

Big Lakes County

---

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**

**2020**





# BIG LAKES COUNTY

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to <b>Big Lakes County</b>	4
Big Lakes County's <b>Vision &amp; Mission</b>	6

### COUNCIL

Message from <b>The Reeve</b>	8
Your <b>Elected Representatives</b>	10

### ADMINISTRATION

Message from <b>The CAO</b>	12
Boards & <b>Committees</b>	14

### PUBLIC WORKS

Services	16
Waste <b>Management</b>	20
Utilities	22

### COMMUNITY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Agricultural <b>Services</b>	25
Fire <b>Services</b>	26
Economic <b>Development</b>	29
Bylaw <b>Enforcement</b>	30
Animal Care & <b>Control</b>	32
Grants	34

### PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Planning & <b>Development</b>	36
Mapping & <b>Geographics</b>	38
Family & Community <b>Support Services</b>	40

### CORPORATE SERVICES

<b>Taxation</b>	43
Financial Statements <b>Breakdown</b>	44

---

## WELCOME TO BIG LAKES COUNTY

---



Big Lakes County is a welcoming and thriving community. Situated just a few hours north of Alberta's major cities, our residents enjoy the freedom of the great outdoors. With a service area population of 12,731, Big Lakes expands over 13,942 square kilometers and neighbours the Town of High Prairie, Town of Swan Hills, East Prairie Métis Settlement, Gift Lake Métis Settlement, Peavine Métis Settlement, Driftpile First Nation, Kapawe'no First Nation, Sucker Creek First Nation, Whitefish River First Nation, and Swan River First Nation.

We are proud of our beautiful lakes, forests, and rolling countryside. We are equally proud of our diverse and talented workforce who have helped expand opportunities in Big Lakes. Our abundance of natural resources — oil and gas, agriculture, and forestry — continue to expand and strengthen our economy. We've also just scratched the surface in exploring opportunities in tourism, transportation and logistics, education, construction, health, retail, and information and communications technology. The possibilities are endless in Big Lakes for those with the vision to help see them grow.

Thank you for calling Big Lakes County home.

**BIG LAKES COUNTY  
OFFICES**

Photos left page.

Big Lakes  
County by A  
Thousand Words  
Photography

Photo right

Big Lakes  
County by A  
Thousand Words  
Photography



**High Prairie Administration**

5305-56 Street, Box 239  
High Prairie, AB T0G 1E0  
Ph: (780) 523-5955  
Fax: (780) 523-4227

**Kinuso Administration**

345 Centre St., Box 57  
Kinuso, AB T0G 1K0  
Ph: (780) 775-3570  
Fax: (780) 775-3571

**Joussard FCSS Office**

Ph: (780) 776-3811  
Fax: (780) 776-3821

**Kinuso FCSS Office**

Ph: (780) 775-3666  
Fax: (780) 775-3571

**ENILDA FCSS OFFICE**

Ph: (780) 523-5925  
Fax: (780) 523-5933

**FAUST FCSS OFFICE**

Ph: (780) 523-355-3896  
Fax: (780) 355-3000

**GROUARD FCSS OFFICE**

Ph: (780) 751-3806  
Fax: (780) 751-3807

**HIGH PRAIRIE FCSS OFFICE**

Ph: (780) 536-0062  
Fax: (780) 523-4902



---

## BIG LAKES COUNTY VISION & MISSION

---

### VISION

Building a Sustainable County.

More than 18,000 people live within Big Lakes County's municipal boundaries in independent communities – hamlets, towns, First Nations reserves, Métis Settlements, and acreages and farms. We are an expansive County with a diverse and skilled population because of our natural resource, harvesting, and manufacturing economy.

*"We'd heard great things about [Northern Alberta], its beauty, and the amazing fishing, The best part, aside from the stunning views, the one-of-a-kind camping, the extraordinary fishing, and the AH-mazing curly fries, was the people. Our fellow Albertans who call this part of our province "home." You can tell they cherish it and they're thrilled to show it off to those (like us) who've never had a chance to experience it. It's their little gem, and now we like to think it's ours too." ~ Karis Skelton*

People come here for a year, but they stay for a lifetime. They get hooked on the low-cost living, the outdoor lifestyle, the sense of community, lack of commute, and endless opportunities. They make BLC home.

### MISSION

Big Lakes County will endeavor to enhance our overall community by encouraging responsible development that supports our resource based industries, our agriculture base and the overall education of our people. This means investing in core services like infrastructure, communities, and other County services. Through Council policy and resolutions, we will promote responsible development, environmental security, positive Inter-Municipal relations, safety and work with the private, public and governmental partners.

In Big Lakes County, we raise Rhodes Scholars, paediatric surgeons, internationally acclaimed authors, hardworking farmers and oil patch workers, trailblazing business owners, and forestry innovators. We're home to dreamers and doers. Collaboration is our way of life; we are bold thinkers and together, we get things done. We believe in the rural Alberta advantage. Spend some time with us and you will too.

Photo top

Sunflowers by A  
Thousand Words  
Photography

Photo bottom

Rod Marx Farm by  
A Thousand Words  
Photography



## CORE VALUES

### BUILDING

#### *Diversifying the Economy*

Through Council's leadership, building, and diversifying Big Lakes County's economy and strengthening the County's role as a leader of rural municipalities.

### SUSTAINABILITY

#### *Continued Innovation*

Striving for sustainability in Big Lakes County by setting the stage for continued innovation, education, diversification, and good government.

### MUNICIPALITY

#### *Protecting the Future*

Maintaining the rural landscape in Big Lakes County by protecting agricultural resources and significant natural environments for future generations.



---

## MESSAGE FROM THE REEVE

♦  
*Ken Matthews*

---

Dear ratepayers:

On behalf of Council, I am pleased to present the 2020 Annual Report, which highlights growth, opportunity, and progress in our County and what we are working towards for 2021. Each of our projects is part of a larger story – how we are striving to accomplish Council’s vision of building a sustainable County.

I want to thank all County staff and my colleagues for their dedicated work over the past year. I also want to recognize the nearly 13,000 residents served by Big Lakes County that contribute to making our community a welcoming, inclusive environment for everyone and a place where we are proud to call home.

I am happy to report that Council has continued to build positive relationships with the provincial and federal government representatives in our region. Furthermore, we will continue to work cooperatively with the Town of High Prairie and the Town of Swan Hills, in addition to strengthening our regional partnerships with neighbouring First Nations and Métis Settlements.

The COVID-19 pandemic created an entirely new set of challenges in 2020 for not only our County but globally. In March, we set up an Emergency Coordination Centre to ensure that the County’s response and actions were being communicated accurately to our residents. As we move into 2021, our Council and staff will continue to monitor the pandemic and adapt our programs and services to safeguard the health of our community.

*We couldn’t talk about 2020 without highlighting all the essential workers who persevered and continue to provide essential services to our community. For that, we are all thankful.*

Over the past year, I have seen our community come together and support one another time after time. We will continue to see the effects of the pandemic in 2021. But, I know that our community spirit, resiliency, and determination will get us through any challenges that may present themselves.

Big Lakes County completed the Jousard Water Treatment Plant in 2020, which supplies the Hamlet of Jousard and the surrounding rural residents with a more reliable and sustainable water supply. The County was able to complete this project with the help of two grants: the Government of Canada's Clean Water Wastewater Fund, which contributed \$1.2 million, and the provincial government's Alberta Municipal Water/Wastewater Partnership grant, which contributed \$3.6 million to the development of the new site.

In February, we officially opened the Animal Care Facility, located behind the Administration Office in High Prairie. The County was able to use \$300,000 of the Municipal Sustainability Initiative, a provincial grant allocated through the Alberta Government, to build the facility. The County, the Town of High Prairie, and the High Prairie RCMP can now access this beautiful new facility.

The Big Lakes County Shop Solar Project commenced in October, with the primary objective of reducing the cost of the direct energy used by the County. The project was funded in part by the Municipal Climate Change Action Centre, a partnership of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and Rural Municipalities of Alberta. The County accessed over 41% of the money required through the Alberta Municipal Solar Program, offered through the MCCAC. Other grant funding was obtained for the project by the Federal Gas Tax fund.

*The County strived to improve our services, which helped expand our business and recreational opportunities in 2020. Through continued lobbying efforts made by Council and staff, the County received several provincial and federal grants totaling more than \$2 million to repair and upgrade our roads and bridges and expand our municipal initiatives.*

At Big Lakes County, we are committed to being financially stable for the future and are working diligently to identify savings and increase revenues with the community's needs in mind. Still, like any community, we also have our challenges. As we move into 2021, I am confident that our Council and staff will continue to keep things moving forward. As always, your feedback on how we can make the County better is greatly appreciated and will only make us stronger and more resilient moving forward.



KEN MATTHEWS  
Reeve

# ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Council

## COUNCIL

### Big Lakes County

More than 18,000 people live within Big Lakes County's municipal boundaries in independent communities – hamlets, towns, First Nations reserves, Métis Settlements, and acreages and farms. Big Lakes is made up of 1,213,056 hectares of land that is divided into 9 wards. Every four years, during the municipal election a councillor is elected in each ward.



**KEN MATTHEWS**

*Reeve*  
*Ward 3: Gilwood North/Triangle*  
Box 83 High Prairie, AB T0G 1E0  
Phone: 780-523-4073  
Cell: 780-523-7273



**DAVID MARX**

*Deputy Reeve*  
*Ward 1: Heart River/Salt Prairie*  
Box 814 High Prairie, AB T0G 1E0  
Phone: 780-523-2498  
Cell: 780-523-1420  
Email: ward1@biglakescounty.ca



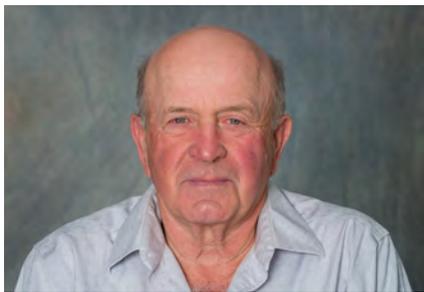
**FERN WELCH**

*Councillor*  
*Ward 2: Grouard*  
Box 157 Grouard, AB T0G 1C0  
Phone: 780-523-1077  
Email: ward2@biglakescounty.ca



**KEN KILLEEN**

*Councillor*  
*Ward 4: Kinuso*  
Box 204 Kinuso, AB T0G 1K0  
Phone: 780-775-2234  
Cell: 780-849-0645  
Email: ward4@biglakescounty.ca



**ROBERT NYGAARD**

*Councillor*  
*Ward 5: Faust*  
Box 128 Faust, AB T0G 0X0  
Phone: 780-355-2735  
Cell: 780-523-8391  
Email: ward5@biglakescounty.ca



**RICHARD SIMARD**

*Councillor*  
*Ward 6: Jousard*  
Box 246 Jousard, AB T0G 1J0  
Phone: 780-523-1812  
Email: ward6@biglakescounty.ca



**DONALD BISSELL**

*Councillor*

*Ward 7: Enilda/Big Meadow*

Box 179 Enilda, AB T0G 0W0  
 Phone: 780-523-2209  
 Cell: 780-523-7179  
 Email: ward7@biglakescounty.ca



**DON CHARROIS**

*Councillor*

*Ward 8: Banana Belt/HP East*

Box 1637 High Prairie, AB T0G 1E0  
 Phone: 780-523-4037  
 Cell: 780-523-8411  
 Email: ward8@biglakescounty.ca



**ANN STEWART**

*Councillor*

*Ward 9: Sunset House/Gilwood South*

Box 660 High Prairie, AB T0G 1E0  
 Phone: 780-523-2590  
 Cell: 780-523-7282  
 Email: ward9@biglakescounty.ca

---

BIG LAKES COUNTY

## MESSAGE FROM THE CAO



*Jordan Panasiuk*

---



Dear ratepayers:

I am proud to present Big Lakes County's 2020 Annual Report. Our Annual Report is an important document that provides transparency into where our revenue comes from and how those dollars contribute to services for the community. It is also an opportunity to reflect on the previous year and inform you of the many initiatives on the horizon for Big Lakes County.

