



Survey March 2023

Thank you for all those that participated on our recent Survey and especially those that provided ideas and solutions.

This not only helps the Town but the Community as a whole and entrepreneurs.

The Town wanted to do the Survey for a number of reasons; to see if our strategic priorities were on track and to give you a voice. Hoping to hear what we are doing well and where we need to improve.

There are a few areas that the Town is not directly responsible for and act in an advocacy role. The Town of Eston and RM of Snipe Lake jointly fund many departments together; Recreation, Fire, Landfill, Cemetery and Library. Some are administered by the Town and other by the RM of Snipe Lake No.259.

In reviewing the survey comments, the comments can be broken into the following areas which are have summarized below.

Health

Comments from the Survey

Numerous instances highlighted the requirement for either a full-time physician in Eston or a doctor who can be available from Monday to Friday, as well as the sporadic availability of laboratory and X-ray facilities.

One individual proposed a potential solution: Eston has a couple of residents in medical school, perhaps, we could persuade them to establish a practice here by extending financial assistance until they finish their university education. All of them are beneficiaries of Dr. Holmes Scholarships. We should take an active role in retaining our laboratory. Without a lab, there can be no doctor. Perhaps Karen Serfas could assist in hiring a nurse practitioner to work alongside and aid her.

Comments from Town / RM Snipe Lake No. 259 (Administrated by the RM)

The Eston and District Health Care Committee exists to observe and comment on the health services provided to the community as provided by Saskatchewan Health Association (SHA). Many of the comments expressed in the survey are echoed by the committee and
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have been and will be expressed to SHA through our bi-monthly meetings and communication on a timely basis in the interim. SHA reminds us that we are “better off” than many communities who have even more severe shortages and in some cases no doctor or nurse practitioner coverage at all. The committee would love to have a full-time doctor covering Eston and community but recognize that the coverage received through the rotation sent by Rosetown is meeting many needs in the community.

SHA is using a “hub and spoke” model for providing services to Eston Lab. This means that staff members are sent from Kindersley to Eston 4 days a week. A local staff member provides service on Fridays. The committee has expressed the advantage of people who reside locally being employed for the lab but SHA has, for their own reasons which include test results and coverage flexibility) are committed to the hub and spoke service delivery model. We are pleased to agree that staffing levels available to Eston have improve and the stability of service at the Lab/X-Ray have improved.

As suggestions or ideas come forth (such as a Medical intern) they are discussed with SHA as to whether they would work in this situation. The ever-changing health care field requires that every such innovative approach to health care be investigated and the health committee will continue to be vigilant in this effort. We believe that a cooperative approach with SHA, identifying our needs and concerns and working with the organization in working towards solutions, is the best approach.

Infrastructure

Comments from the Survey

There were a number of complaints on streets, sidewalks and back alleys.

As well as concerns regarding the water breaks, sewer lines and the deteriorating infrastructure.

It was alluded to that there is no long-term strategy and need to secure funds.

The many abandoned houses in town are beyond the point of repair and should be condemned, as well as unkept yards and buildings.

Comments from the Town

The Town of Eston has a strategic plan in place for infrastructure, equipment, and other projects, including sidewalk and pavement repairs. Over the last five years, funding has been allocated for sewer line improvements, and the town is pleased to report that it is now 80% complete.

The council remains committed to replacing sidewalks and has allocated \$15,000 each year to adhere to its policy.

The council has also dedicated \$100,000 annually to repairing the pavement, which will have a noticeable impact throughout the community.

Regarding run-down buildings and houses, if the town comes into possession of such properties, they are typically demolished, and the lots are cleared.

To encourage new businesses, the town has developed an incentive program.

The back alleys will receive attention this year, as communicated in the March 2023 Gopher Bites

Local Businesses / Services / Growth

Comments from the Survey

Also noted, to find a way to encourage businesses to invest in large, vacant properties such as the old hospital, bakery, etc.

There was a general dissatisfaction expressed regarding empty buildings on Main St. People would like to see more services, including a hardware store, additional restaurants, and other amenities.

Numerous comments were made regarding the new Coop Store, with some expressing disappointment that it offers less variety than the old store.

Participants suggested providing services to help elderly individuals stay in their homes longer. One proposal involved creating a list of services to assist with maintenance, such as grass cutting, window washing, hedge trimming, and transportation. Additionally, it was suggested to allow individuals under the age of 18 to offer assistance without requiring a business license.

