

## DUNDURN RURAL WATER UTILITY OFFICE MOVING ON UP

Story & Photo

By

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The Dundurn Rural Water Utility (DRWU) is expanding to a new location in December 2019. With the construction of a new building on the corner of Second Street & First Avenue in Dundurn, operating and fuel costs will decrease as the office and maintenance staff will be under one roof. Energy efficiency was one factor in the planning of the building and extra insulation being installed will reduce operating costs..

The land for the new building was purchased in June 2018, when they realized the existing building at 410 Second Street wasn't providing the space they needed for their growing business. Finance Committee Chair, Mike Kuzma stated, "This is the best and right time to choose to build." He further explained that the DRWU borrowed against their capital reserves which means third-party debt wasn't required to finance the project and it is projected that within 15 years the capital reserves will be repaid using a combination of operating and capital budgets, Kuzma added that, "In long term, DRWU isn't going anywhere and the time to invest in a building ourselves is essential."

The current building DRWU operates from is for sale, and the uncertainty of the new owners renewing their lease was just one of the concerns the board had. Other factors in deciding for the new build was allocating more office space as the new building will expand the office by 980 sq./ft with a private board room, storage space for archived files, a staff room and an adjoining maintenance shop.

Currently, Operations and Maintenance Supervisor, Jason Bellina, and his co-worker, Brian McNutt, work out of pump house #3 on the North Grid; which is cramped when they build meter assembly boards and will not house the skid



Dundurn Rural Water Utility office staff (L to R) Chantel Hendry, Barb Olyniuk and Ros Arndt are excited about the new building and patiently await for it to be completed.

steer and trailer the board recently purchased. "More space in the new shop at the rear of the building will be a welcome addition," said Bellina.

DRWU began in 2004 with the RM of Dundurn signing the first Corporate Bylaw. In 2008, the RM of Blucher, RM of Rosedale and the Resort Villages of Shields and Thode joined in. In 2011, the Towns of Dundurn and Hanley joined. In 2009, Administrator Ros Arndt was hired due to the Phase 3 huge water project expansion and worked out of the RM of Dundurn office. Arndt's knowledge of water utilities is vast as her experience comes from being employed at the public utility's in the cities of Prince Albert, SK and Yorkton, SK before spearheading Dundurn's Phase 3 project.

It's a progressive time for the water business. Arndt reflected how the Utility started with 140 rural water customers in the RM of Dundurn to now currently having 700 water subscribers and 500 more ready for water. This number does not reflect the number of household's water is provided to; for instance, the Town of Dundurn is one customer and the town has 274 households. All together, DRWU supplies water to approximately 1600 households or 3800 people. DRWU has grown over

the past 15 years; ten (10) pump houses have been built, they have laid 536 km water pipeline, they employ seven (7) staff members, they have just acquired a skid steer and trailer, and of course the new building. Yes! Progressive times.

One of the concerns subscribers voiced: Will the water rate go up? Unlikely. "Water rates will not go up with the new building being built," Kuzma stated. "Investing in projects such as our own building and solar power at our pump houses ensures that operating costs remain stable and predictable in the long-term, and in some cases certain costs have been reduced or eliminated altogether."

DRWU purchases water from SaskWater, who purchase water from the City of Saskatoon. When SaskWater increases the rate, that is when DRWU increases the rate, and in recent years, DRWU has passed along smaller increases to water rates to subscribers than what the Utility has received from SaskWater,

DRWU encourages their subscribers to reach out to the DRWU board and staff with any questions or concerns regarding the new building, infrastructure, or anything else water-related.