*2020 is a special year for Big Lakes County. Twenty-five years ago, our community was successful in their bid for more autonomy from the Provincial Government by incorporating our community as the Municipal District of Big Lakes. That independent attitude still drives our organization today in our mission to create a more sustainable and vibrant municipality.*

Looking back, 2020 was a year that marked many accomplishments for Big Lakes County. The County finalized the comprehensive Intermunicipal Collaborative Framework Agreements with our surrounding rural municipalities and the towns of High Prairie and Swan Hills. These agreements lay out how we can work together today and establish the foundation of how we can expand joint services in the future.

Budget 2020 was a difficult one. Uncollectable linear and non-residential taxes posed challenges to the operating budgets of all rural municipalities. Together with Council, we responded by streamlining services, shifting our focus to maintaining existing infrastructure over building new, and in some circumstances, making difficult decisions to reduce services. Responsible fiscal management remains a top priority for Council to ensure that we can continue to

Photo top

Canola field by Michelle Olanski Photography



Photo bottom

Dog sledding by Michelle Olanski Photography

Big Lakes County also completed the construction of the new expanded Joussard Water Treatment Plant. Initiated in 2017, this Water Treatment Plant will supply critical additional capacity to the hamlet of Joussard to accommodate the increasing year-round residents and the influx of the hamlet's seasonal population.

Big Lakes County's 2020 focus for capital infrastructure has been centered on responsible asset management. With Council direction, our organizational team made significant progress in 2020 on developing a superior process and data to support responsible decision-making for our 300 million dollars worth of municipal capital assets.

*2020 is a milestone year and also one of the most challenging years for Big Lakes County. We saw a 1 in 100-year flood, the most impactful global pandemic of our lifetimes, never before seen drops in municipal revenue, significant downloading from senior levels of government all while being more disconnected than ever, created the perfect storm in 2020. Difficult times expose true character, and I am proud to be a part of an organization and community that is adaptable, innovative, and caring.*

Without exception, each year brings us new change, challenge, and opportunity. Looking back on 2020, I see where we have met change and overcome challenges making me confident that our resiliency as a community will continue to serve us well on the road ahead.

Sincerely,

JORDAN PANASIUK

Chief Administrative Officer





Photo top left

Big Lakes County by  
A Thousand Words  
Photography

Photo bottom left

"Fall trees" by Michelle  
Olanski Photography

Photo top right

Big Lakes County by  
A Thousand Words  
Photography



---

## BOARDS & COMMITTEES

---

*Big Lakes County's boards and committees play an important role in the operations of the County. Unlike Council, members of these bodies are appointed, not elected. Some of the boards and committees require members to meet specific qualifications, such as residency in the County, or have a specific area of expertise. But while each body differs in its area of responsibility and requirements for appointment, they all have one common requirement: they depend on citizens willing to serve their municipality.*



## EXTERNAL BOARDS & COMMITTEES

- Alberta CARE
- Barrhead Social Housing
- Big Lakes County Library Board
- Children's Resource Council
- Community Futures Lesser Slave Lake Region
- CHWC Community Partnership Committee
- FCSS Advisory Committee
- Golden Triangle Consortia
- Grouard/Peace River Trail Committee
- Heart River Housing
- High Prairie Aboriginal Interagency
- High Prairie Chamber of Commerce
- High Prairie Municipal Library Board
- High Prairie & District Regional Solid Waste Management Authority
- High Prairie Seed Cleaning Co-op
- Little Smoky Recreation
- Lesser Slave Lake Forest Resource Advisory Committee
- Lesser Slave Watershed Council
- Northern Alberta Elected Leaders
- Northern Lakes College Community Education Committee
- Peace Airshed Zone Association
- Peace Library System
- Peace Region Economic Development Alliance
- Smoky Applied Research & Demonstration Association
- Swan Hills Special Waste Liaison Committee
- Tolko Forest Resource Advisory Committee
- Northwest Species at Risk
- Water North Coalition

## TOWN OF HIGH PRAIRIE COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

- Fire Budget Review Committee
- High Prairie & District Recreation Board
- Library Budget Review Committee
- Recreation Budget Review Committee
- Recreation Masterplan Committee

## INTERNAL BOARDS & COMMITTEES

- Agricultural Service Board
- Assessment Review Board
- Emergency Management Committee
- Economic Development
- Finance Committee
- High Prairie Airport Committee
- Inter-Governmental Relations Committee
- Municipal Planning Commission
- Peavine Métis Settlement Agreement Committee
- Intermunicipal Subdivision and Development Appeal Board
- Weed & Pest Control Appeal Board

## INTER-MUNICIPAL COMMITTEES

- Town of High Prairie
- Town of Swan Hills
- Municipal District of Greenview
- Municipal District of Smoky River No. 130.
- Municipal District of Lesser Slave River
- Northern Sunrise County

---

## PUBLIC WORKS SERVICES

---

*Big Lakes County provides a variety of operational services year around. The following information is intended to provide a glimpse into the daily operations of our County services.*

### PRIVATE DRIVEWAY SNOWPLOWING & GRADING

Private driveway snowplowing and private driveway grading is provided to residents who have entered into an agreement for these services.

In 2020, grading and snowplowing services were provided on a cost recovery basis for a minimum charge of \$74.00 plus GST. The total number of driveways snowplowed and graded can be seen in [Fig. 1](#) on the top right.

### GRADER BEAT HOURS

The County has eight grader beats including two contract graders:

- Banana Belt/Snipe Lake -- contracted out
- Kenzie/Gilwood
- High Prairie South West
- Winagami/Salt Prairie
- Contract Big Meadow/Grouard

- High Prairie South East/Enilda
- Jossard/Faust
- Kinuso

The number of hours for each grader beat can be seen in [Fig. 2](#) on the middle right. The variances in unit hours are due to weather, the number of dust controlled areas, and kilometres

### DUST CONTROL APPLICATIONS

The County applies calcium chloride dust control at its own cost along gravel roads within the Hamlets as per the Dust Control Policy. Rural residents within the County may also apply to have 150m of dust control applied in front of their residence.

This service was provided once last year at a subsidized cost of \$440.00. The graph in [Fig. 3](#) on the bottom right indicates the number of applications received from rural residents in the last five years. In 2019 the County applied 7.16 km of dust control for rural residents.

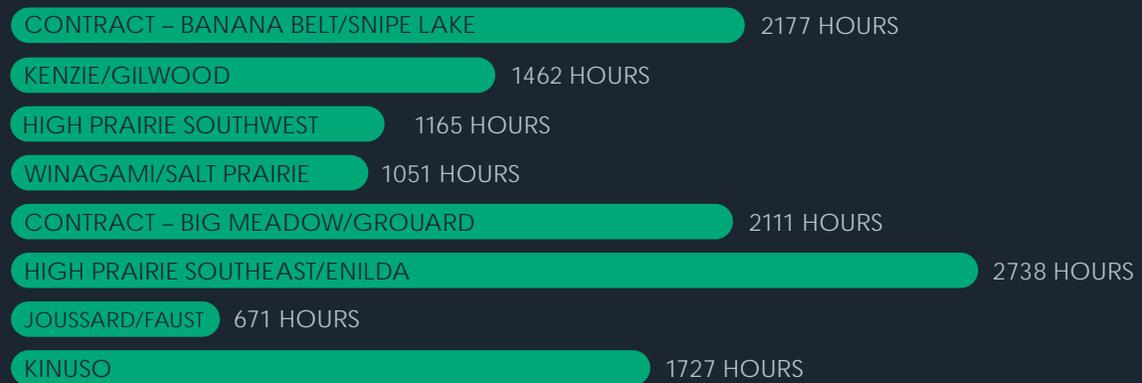
## PRIVATE DRIVEWAY SNOWPLOWING & GRADING

Fig. 1



## GRADER BEAT HOURS

Fig. 2



## DUST CONTROL APPLICATIONS

Fig. 3

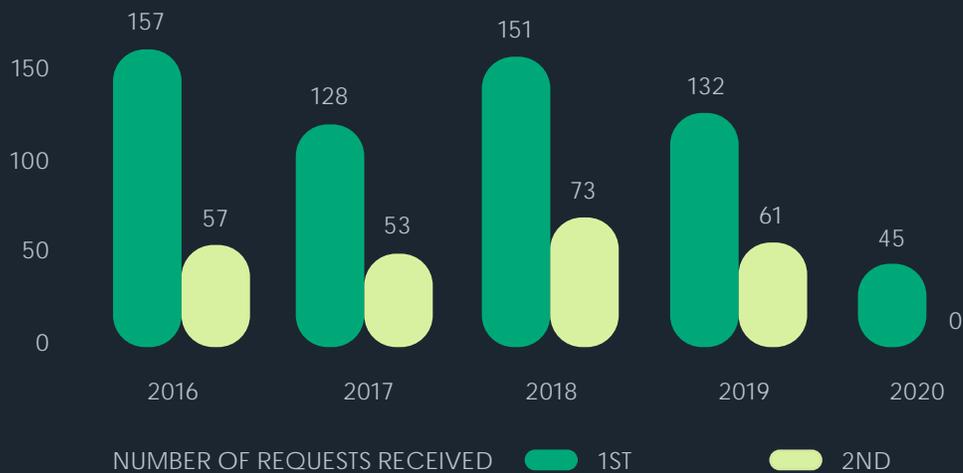


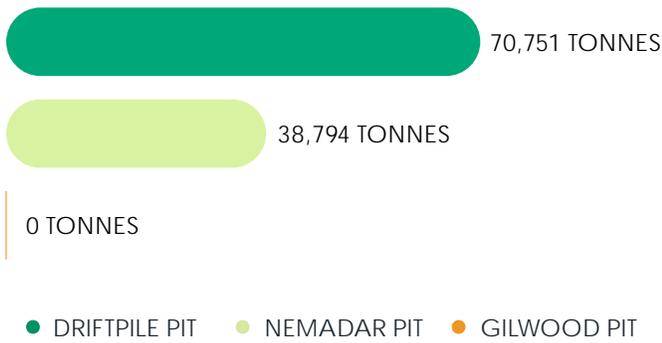


Photo right

Big Lakes County's  
2016 Fly in  
Breakfast by A  
Thousand Words  
Photography

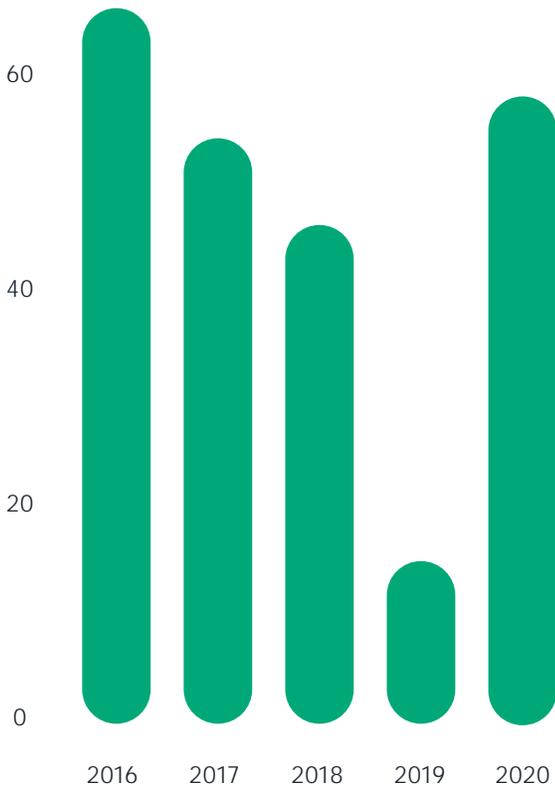
## QUANTITY OF GRAVEL PLACED ON COUNTY ROADS

The County is continually working on securing aggregate resources for future road maintenance. The below shows the tonnes of gravel placed on county roads in 2020 and the gravel pit that the gravel was hauled from.