A couple of individuals commented on the lack of police presence in the town.

There was a desire expressed for more community events. Participants felt that younger generations, in particular, have missed out on traditional events such as church suppers, street dances, and parades, and are hoping for their return.

The lack of affordable rental options was a concern raised by participants.

Comments from the Town

The Town of Eston recognizes the importance of growth and business and offer tax incentives for new businesses.

There are a number of events in town over the course of the year. There are a few listed below and may be missing some.

Annual events in Eston include Ladies Night Out in April, June Summer kickoff event, Eston Rodeo, July 1st Canada Day events at the museum, fowl suppers in season, Bizarre Bazaar, Christmas in November, a number of bonspiels, hockey and curling tournaments and skating carnival in season as well as a host of other special events throughout the year.

Recreation

Comments from the Survey

There were numerous suggestions for improving the community, such as;

- adding walking trails both indoor and outdoor
- dog park
- more recreation options for adults
- splash park
- pickleball
- basketball courts
- workshops for crafts and other activities
- indoor pool
- boy and girl scouts' programs
- group fitness classes
- skateboarding
- Christmas tree lighting event
- baseball academy
- recreational activities for older teens
- more events like the Summer Kickoff
- sewing, crafts, cooking, and board games

Additionally, there were requests for day camps during the summer and school holidays, improved soccer programs that include games with other towns, and attracting other activities to the complex such as yoga, gymnastics, and martial arts, workshops, seminars, improving the grassy area and eating area at Henry Hamilton Park, providing better facilities for babies and toddlers at the pool, and starting walking groups for various ages at the complex.

Items that the community would like to see improved; Pool, Henry Hamilton Park, Ball Diamonds and Bowling

Comments from the Town

As we commenced planning for this year's projects, we incorporated a number of tasks such as unveiling a pool proposal to the community, administering upkeep to the park by fixing equipment and watering, revamping the ball diamonds, and enhancing the appearance of the campground.

The Council instructed the Recreation Director to concentrate on devising strategies for improving the bowling alley and fostering endeavors linked to arts and culture to expand the programming.

The responsibility for managing recreational activities and other events does not solely lie with the Town, but rather with the community as a whole. We welcome you to start a program you are passionate about and we will do our best to support your efforts.

Other

Various Comments from the Survey

Taxes

- Despite being heavily taxed for upgrading and improving our property, some individuals are allowed to store junk and cars in their backyards without consequence.
- Compared to larger cities such as Saskatoon, Medicine Hat, and Calgary, our taxes are notably higher.

TOWN: The Town set the Mill rate based on reviewing the budget and ensuring the needs of the community are met, the mill rate is on the Taxable assessment.

The Town does not assess the properties, this is done by SAMA. For more information see a eston.ca/assessments/

The Town of Eston with the population of 972 can not be compared to the above mentioned cities. This is not a true comparison.

- Families requiring more frequent garbage and recycling pickups should have access to additional collection days.

TOWN: You may ask for another bin at an additional charge.

- Decisions concerning the landfill and other municipal projects can significantly impact taxpayers financially, including the cost of utilities and taxes.

TOWN: In the Town, decisions are made through the Council, which operates in the best interest of the community. Each decision is thoroughly researched and scrutinized. As with other cities and towns, costs have been on the rise in various areas such as policing, office supplies, utilities, materials, and insurance. Despite these increases, Council was able to keep the overall tax increase at a manageable level, with some taxpayers seeing an increase of up to \$100 in 2022.

- Our Communities in Bloom group does an excellent job of maintaining the town's appearance, and we should continue to support their efforts.
TOWN: We appreciate our active CIB group and support them where we can. We hope more volunteers join.
- Instead of offering incentives for new construction, the town should focus on attracting businesses and not disadvantage existing units.
TOWN: We would be more than happy to hear any suggestions on how to attract new business.
- Crime, drug use, and noise from barking dogs are issues that need to be addressed.
TOWN: We are trying to deal with what is within our control.
- The Plus 50 program caters to seniors, but the town could consider implementing services for all age groups, such as a Kid sport program for children from low-income families.
TOWN: Yes, we have kidsport funding.

If you would like to discuss anything further or have suggestions please feel free to reach out to myself or Council.

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