airport Road in Leduc County.



# Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF)

## Background

The Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) grant will be replaced by the Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF) grant beginning in the 2024-25 fiscal year. While the *Local Government Fiscal Framework Act* establishes some aspects of how the LGFF will look, the Government of Alberta is engaging Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) and Alberta Municipalities to develop an allocation formula and approach to program design.

MSI has been a consistent source of funding for municipalities. On average, Leduc County received approximately \$5.7 million of funding annually through the MSI program. Once the LGFF program is in place, we are anticipating a drop from \$5.7 million to \$3 million annually.

## Timeline

### May 2022

- ▶ Leduc County administration attended an RMA Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF) member townhall.

### June 2022

- ▶ Leduc County completed a LGFF engagement survey that was provided by the Government of Alberta.

## Ongoing actions

- ▶ On hold until the funding allocation formula is released by the Government of Alberta.

# Vantage Pointe communal wastewater system

## Background

The Vantage Pointe country residential subdivision was approved and constructed with communal water distribution and wastewater collection systems. Water is hauled to the subdivision to a cistern, and wastewater is collected in a central holding tank and then hauled away. The original plan for the subdivision was to have a communal wastewater treatment system to allow the collected wastewater to be treated onsite.

Vantage Pointe submitted an application – first in 2014 and then re-submitted in 2016 – for the construction of a communal wastewater treatment plant to Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP).

Since 2014, Leduc County administration has been working with the Vantage Point Homeowners Association (HOA) to assist them with the approval of their communal wastewater treatment plant.

- ▶ In 2014, the HOA submitted an application under the Environment Protection and Enhancement Act for approval to treat domestic wastewater from the development and disperse it into the local wetland. This system was designed in conformance with the standards in effect in 2014.
- ▶ In Oct. 2017, after numerous design revisions, an email from AEP was delivered to the applicants stating a draft approval was complete and the final approval would be issued.
- ▶ Before the final approval could be issued, non-compliance issues arose with regard to *Water Act* approvals for stormwater management and wetland work for this project.
- ▶ A remediation proposal was submitted by the developers to satisfy the issues of concern, based on AEP requirements.
- ▶ Even though they are unrelated, AEP held the wastewater approval in abeyance until the stormwater management and wetland issues were addressed.
- ▶ After the two issues were separated, AEP then applied a new set of standards and requirements to the Vantage Pointe communal wastewater treatment plant. The redesign would require both increased expenses and operating costs.
- ▶ On July 3, 2020, the residents of Vantage Pointe submitted an appeal to the Alberta Environmental Appeal Board.
- ▶ The Appeal Board shared a decision on Jan. 28, 2022, agreeing with AEP's position that a decision had not been made on the application, and therefore, there was no decision that could be appealed.

## Timeline

### January 2024

- ▶ On Jan. 17, Leduc County Council and administration met with the Honourable Devin Dreeshen, Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors, to discuss the protection of the Highway 625 high-load corridor, Nisku Spine Road grant funding and the Vantage Pointe communal wastewater distribution system.

## Ongoing actions

- ▶ Continue to advocate for provincial funding for the construction of a wastewater collection and treatment system that will service the Vantage Pointe and Highlands subdivisions in Leduc County.
- ▶ Examine alternative options for wastewater treatment in Vantage Pointe.



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