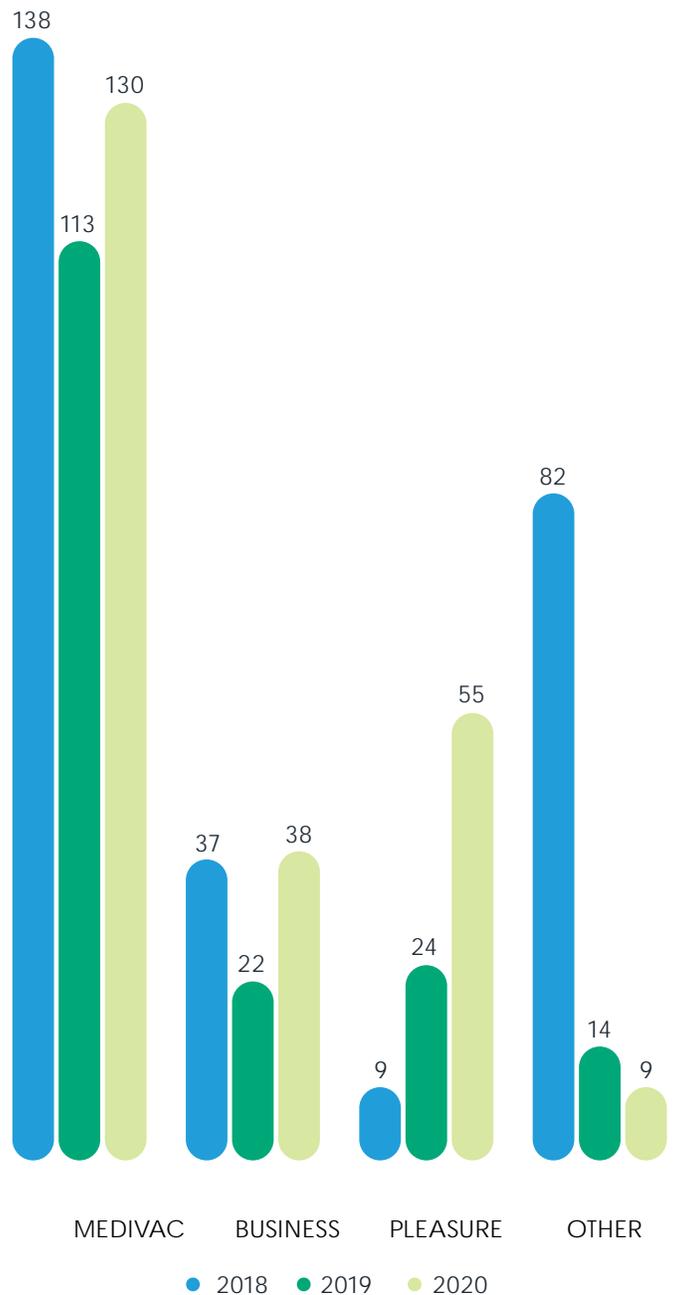
## NUMBER OF FLIGHTS RECORDED AT THE SWAN HILLS AERODROME

The Swan Hills Aerodrome, located approximately 4km south of the Town of Swan Hills, is under the management and control of Big Lakes County. This Aerodrome is a Self-Register Aerodrome as this is an unmanned facility. Pilots are asked to record their flight details on the Airport Register.



## NUMBER AND TYPE OF FLIGHTS RECORDED AT THE HIGH PRAIRIE AERODROME

In 2017, Big Lakes County took over ownership of the High Prairie Aerodrome located 2km south of the Town of High Prairie. This Aerodrome is also a Self-Register Aerodrome. In 2019, major upgrades were completed at the airport including a runway extension, runway overlay, lighting upgrades and an overlay of the access road. The High Prairie airport is equipped with an all weather runway measuring at 3933 ft long by 75 ft wide.



---

## PUBLIC WORKS WASTE MANAGEMENT

---

**TOTAL WASTE  
TONNAGE  
RECEIVED FROM  
THE TRANSFER  
STATIONS AND  
REGIONAL  
LANDFILL**  
= 9,705

*Public Works administers Waste Management, which includes a Regional Landfill and seven Waste Transfer Stations with a full time Landfill Manager to accept your waste and recycling.*

*The Landfill Manager reports to the High Prairie & District Regional Solid Waste Management Authority (HPDRSWMA) and the Director of Public Works, and ensures that the policies and objectives of the Waste Authority are implemented.*

### ALBERTA RECYCLING ANNOUNCES EXPANDED ELECTRONIC RECYCLING PILOT PROJECT IN BIG LAKES COUNTY

In September, the provincial government approved a two-year \$43 million expanded electronics recycling pilot project managed by the Alberta Recycling Management Authority (ARMA). The pilot will collect 24,600 tonnes of recycled electronics throughout the province that were not previously accepted at Transfer Stations or Regional Landfills.

The HPDRSWMA has partnered with ARMA to bring this pilot to all Transfer Stations and Regional Landfills in Big Lakes County, the Town of High Prairie, Gift Lake Metis Settlement, and East Prairie Metis Settlement at no additional cost to residents.

Through this pilot, residents can now recycle electronics, including audio visual equipment, telecom, cell phone and wireless devices, electronic gaming equipment, small home appliances, portable power tools, toys, musical instruments, and solar panels. With the data that ARMA will gather from this project, they will provide the Government of Alberta with critical information that will help them determine the best course of action to modernize the electronics recycling program for the long-term.

### EXAMPLES OF PRODUCTS YOU CAN RECYCLE

#### Small Appliances

- Clock
- Fan
- Hair dryer
- Heater
- Iron
- Microwave
- Residential Air Conditioner
- Toaster
- Shaver
- Vacuum

#### Audio Visual

- CD Player
- Clock Radio
- Digital Camera
- DVD Player
- Headphones
- Satellite Dish
- Satellite Radio
- Speakers

#### Telecom Devices

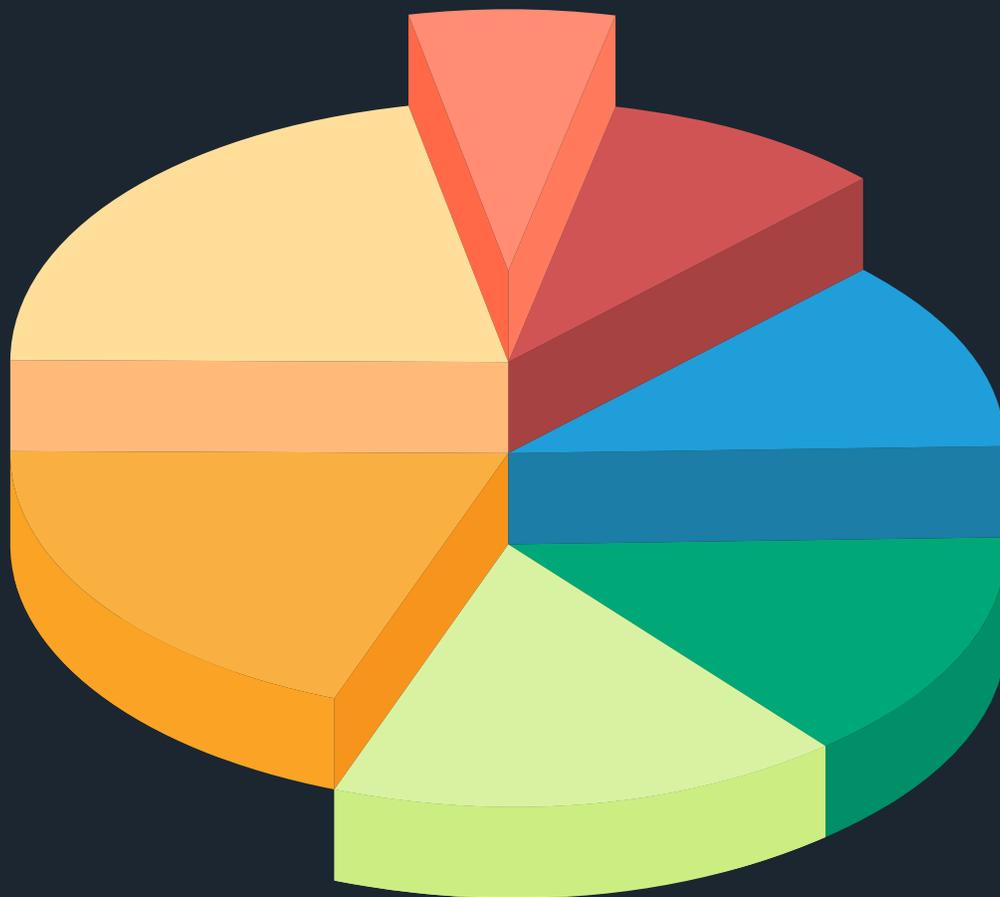
- Answering Machine
- Cell Phone
- Landline Phone
- Modem and Router
- Pager
- Satellite Phone
- Speakerphone

#### Power & Air Tools

- Drill
- Grinder
- Miter Saw
- Nail Gun
- Residential Air Compressor
- Sharpener
- Shop Vacuum
- Skillsaw
- Table Saw

PERCENTAGE OF WASTE RECEIVED FROM THE TRANSFER STATIONS

Fig. 4



- ENILDA
- HEART RIVER
- BANANA BELT
- GROUARD
- JOUSSARD
- GILWOOD
- KINUSO/FAUST

---

## PUBLIC WORKS UTILITIES

---

*The Utility department administers water and wastewater services to five hamlets, nine rural areas, one water co-op and two First Nations. In 2020, the County assumed ownership of the Westend Water Co-op.*

*The department has nine full time staff consisting of the Director of Public Works, Utilities Manager, Utilities Foremen/Operator, Utilities Coordinator, and five full time Utilities Operators.*

### JOUSSARD WATER TREATMENT PLANT

In February, the Joussard Water Treatment Plant, which will supply the Hamlet of Joussard and the surrounding rural residents with a more reliable and sustainable water supply, became fully operational.

The County was able to complete this project with the help of two grants: the Government of Canada's Clean Water Wastewater Fund, which contributed \$1.2 million, and the provincial government's Alberta Municipal Water/Wastewater Partnership grant, which contributed \$3.6 million to the development of the new site.

The project involved building a larger reservoir to meet the immediate needs of residents and allow for future growth. This was a huge priority as the old plant had a difficult time keeping up to the water demands when the population of Joussard increased in the summer. The new water treatment plant process is also better equipped to handle the seasonal fluctuation in water quality and will provide better removal of organics, meeting the Canadian Drinking Water Guidelines more effectively.

