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## Can Red Deer River satisfy all water needs?

By LANA MICHELIN Advocate staff

East Central Alberta's tiny population can't justify the size of the water allocation being sought from the **Red Deer River**, says the mayor of a Sylvan Lake summer village.

Here we are, seeing a whole lot more (**river**) water disappear, said Toby Lampard, mayor of Norglenwold, who attended an open house in **Red Deer** on Thursday on the proposed East Central water project. Lampard is concerned that the rapidly-growing Town of Sylvan Lake and its surrounding villages have no water allocation from the **Red Deer River**. They rely on well water.

By the time these communities get organized and apply for a water licence, Lampard is worried there won't be enough **Red Deer River** water left to allocate.

Meanwhile, the newly formed Shirley McClellan Regional Water Service Committee from the County of Stettler area is soliciting public opinion on its application for an interbasin water transfer from the **Red Deer River** to the Battle **River** to accommodate their pipeline project.

Their line would pump **Red Deer River** water treated in Stettler to communities such as Halkirk and Consort for domestic, farm and industrial use. Another line, overseen by the 12/21 Water Commission, would take treated water to residents of Mirror, Bashaw and Ferintosh.

Some 11,000 East Central Albertans, who have inadequate, poor quality water from wells and dugouts, were calculated to live in the vicinity of a proposed pipelines yet the water allocation being sought is for up to 50,000 people in 50 years.

Lampard doesn't believe the region's population is as large as 11,000 people now, or will grow as fast as 50,000 people in half a century.

Yet once this allocation is granted, the area would continue to hold the water rights, effectively taking that much **river** water out of commission for anyone else's use, said Lampard.

We in the west really have a problem, he added.

But Wayne Richardson, chair of the Shirley McClellan water committee, said East Central communities need decent water and have every right to apply for a pipeline.

The **Red Deer** area does not have a monopoly on water, he added.

While the area east of Stettler actually had more residents in 1927 than it does now, Richardson believes high house prices in more booming parts of the province have caused a repopulation of the area.

Many villages and towns in East Central Alberta are now holding their own and hoping for a population surge after securing a good water source.

Richardson doesn't believe the 50,000 person forecast is too optimistic, considering all the new subdivisions proposed for around Buffalo Lake, where Calgarians are purchasing hundreds of cottage lots.

Buffalo Lake is a real growth area. Probably half of our population will be around that lake, predicted Richardson.

The 30 people residents who attended the open house at the Capri Convention Centre heard the water allocation being sought is only 0.5 per cent of the **Red Deer River's** total flow. The pipelines would draw 7.8 million cubic metres of water annually from the

**Red Deer River.**

But this still worried Bev Servold of Pelican Point and Edith Pettie of **Red Deer**.

The women were disappointed that water conservation wasn't factored into the pipeline project. And Pettie questioned the wisdom of pulling more water out of the **river**, with glaciers melting and the possibility of more droughts.

But only three per cent of the **Red Deer River** comes from a glacial source ♦

Richardson said most comes from precipitation and snow melt.

If a major drought happened, he added that every community would be affected, regardless of allocation.

**Red Deer** resident Wayne Pander said his concerns were lifted after seeing information on the project. ♦I think these people have got every bit as much right to water as we have. ♦

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