

Stanley reeve reflects on year of cooperation, collaboration—and plans for more in 2026

By Lorne Stelmach

It was another year of continued growth and development for the region including the RM of Stanley, and as Reeve Ike Friesen reflected on it all in a year-end interview, he highlighted the importance of regional co-operation and collaboration in the year ahead.

"We will continue to work closely with the two cities," Friesen said. "We're always working on different collaboration initiatives with Morden and Winkler that we can see are a need. That's an ongoing thing, and I'm actually proud that we are able to work so well together with the two cities."

Wastewater is obviously the big item on the to-do list for the RM of Stanley along with Winkler and Morden, and Friesen is relieved to see the project finally near a position to move ahead. "We had a bit of a challenging year with that," he said. "We did have a vision in mind ... but we've changed our focus from the villages to other areas."

"We do have tenders going out. It will probably be in January for the corridor ... for the force mains and the lift station, and that will help with the hospital expansion and future growth of the area that's developing along the corridor."

A planned project to extend wastewater service into the villages of Reinfeld and Schanzenfeld was changed so that for now at least it will only go up the edges of the villages as a result of opposition from a portion of the residents.

"That was a challenge. We did try to listen to the people," Friesen said. "That is still an ongoing project. We spoke with the province again a num-

ber of weeks ago. We're still waiting for some written reports from them for some direction ... it's a work in progress."

He acknowledged the need for dialogue.

"It's difficult to please everyone. You will always have some people not happy with the decisions you have made," Friesen said. "We will continue to work on different areas, and obviously we do know the corridor is one area where there's expansion and there's new development that will continue to happen."

As far as roads and other infrastructure, 2025 was a challenging year for some of the day-to-day work of maintaining a rural municipality, Friesen reflected.

"We started off with quite a wet spring, so our roads have been quite a challenge all year to keep maintained," he said. "It was definitely more of a reactionary year to try to keep up with managing the frost boils and the soft spots."

The tasks for the public works department included 20 new water connections and 15 line breaks, and there were also 936 meters of culverts replaced or installed.

In addition, 78,000 tonnes of gravel was spread on roads, and three miles of rural roads were upgraded including Road 14N and a quarter mile of industrial paved road near Greenvalley Equipment.

Friesen also shone a spotlight on the RM's parks, including Stanley Park as well as those in Reinfeld and Haskett.

"Nearly 15,000 people used our parks this summer," he said. "There was great work done by our park staff," he said. "The Reinfeld park, rink and playground are being well managed by Reinfeld committee."



WATER AN INTEGRAL FACTOR

As the community continues to grow, Friesen stressed the importance of working with the Pembina Valley Water Co-op.

"We've secured water agreements with Pembina Valley Water Co-op, so there's assurance of good water for the area," he said, citing the necessity of these agreements to ensure the first phase of the wastewater connection from the corridor can be completed and until the new corridor line is installed. Future phases will include the new corridor line and the two new lines ending up at the village limits of Reinfeld and Schanzenfeld.

Engineering work has prioritized continuing to flood-proof the villages and working with the province to install additional overflow protection in Reinfeld.

Friesen also noted making headway with the development of an asset management program to formally document asset maintenance and plan for future expenditures.

Friesen went on to highlight a cou-

ple key planning and development priorities that have included updating the building bylaws and development plan through the MSTW (Morden Stanley Thompson and Winkler) Planning District.

In addition, he anticipated they would have of four concept plans ready in the first quarter of the new year to help provide guidance for new development areas, especially within Reinfeld and Schanzenfeld.

"That concept plan offers developers a level of direction that they can use to develop, whether it's commercial or residential," he said. "It's just a guide for them ... so it's not done all piecemeal."

Priorities for 2026 include tendering the corridor lift station and force main to service the hospital expansion and future growth, tendering Reinfeld and Schanzenfeld lift stations and force mains in late 2026/early 2027, and tendering for work at the Dunston reservoir.