Lastly, residents will not only have better access to the truck fill station, but the new location is also equipped with a septage receiving station for RV's to empty their septic system. This

will be beneficial to the large number of campers who visit the community each year.

On February 21, 2020, the Joussard Water Treatment Plant and Reservoir Expansion Project received an Award of Excellence at the Consulting Engineers of Alberta Showcase Awards for M2 Engineering's innovative leadership in the design of the facility.

### REMAINING 2020 INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

- Triangle Area Water Extension (design stage)
- Prairie Echo Waterline Expansion (design stage)
- Grouard Water (conceptual design stage)

### 2020 REVIEW

- 10 curb stop repairs
- 3 water mainline repairs
- 2 sewer line repairs
- 5 flush point installed/replaced
- 106 water meter installations/replacements
- 7 rural Installations
- 14kms of sewer mains flushed
- 9 lift stations cleaned
- 500+ water samples taken from 11 systems
- 110 fire hydrants flushed and inspected twice
- 1 fire hydrant replaced

Photo right

Big Lakes County's Water Operator, Fay Baker at the new Jousard Water Treatment Plant.

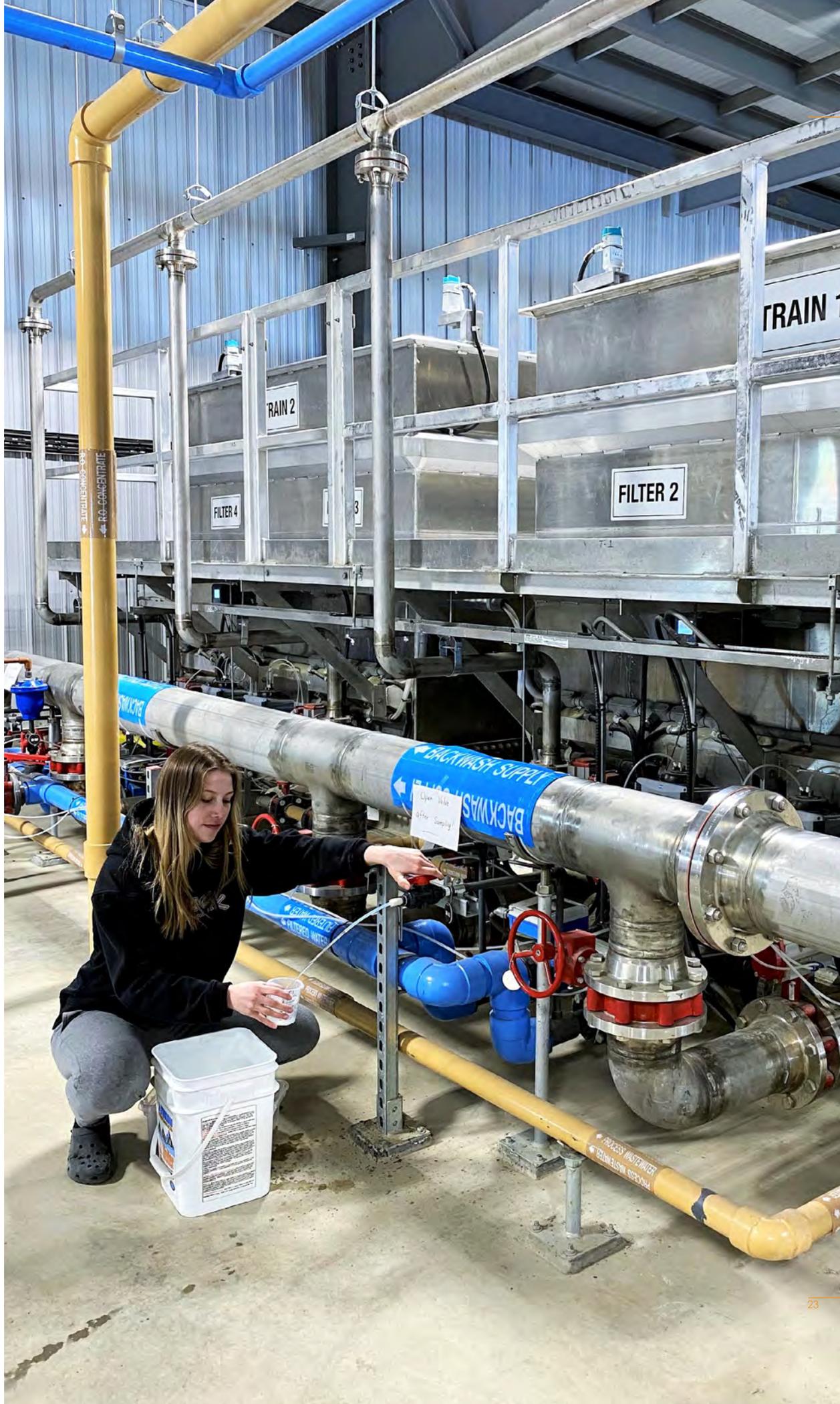




Photo left  
"Meneice Family  
Farm" by A  
Thousand Words  
Photography

---

## COMMUNITY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES

### AGRICULTURAL SERVICES

---

*Big Lakes County Agricultural Services aims to improve and support the economic viability and vibrancy of the agricultural industry within our County.*

*This is done through the implementation of Agricultural Service Board programs and priorities, participation in provincial agricultural surveys, the support and delivery of sustainable agriculture education, collaboration through extension organizations, and meeting municipal responsibilities through the Weed Control Act, Agricultural Pest Act, and Soil Conservation Act.*

The County conducts agricultural pest surveys annually for fusarium, clubroot, virulent blackleg, and grasshopper. In 2020, 162 canola fields were checked for clubroot with three positive findings. While this is good news, please scout your fields for clubroot as we cannot control it if we are unaware of it. As well, 50 fields were surveyed for fusarium, and although no incidence was found, we encourage producers to be diligent in monitoring for this disease. Test your seed before planting and monitor your fields for signs of fusarium.

Additionally, Big Lakes County participated in the provincial pea leaf weevil, pea root rot, peace regional clubroot spore surveillance initiative, and bertha armyworm surveys. These surveys contribute to ensuring the County can recognize issues early, protecting market access for our producers in Big Lakes County and around the province.

In 2020, Big Lakes County became a partner in the Alberta Land Use Services (ALUS) Program. ALUS helps farmers and ranchers produce ecosystem services on their land. These include cleaner air, cleaner water, flood mitigation, carbon

sequestration, species at risk habitat and support for native bees and pollinators. Two projects were approved in 2020, for a total of 310 acres being enrolled into the program. These projects will be completed in the 2021 season.

We would like to thank our residents for dealing with their weed infestations diligently - weeds are everyone's concern, and it takes a team effort to get them under control. In 2020, there were 353 active private land infestations; an additional 11 cases were closed from the previous season. Although this is a significant step towards ensuring our fields are agriculturally productive and aesthetically pleasing, we need to remain vigilant in our control efforts.

The Agricultural Service Board is focused on providing quality services and assistance to our ratepayers. The following programs were administered in 2020: vegetative control, spray exemption program, pest management, agricultural equipment rental program, weed and pest inspection, identification services, shelterbelt program, veterinary services incorporated, ALUS, and the wolf hunting incentive.

---

## COMMUNITY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES FIRE SERVICES

---

*2020 was a year of challenges for Big Lakes County Fire Services, as it was for so many. The 70 dedicated volunteers in our five fire districts, Enilda, Grouard, Jousard, Faust, and Kinuso, proved their level of service and devotion to Fire Services through resiliency and perseverance when all training and meetings were put on hold due to COVID-19. Besides answering the call when emergencies arise, community involvement and fire hall activities are a huge part of a firefighter's role.*

In conjunction with the fire departments from the Town of Swan Hills and the Town of High Prairie, Big Lakes County Fire Services responded to 180 emergency calls. The towns and our fire districts cover a large portion of the County, and in 2020, we saw a significant evolvement in these groups working together.

Fire Services prioritized training in 2020. At the beginning of the year, Fire Chief David Sturgeon partnered with the High Prairie Fire Department and organized group training exercises at the Town's training facility. Cleanup, organization, and standardization of fire halls were also a priority for 2020, with purchases of equipment to standardize apparatus and bunker gear storage. Fire Services also reviewed and made changes to the Call Response Plan to ensure that appropriate resources are being deployed to every emergency scene.

In July, Fire Chief David Sturgeon accepted the Protective Services Manager position with the Peace Regional District, and in September, the County hired Jason Cottingham as the new Fire Chief. In November, Luci Martinson was hired as the Deputy Fire Chief.

In December, Big Lakes County began working with Sea

Hawk Services to get their unbiased, expert opinion on how Big Lakes Fire Services can improve fiscally and legislatively. Sea Hawk provided the County with two documents, an Executive Summary and the Big Lakes County Fire Services Vision 2021 and Beyond. Both documents outline many areas of improvement and areas where we can find monetary savings and general improvements to the overall Fire Services for ratepayers.

Fire Services is committed to ensuring the safety of all County residents and visitors, and we're dedicated to enhancing our firefighters knowledge and capabilities for the future. We are looking forward to another year of growth in 2021.

### EMERGENCY RESPONSE CALLS

- Motor Vehicle Collision - 76
- Outdoor Fire - 27
- Structure Fire - 24
- False Alarm - 20
- Other - 11
- Vehicle Fire - 9
- Water Rescue - 6
- EMS - 4
- Electrical Hazard - 3

Photo right  
Big Lakes County  
Fire Services by A  
Thousand Words  
Photography





Photo left  
Shaw's Point  
Golden Walleye  
in 2018 by A  
Thousand Words  
Photography

---

## COMMUNITY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

---

*Big Lakes County Economic Development Authority (EDA) entered its fifth year in 2020. The committee includes Chair and Councillor Robert Nygaard, Reeve Ken Matthew, and Councillor Don Charrois.*

In January 2020, the EDA received the Community and Regional Economic Support (CARES) Funding through the Provincial Government. This two-year grant is 50 percent funded by the Province and 50 percent funded by the County. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 and the lack of tax revenue from the economic downturn in the oil and gas sector, the County had to end the CARES program. Removing this program from the County budget saved the County roughly \$160,000 to help maintain other essential services within our region.

With many businesses being affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic, the County will continue to be a liaison for businesses in our region and provide them with information on Provincial and Federal grant opportunities and resources.

The following are the EDA's initiatives were completed by the County in 2020:

- Utilized our social media platforms to release information on the Class 1 Driver Grant, business programs, Provincial resources such as Bizconnect, Community Futures, Alberta Small Business Resources, Business Link, and Agriculture Job Connector, Provincial COVID-19 loan and grant opportunities, and the County Grant Writing Assistance Program.
- County Firefighter Driver Training Program will help our local firefighters drive fire truck apparatus and gain another trade skill.
- Planning and Development shortened the development contract to make it easier for future developers.
- Tax Instalment Payment Plan (TIPP) was introduced to allow residents and businesses to pay property taxes monthly instead of one payment in June.
- Residents can now pay by e-transfer for certain payments to allow for easier, quicker, and alternative methods of payment.
- The County applied a proposal to host a possible plant protein warehouse.

---

## COMMUNITY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES BYLAW ENFORCEMENT

---

*The Bylaw Enforcement Officer enforces County bylaws that Big Lakes County Council has implemented. Where the ratepayer's activities or property conditions don't meet acceptable County standards, the Bylaw Enforcement Officer provides education, warnings, and inspections and applies penalties if need be.*

Bylaw Enforcement works with ratepayers throughout County to ensure that basic community standards are maintained to a reasonable level. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, Big Lakes County could not go ahead with the Bike Helmet Safety Program for 2020. The Bylaw Enforcement Officer is responsible for enforcing bylaws to deal with common complaints such as:

1. Unsightly Properties in hamlets and country residential subdivisions, which can include uncut long grass and or weeds, garbage storage, the presence of wrecked and or dismantled vehicles, including vehicles that are inoperable and or not registered and insured on the ratepayers properties. BYLAW N0. 06-2019
2. Recreational vehicle parking in the hamlets. Up to two RV's can be placed on a hamlet residential lot with a development permit provided the lot coverage of 40% or maximum coverage of 371 m2 whichever is greater is not exceeded. LAND USE BYLAW SECTION 6.34.2
3. Development permits are required for all new development. This includes new accessory buildings/structures such as a shed (larger than 107.6 square feet in size), sea can or deck. Farm buildings, such as barns and granaries, and most agricultural operations are exempt from requiring a development permit. LAND USE BYLAW SECTION 3.1,3.2



---

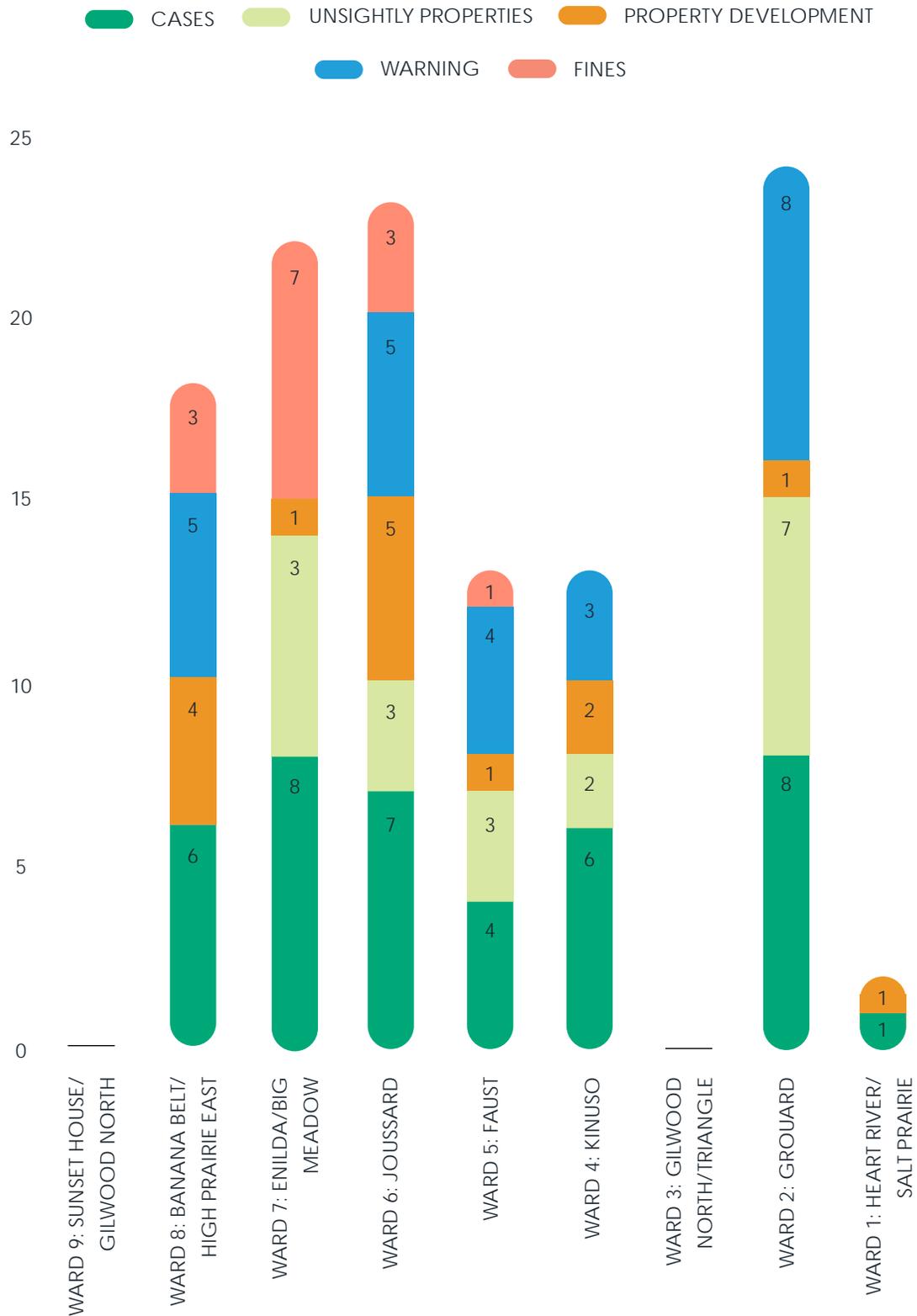
### **Bylaw Enforcement participates in a number of programs in the community throughout the year including our Bike Helmet Safety Program!**

If our County Bylaw Officer, Public Works staff, or Peace Officers spot your child wearing a helmet while riding a bike, scooter, or rollerblades, they will receive a coupon for a FREE treat to redeem at any of the following stores:

- Korner Kitchen, Kinuso
  - Superette, Joussard
  - Jerry's store, Joussard
  - Bigway Foods, Grouard
  - Ferguson's Market, Grouard
  - Bay Shore resort, Faust
  - Faust General store
  - O's Treats, High Prairie
-

# BYLAW ENFORCEMENT FILE TYPES GENERATE PER WARD

Fig. 5



## COMMUNITY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES ANIMAL CARE & CONTROL

Big Lakes County's Animal Care & Control program serves the community by enforcing the Animal Control Bylaw and the Livestock Bylaw. This typically means responding to complaints about animals at-large, being neglected, abandoned, nuisance animals, and sometimes dangerous animals. Animal Care & Control also assist residents in identifying the best animal husbandry practices and assists residents with problems they may be experiencing with their pets.

### ANIMAL CARE FACILITY GRAND OPENING

In February, the County officially opened the Big Lakes Animal Care Facility. The County utilized \$300,000 of the Municipal Sustainability Initiative to build the Facility that the County, the Town of High Prairie, and the High Prairie RCMP will all use. This facility features 12 pens, a quarantine room, and a washroom/supply room. The new facility allows the County to provide a much higher level of care to the animals in terms of capacity, cleanliness, stress reduction, and safety features.

### IN THE WOODS ANIMAL RESCUE SOCIETY

Big Lakes County has worked very closely with ITWARS over the past six years with all animals either unclaimed or surrendered being brought to this wonderful not-for-profit organization. The animals are then spayed or neutered, micro-chipped, receive vaccinations, and are adopted to approved homes. What a wonderful resource to have near our community!

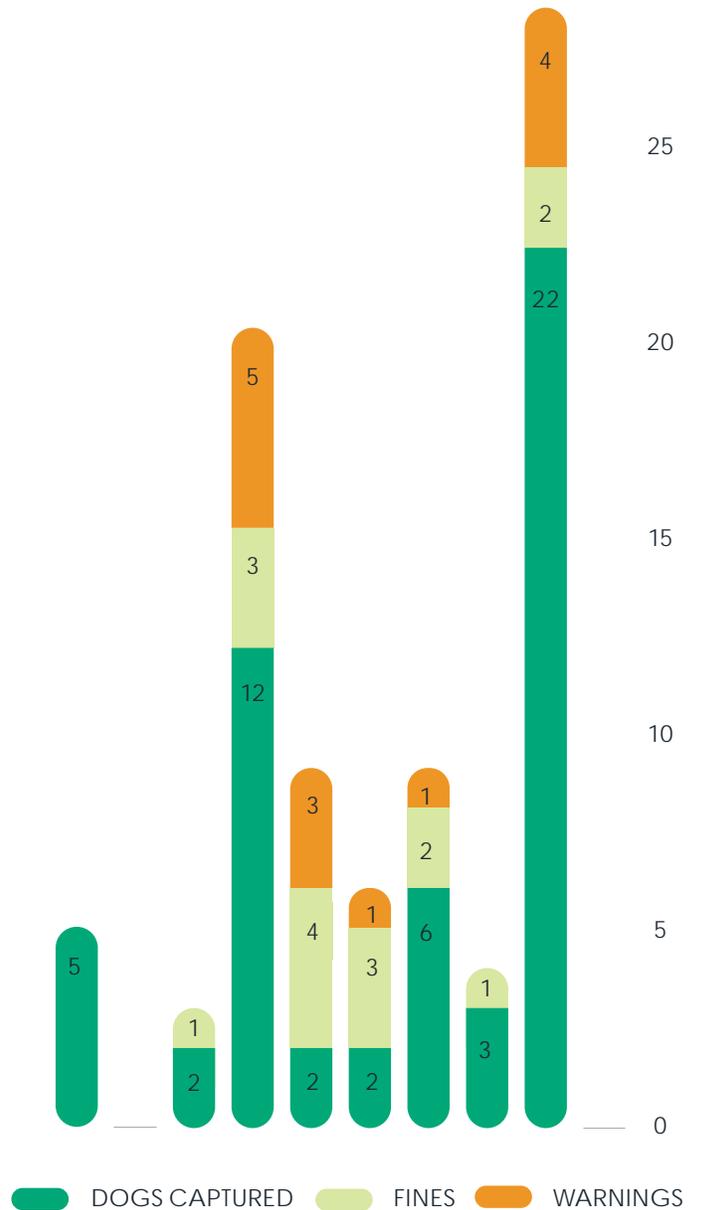


Photo right

"The Berg Family  
Farm" by A  
Thousand Words  
Photography



---

## COMMUNITY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES GRANTS

---

The Grants department is responsible for both grants where the County distributes funding to local community groups and non-profit organizations, and grants where the County receives funding from other levels of government for capital projects and other initiatives.

***DID YOU KNOW?** Our various grant programs support community organizations and benefit residents by subsidizing community halls' annual operating expenses. This allows organizations to make their facilities more accessible, enhance cultural and recreational opportunities for residents, repair or improve facilities to create a safer and more enjoyable space, and support local events and initiatives. Visit [biglakescounty.ca](http://biglakescounty.ca) to apply for a grant today.*

### TOTAL CAPITAL GRANTS PAID OUT BY THE COUNTY TO

Through the Capital Project Grant, Big Lakes County provides a source of funds for eligible capital projects to be undertaken by community organizations that provide community services within the County. In 2020, the County granted \$28,972 in funding to community groups.

### TOTAL OPERATING GRANTS PAID OUT BY THE COUNTY TO COMMUNITY GROUPS

In 2020, the County allocated \$1,214,489.02 to local community groups.

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| • Recreation Grants<br>\$822,568.41 | • Community Capital Projects<br>\$28,972          |
| • Community Halls \$150,700         | • Events & Sponsorship \$133,342.86               |
| • Museum \$36,000                   | • Other (Cemetery , Clean-up etc.)<br>\$17,405.75 |
| • Seniors Programming \$25,500      |   |

### GRANTS AWARDED TO THE COUNTY

#### ALBERTA COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

*(second year: \$23,000)*

In partnership with the ACP Municipal Internship Program. This is a two-year commitment in which administration mentors and provide hands-on experience in local government, management and supervisory training.

#### AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARD

*(\$819,535.21 over 5 years)*

Big Lakes County partnered with Peace Country Beef and Forage Association and the Lesser Slave Lake Watershed Council to further environmental initiatives, stewardship and viable economics for producers.

Photo top

Big Lakes County by  
A Thousand Words  
Photography

Photo bottom

Harvest 2019 by A  
Thousand Words  
Photography



**CANADIAN CULTURAL SPACES FUND**

**(\$8,424)**

Big Lakes County was approved for funding under the Canadian Cultural Spaces Fund to purchase specialized equipment for the Kinosayo Museum in Kinuso, AB.

**WATERSHED RESILIENCY & RESTORATION PROGRAM**

**(\$148,700)**

Big Lakes County was selected to partake in the Alternative Land Use Program - Pilot Program for flood mitigation and critical flood-prevention work. Due to COVID-19, this project was delayed a year and will start in 2021.

**STRATEGIC TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM**

**(\$889,500)**

STIP funding went towards four different bridge maintenance projects throughout the County.

**MUNICIPAL SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE**

**(\$487,720)**

MSI funding went towards the new Jousard office, and a bridge maintenance project.

**MUNICIPAL OPERATING SUPPORT TRANSFER**

**(\$420,466)**

The funding from MOST was released to help with the loss of revenue or related expenses due to the pandemic.

**FIRE SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAM**

**(\$9,418)**

Big Lakes County applied with the Town of High Prairie to get more firefighters trained to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1001 certified standard. This certification identifies the minimum job performance requirements for career and volunteer firefighters whose duties are primarily for structure fires.





Photo left  
2017 development  
in Joussard

## PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

*Planning & Development is a diverse department here at Big Lakes County. It combines many different sectors and professions to improve our communities and to help build a better future. Together we strive to make a difference in our communities today and tomorrow.*

### 2020 ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

In 2020, the Planning and Development Department consisted of the following staff - Director of Planning & Development, Development Officer, Administrative Support, and the Family & Community Support Services Program (FCSS). FCSS is made up of the FCSS Manager, 3 FCSS Outreach Workers, Administrative Support, contracted Home Support and Youth Program workers, and a Bus Driver. Temporarily, the Animal Control and Safety Officer and the Bylaw Enforcement Officer were part of the department. These two positions were transferred to Community and Protect Services in April of 2020.

The Planning and Development component administers the County's statutory planning documents such as the Municipal Development Plan, Land Use Bylaw, and Area Structure Plans by providing recommendations to the Subdivision & Development Authority (Municipal Planning Commission) and Council on applications such as development permits, subdivision approvals, and Land Use Bylaw amendments. When you seek subdivision or development approval, our department must ensure that you have a suitable building site, adequate water and mechanisms to dispose of waste. The Municipal Government Act (MGA) provides direction on many aspects of planning and development, and all our policies, bylaws, and procedures must comply with the legislation within the MGA.

2020 was a year like no other. While the pandemic affected our operations, it did not hamper our residents with many of their subdivision and development projects. The FCSS program, however, experienced significant disruption in service delivery.

Offices were closed to the public except for "by appointment only," and many activities and programs were either postponed or cancelled to protect the County's vulnerable population.

Residential development permit numbers were the highest they have been in years. However, it was apparent that the majority of these development permits were for smaller projects because the estimated value of residential development was considerably low compared to prior years, as indicated in the following chart. Commercial and industrial development was extremely low in comparison to previous years. This can be directly attributed to Alberta's recent economic impacts felt by the oil and gas industry.

### RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT BY # OF PERMIT APPLICATIONS

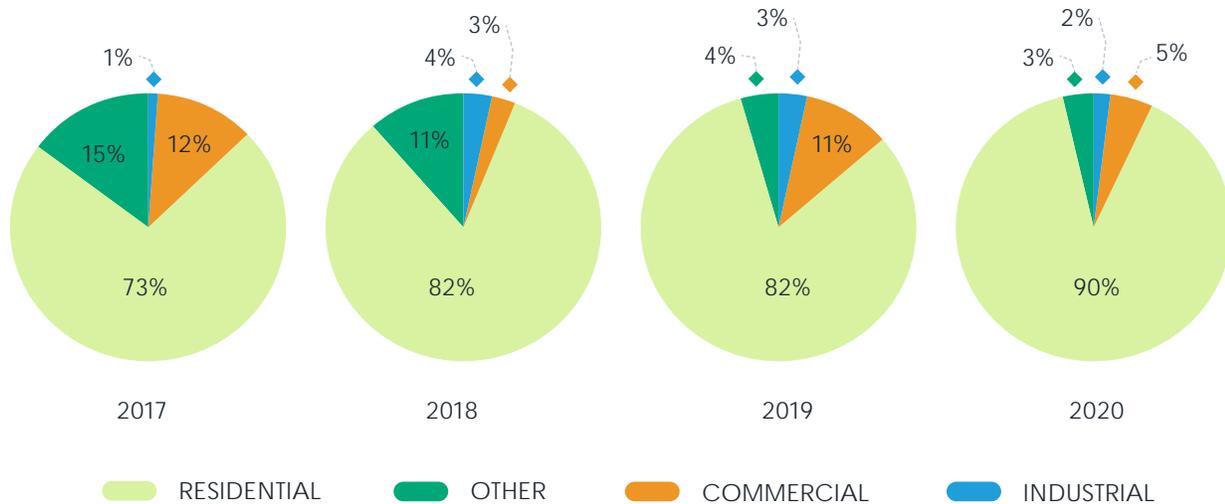
	2017	2018	2019	2020
Single Family Dwellings*	51	31	14	11
Manufactured Homes	14	20	14	17
Cabins**	11	8	4	10
Garages	10	10	8	8
Other (decks, sheds)	33	47	56	83
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>129</b>

\*Includes additions

\*\*Cabin is a dwelling (not single detached used as a temporary residence)

## DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATIONS

Fig. 6



## SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Urban (Hamlet)	1	0	5	0
Rural	17	18	16	20
Rural Multi-Lot	0	0	0	2
Bareland Condominium	1	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>

Subdivision applications were higher in 2020 than the previous year. There were 22 subdivision applications for rural acreages in 2020 and 0 applications for urban (hamlet) lots. By year-end, 13 new rural lots in the County were registered at the Alberta Land Titles Office.

## COMPLETED SUBDIVISIONS BY NUMBER OF LOTS

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Urban (Hamlet)	2	0	0	0
Rural	8	21	20	13
Rural Multi-Lot	3	0	3	0
Bareland Condominium	2	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>13</b>

## DEVELOPMENT BY CONSTRUCTION VALUE

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Industrial	90,000	2,125,000	40,100,000	10,000
Commercial	435,770	55,000	1,368,000	260,000
Residential	16,015,550	11,751,940	7,298,275	7,352,741
Other*	5,038,950	11,321,000	741,500	42,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21,580,270</b>	<b>25,252,940</b>	<b>49,507,775</b>	<b>7,664,741</b>

\*Other – Public use/institutional facilities, shops, signs, wind turbines, hangar, propane storage (not for sale), family campground, water reservoir, WTP. 2017 other spike due to Kinuso water reservoir & pump station/truck fill and shop at HP Airport; 2018 Other spike due to Joussard Water Treatment Facility.

The County contracts Superior Safety Codes Inc. to review and process building, electrical, gas, plumbing and private sewage disposal permit applications, issue these safety codes permits, and inspect the work completed within the County. This agency also provides code advice and consultations, conducts investigations in conjunction with various local and provincial regulatory agencies and investigates safety codes related complaints.

Photo right

Big Lakes County  
Fire Services by A  
Thousand Words  
Photography



---

## PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT MAPPING & GEOGRAPHICS

---

*More than just mapping, this department uses specialized software to visualize data and record key locational information. GIS facilitates the assignment of addresses to all properties and dwellings within the County. GIS is also a key component in looking at changes in data by location or time.*

In addition to your legal land description, your property may have a civic address or a rural address: A civic address is generally used for properties within a hamlet and other urban areas. A rural address is for properties outside of hamlets, such as farms and acreages.

Rural Addressing is a standardized system, which assigns an address to rural properties throughout the County. Similar to an urban address, your rural address helps emergency services personnel, such as fire, ambulance, or police, find your property quickly in an emergency.

In rural areas each address is assigned based on your driveway, or approach into your property from the Township/Range Road network. In the hamlets each address is assigned based on the location of the lot/parcel along the hamlet roads.

In 2020, our mapping and geographics department spent many hours tending to the Geographic Information Services (GIS) software back-end to facilitate the work listed below. This background work will be a solid foundation for all large projects in the works at the County.

- GIS has reworked and checked for all property address

errors. Now the physical address signs are being replaced at request. Please let us know if your signage does not match the address on your tax notice.

- A new GIS platform has been implemented. This system will give staff quicker access to our data to aid in better decision-making.
- Research and testing of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) were conducted to vastly improve the efficiency of some of the fieldwork, such as drainage inspections, beaver dams, etc., at a considerably faster rate than current methods. This will also reduce the County's spending by bringing in minor engineering contracts in-house.

### **AERIAL IMAGING & CUSTOM MAPS**

Custom maps can be requested for specific locations within the County, as well as its latest imagery where available. Products can be delivered electronically or be printed at various sizes for pickup at the Big Lakes County Administration Office.

- \$30 + gst for official wall map
- \$30 + gst for the latest Ownership Mapbook
- \$50 + gst / hr for custom maps, minimum 1 hr charge

Photo Right

Aerial drone shot  
of the Jack Pines  
in 2018.



## PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT **FAMILY & COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES**

### VISION

To improve the quality of life for our community by assisting people to address their own needs and help themselves.

### MISSION

- To help people help themselves to live a happier and healthier life.
- To educate the community and make people aware of choices and options, thereby giving individuals power over their own lives.

*Big Lakes FCSS is a partnership between the Province of Alberta, Big Lakes County and the Town of High Prairie, Provincially, FCSS is mandated to provide preventative social services under the Alberta FCSS legislation.*

In 2020 the FCSS offices in Big Lakes County provided assistance to residents 3,702 times. This assistance was provided through their six offices and three outreach staff. Outreach staff have assisted residents in completing government paperwork, referrals to other agencies, preparing income tax returns, and so much more. This assistance is confidential and free.

### 2020 FCSS YEARLY VISIT TOTALS

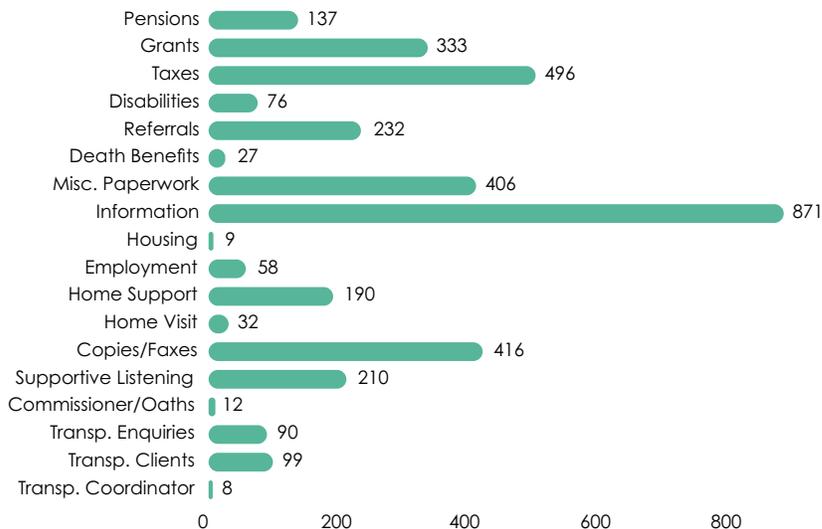


Photo top

Council and staff on the 2019 bus tour.



Photo bottom

FCSS & Admin staff delivering the 2020 Christmas hampers.

### COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX PROGRAM (CVITP)

By providing services to low-income residents under the CVITP, Big Lakes FCSS has helped ensure that over \$2 million per year comes into the community. This includes federal income supplements, working income tax benefits, income tax refunds, and child tax benefits. Through this program, FCSS can also ensure that seniors are receiving proper support.

### CHRISTMAS ANGELS PROGRAM

FCSS, with the continued generosity of donations and support from residents, is able to provide Christmas hampers to families in need within the County. In 2020, we provided 54 families with hampers. Due to a generous amount of donations, we were able to add additional items to the hampers this year.

### HOME SUPPORT, YOUTH PROGRAMS & EVENTS

FCSS also provides successful home support services to residents in need, which often allows people to remain in their own homes and communities for longer. Our Faust Youth Program has been on hold since April 2020 due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Furthermore, we host several events throughout the year on behalf of the Province of Alberta, Big Lakes County, and the Town of High Prairie. Events include Volunteer Appreciation, Family Day, and Seniors Week. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, we were not able to host any events in 2020.

### RURAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

In 2020, the Town of High Prairie assisted with funding to help support the bus, and now the bus services the Town of High Prairie residents once a week.





Photo left

"First day of  
School" by A  
Thousand Words  
Photography

---

## CORPORATE SERVICES TAXATION

---

*Big Lakes County's Corporate Services department provides supports to residents and ratepayers as well as other departments within the County. Corporate Services includes Financial Services, Taxation, & Reception.*

The Taxation department works closely with our contracted assessors to ensure that property values are properly recorded, and that taxes charged are correct.

The department also manages the collection of outstanding taxes, as well as payment of requisitions collected on behalf of the Alberta School Foundation Fund and local seniors' housing foundations. Here are just a few answers to some of the questions we get asked throughout the year.

### **I HAVE FILED A COMPLAINT REGARDING THE ASSESSMENT OF MY PROPERTY. DO I STILL NEED TO PAY MY PROPERTY TAXES?**

Yes, you must still pay your taxes by the due date to avoid penalties. If a decision on your complaint results in a lower tax levy, you will be credited the appropriate amount.

### **ARE THERE ANY PROPERTY TAX PROGRAMS AVAILABLE FOR SENIORS?**

The Alberta Government offers the Seniors Property Tax Deferral Program that allows eligible senior homeowners to defer all or part of their property taxes through a low-interest home equity loan with the Alberta government. If you qualify, the Alberta government will pay your residential property

taxes to the municipality on your behalf. You re-pay the loan, with interest, when you move or sell the home, or sooner if you wish.

### **WHY DO I HAVE TO PAY SCHOOL TAXES WHEN I DON'T HAVE ANY CHILDREN IN SCHOOL?**

The Provincial Government has mandated that all municipalities will collect school taxes on behalf of the provincial government. Every property owner in the province pays school taxes, regardless of whether they have school.

\*An education tax - to support the public education system, including public and separate school boards. The Government of Alberta determines the amount of education tax each municipality in Alberta will pay.

### **WHAT WOULD CAUSE MY PROPERTY ASSESSMENT TO CHANGE WHEN I HAVE NOT CHANGED ANYTHING ON MY PROPERTY?**

As properties are assessed every year based on a mass appraisal approach, market values will have an effect on the assessed value. Even though you may not have changed anything on your property, assessed values change based on the change in market values year to year.

---

## CORPORATE SERVICES FINANCIAL STATEMENTS BREAKDOWN

---

*The Financial Breakdown section of the Annual Report is prepared by management in accordance with the principles and standards established by the Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada, as well as the Municipal Government Act and provincial and federal regulations.*

The Financial Breakdown aims to provide commentary on the past year's financial results, including a summary of the sources, allocation and use of the economic resources, while capturing significant differences between the reported year and previous year as well as budgeted and actual results.

Management has made every effort to ensure the financial statements present a fair accounting of the County's consolidated operating and capital activities for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2020. The County's financial results are recognized and reported in observation of the County's policies and bylaws, where Council provides governance and guidance to policy and bylaw changes and approval.

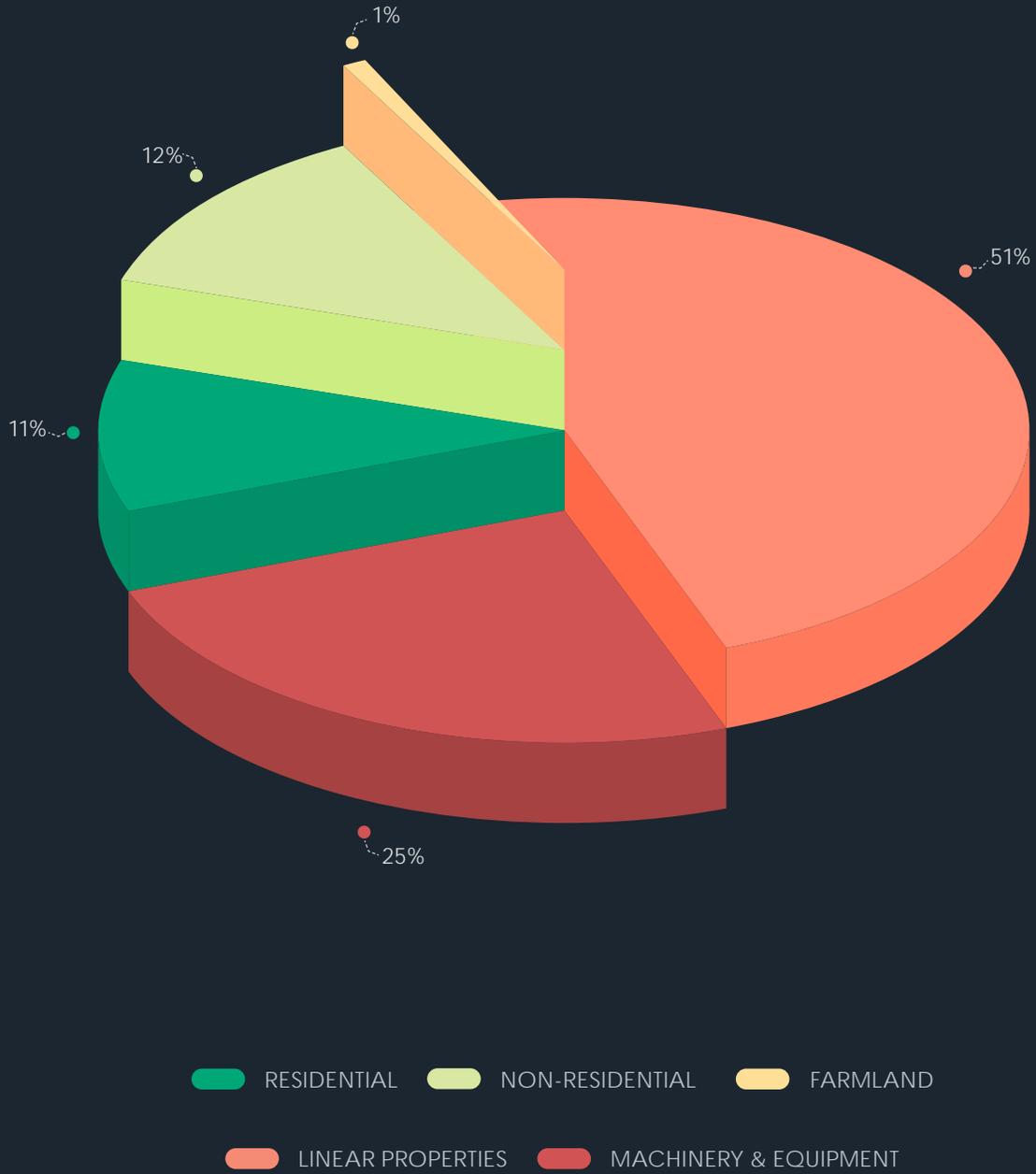
### **OPERATING REVENUES & EXPENSES**

The County's revenue totaled \$29.3 million in 2020; an increase of .1% from the prior year. Most of the revenue that the County collects comes from property taxes, and the majority of property tax revenue is generated from linear properties as discussed below.

Expenses totaled \$31.9 million in 2020, a decrease of -17.4% from 2019.

2020 TAX REVENUE BY PROPERTY TYPE

Fig. 7



### OPERATING REVENUE COMPOSITION

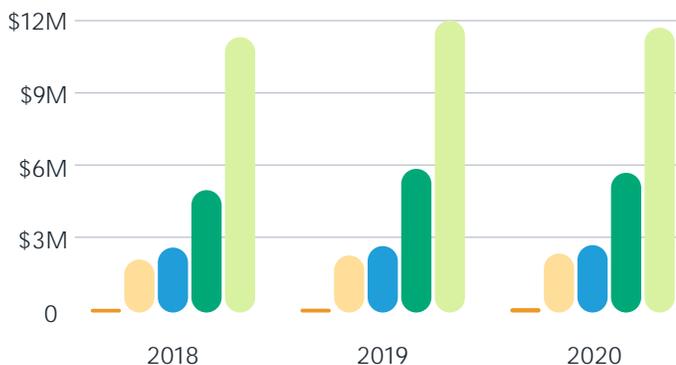
Revenue from property taxes continues to comprise nearly 80% of the County’s operating revenues. Taxation revenue increased by 1.3% in 2020 resulting from a combination of marginal increases in the property assessment base, as well as an increase in tax rates. Most of Big Lakes County’s tax revenue is generated from non-residential, machinery and equipment and linear properties, many of which are a part of the oil and gas sector.

User fees and sales of goods make up another significant source of revenue; most of these amounts come from water and sewer charges.

Unfortunately, revenue from penalties and costs on taxes were comparable, from \$1.16 million in 2019 to \$1.18 million in 2020.

### TAX REVENUE TRENDS BY SOURCE

	2018	2019	2020
Farmland	\$153,272	\$158,587	\$180,328
Residential	\$2,187,042	\$2,354,842	\$2,434,110
Non-Residential	\$2,682,392	\$2,744,312	\$2,782,721
Machinery & Equipment	\$5,054,900	\$5,934,188	\$5,770,736
Linear Properties	\$11,371,980	\$12,055,457	\$11,762,807
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$21,449,586</b>	<b>\$23,247,385</b>	<b>\$22,930,703</b>



\*Tax revenues include grants received in place of taxes, but exclude requisitions for seniors and schools

### ASSESSMENT & MILL RATE

In 2020, Big Lakes County increased municipal taxes for residential and farmland properties slightly to 4.502 “mills” or an effective tax rate of 0.004502% per \$1,000 of assessed value. This means that if a property was assessed at \$100,000, the

municipal taxes payable would have been \$450.20(\$443.50 – 2019). The increase to residential and farmland properties was a 1.50% increase over 2019 mill rates.

Non-residential and machinery & equipment municipal tax rates stayed the same at 14.72 mills, which represents a zero percent increase over 2019 tax rates for these property types.

While the municipal tax rate is the only one that’s controlled by Big Lake County, landowners are also charged taxes to support the Alberta School Foundation Fund (ASFF), local seniors’ housing foundations, and for some specialized designated industrial properties, an additional requisition.

Per section 359.3(2)(3) of the Municipal Government Act, make the following order: “The Minister must set the property tax rate for the designated industrial property requisition. The property tax rate for the designated industrial property requisition must be the same for all designated property.” Amounts collected for ASFF, seniors’ foundations and for designated industrial properties are requisitioned by these organizations – Big Lakes County is given a dollar amount to collect, and the amount is allocated among all the assessed property value within the County.

### 2020 COMBINED TAX RATES

	Residential & Farmland	Non-Residential	Machinery & Equipment
Municipal	4.502	14.720	14.720
School	2.6140	3.6433	0.0000
Seniors	0.26513	0.26513	0.26513
Designated industrial	0.0760	0.0760	0.0760
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7.4571</b>	<b>18.7044</b>	<b>15.0611</b>

### COMBINED TAX RATE TRENDS

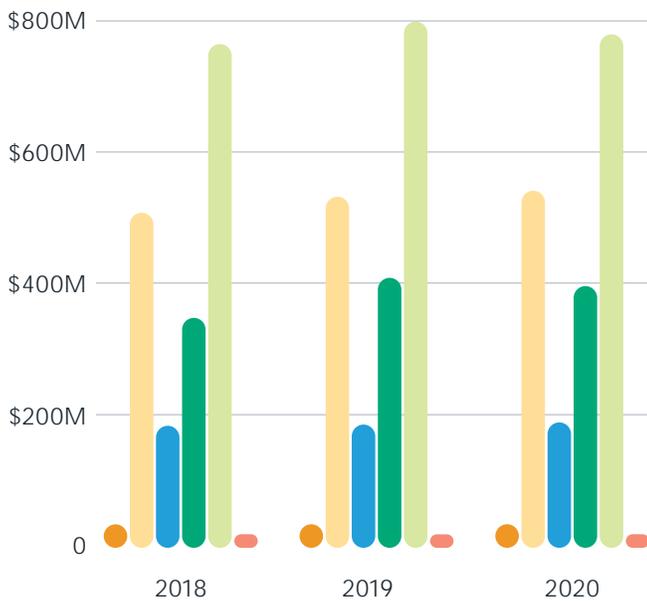


## PROPERTY VALUE TRENDS

Property values within the county continued their overall slight trend upward in 2020. Linear property value (largely represented by oil and gas infrastructure) slightly decreased – which is of particular importance given that those properties generate a significant amount of taxes for Big Lakes County.

## ASSESSED VALUE BY PROPERTY TYPE

	2018	2019	2020
Farmland	\$35,603,170	\$35,735,890	\$35,751,990
Residential	\$508,023,540	\$532,253,290	\$541,398,060
Non-Residential	\$184,992,560	\$186,824,190	\$190,099,880
Machinery & Equipment	\$348,613,850	\$409,322,480	\$396,803,900
Linear Properties	\$763,681,760	\$797,832,110	\$778,507,370
Linear - Power Generation	\$20,592,680	\$20,428,790	\$20,596,390
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,861,507,560</b>	<b>\$1,982,396,750</b>	<b>\$1,963,157,590</b>



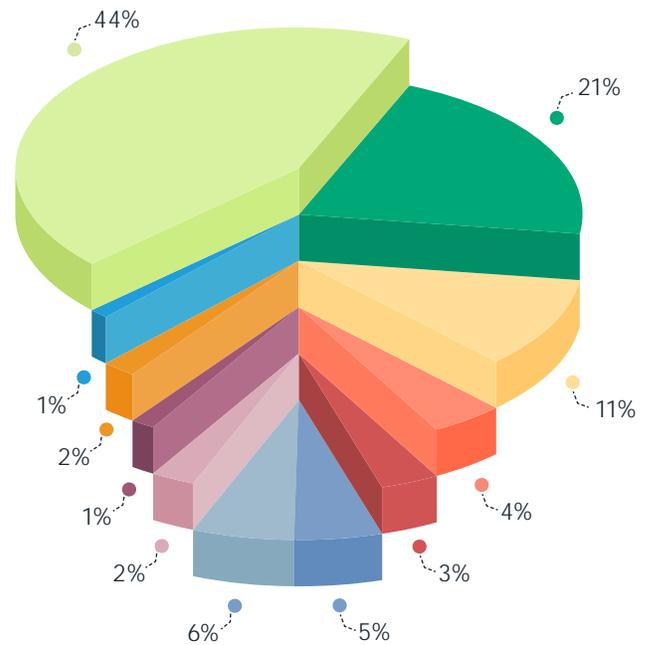
## OPERATING EXPENSE COMPOSITION

Of all the services that the County provides for residents and ratepayers, transportation services come at the highest overall cost. Big Lakes County maintains 1,351 kilometres of roadways, and transportation costs include both summer and winter road maintenance, gravelling, bridge inspections and maintenance,

as well as clearing brush and ditches.

Other significant costs include the treatment, distribution, and management of potable water and wastewater, as well as administrative services and cost-sharing agreements.

## 2020 OPERATING EXPENSES

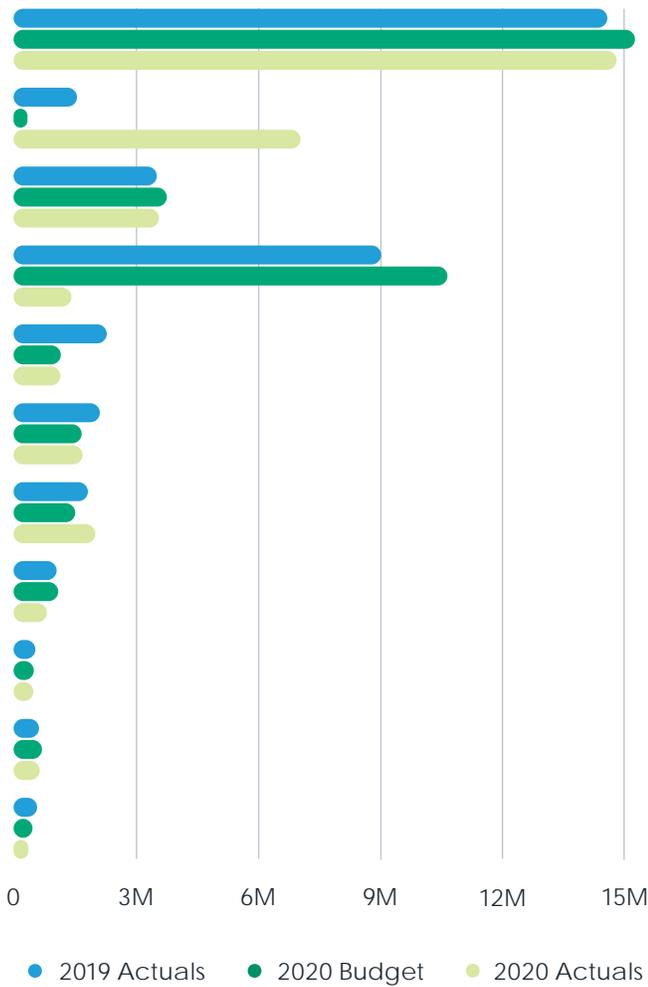


	2020
Transportation Services	15,193,172
Bad Debt	7,229,210
Water & Wastewater	3,664,767
Administrative Services	1,459,588
Intermunicipal Cost Sharing	1,180,825
Recreation & Culture	1,737,207
Protective Services	2,060,377
Agriculture & Development Services	839,727
FCSS	498,291
Waste Management & Disposal Services	659,386
Council & Other Legislative Services	373,026
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31,976,400</b>

### EXPENSE TRENDS

Generally, expenses in 2020 were consistent with both budgeted amounts and with the prior year. The most significant variances were that administration services came in under budget due to estimated write-downs of taxes receivable. Despite some recovery in the oil and gas sector in 2020, many local oil companies elected not to pay their property taxes, resulting in significant penalties that are comparable to 2019.

### 2019 ACTUALS & 2020 BUDGET VS. 2020 ACTUALS



### DEBT & RESERVES

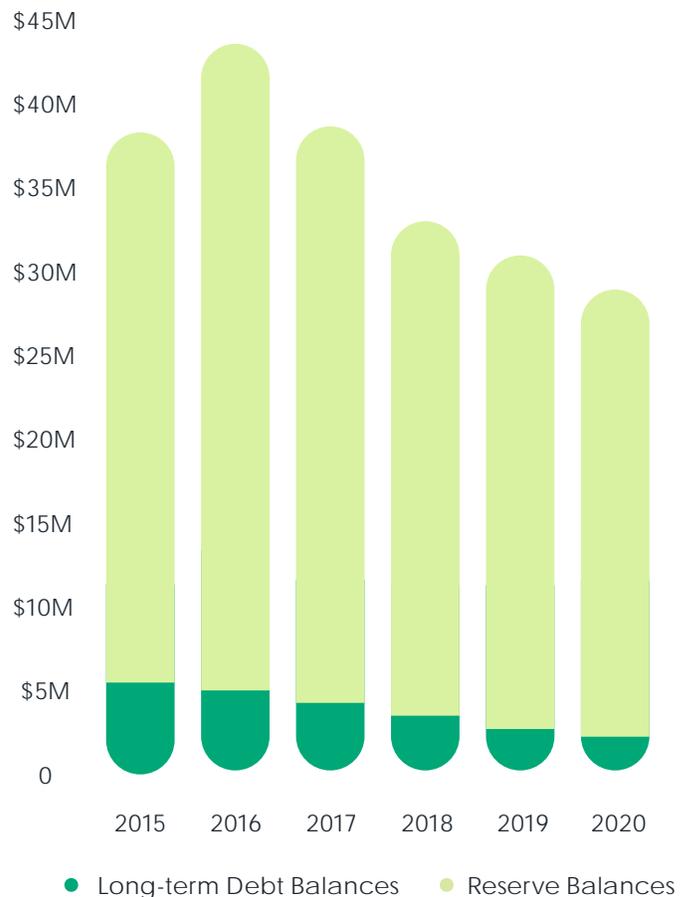
While operating revenue in 2020 increased by a smidge .1% from 2019, expenses decreased by 17.4%. These combined trends mean that the County generated a deficit of \$2.4 million before other revenue and expenses. A deficit occurs when a municipality’s expenditures are greater than its revenues – it cannot bring in enough income to cover its costs.

When a deficit occurs, the shortfall must be funded by either drawing funds from reserves (savings, or surplus funds from good years), or taking on debt.

Reserve funds are set aside by Council to fund specific projects or initiatives. The County continued to draw from reserves to fund both operations and capital projects in 2020, resulting in a \$11.7 million decrease from the highest reserve balances in 2016.

Most municipalities in Alberta borrow from the Alberta Capital Finance Authority (ACFA) when they don't have sufficient funds, particularly for larger infrastructure projects like new roads and bridges.

The Municipal Government Act regulates the amount of debt that municipalities are allowed to take on, as it is important that municipalities have the capacity to repay debt when it is due. Big Lakes County continues to carry a very low debt load, and as at December 31, 2020 has only used 4.5% of its available debt limit.



---

# CORPORATE SERVICES **CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

---

*Big Lakes County's Consolidated Financial Statements for the year ended December 31, 2020  
can be found on our website [www.biglakescounty.ca](http://www.biglakescounty.ca). If you have any questions or concerns  
please contact the Director of Corporate Services at 780 523 5955.*





**BIGLAKESCOUNTY.CA**

**5305 56 ST, Box 239, High Prairie, AB T0G 1E0**

**780 523 5955 / F: 780 523 4227**

**Find us on Facebook & Instagram**

**@BigLakesCounty #GoBigLakes**