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# LAC STE. ANNE COUNTY ISSUES UPDATE REGARDING ADMINISTRATION BUILDING STRUCTURE ISSUES

**Sangudo, Alberta, Wednesday, May 17, 2023 – Update on Administration Building**

The County has made the difficult but necessary decision to replace the Administration Building. This follows extensive expert investigations and assessments, which unfortunately have concluded that repairing the present damage and maintaining the integrity of the building is not feasible. This is very disappointing news we had hoped to avoid. We are now forced to start the process for a new building to ensure we have a quality building to support the important services the County provides.

Details of how we arrived where we are and our plans to minimize the impacts to County residents and ratepayers are discussed below.

## **Chronology and general description of the problem**

Around the time the Administration Building was being completed in 2017, slab heaving and drywall cracking were observed. The issues were investigated by geotechnical experts and determined to be caused by moisture changes to the high plastic clay that the building is situated on. Recommendations made to regrade and redirect surface water were implemented, and the slab heaving appeared to have stabilized. Following this, it appeared that any deficiencies with the building would be addressed as normal warranty items and no long-term issues were anticipated.

However, as 2018 unfolded, and ever since, the building continued to experience movement and damage despite the remediation measures that were implemented in 2017. The County then arranged for a structural engineering investigation, including surveying and ongoing monitoring of the building's movement to ensure it is safe.

The movement appears to be primarily with respect to the building's floor, which is known as a slab on grade floor. This type of floor sits on the subgrade underneath and is not supported by piles or any other structural component. As such, the slab is susceptible to movement when the high plastic clay beneath it expands with changing moisture levels.

The expansion of the ground beneath the building has occurred to the extent that the floor and other structural components are moving, causing issues with the structural integrity of the building as a whole and critical components. Other resulting issues include significant bowing and sloping of the floor slabs, separation of walls from each other and the foundation, extensive wall and ceiling cracking, vapour barrier damage, notable gaps causing air infiltration and heat loss, damage to fire proofing and fire separations, and damage to the exterior cladding.

In addition, the building is expected to continue to experience differential movement of the interior floor slab. There is a significant risk the known problems will get worse over time, and we may encounter new problems with other components of the building.

In addition to the initial geotechnical and structural investigations described above, the County engaged further experts to monitor the situation, investigate all potential causes, and develop options to remedy the problems.

During 2020-2022, experts continued to monitor the condition of the building, assess the structural integrity, and investigate all potential causes of the problems. They also made short-term and longer-term recommendations to address any immediate concerns. The short-term recommendations were implemented, which included the design and installation of shoring of the mezzanine level of the building and close monitoring of the safety systems of the building that were impacted by the building's movement. During this time period, experts also investigated and reported on potential long-term remedial steps.

During late 2022 and early 2023, work continued to fully develop the feasibility, costs, risks, service disruption, and likely outcomes associated with the long-term options. It was in the course of this further work that our experts advised us of further issues with the building, and the steps required to restore the long-term integrity of the building in accordance with industry standards. Unfortunately, the scope of required rehabilitation would be extensive, including the requirement to essentially remove and replace all interior floor slabs, internal walls, internal finishes, and exterior cladding and weatherproofing.

After extensive review and analyses by a team of experts – including some of the leading structural engineers, geotechnical engineers, architects, and construction contractors in the province – it was determined that repairing the existing building would not be a feasible or reasonable option, leaving the County with the only option of replacing the building.

## **Lawsuit**

From the outset, the County has been advised by legal counsel with respect to these issues. The problems with the Administration Building were raised with the parties who designed and built the Administration Building. Unfortunately, they failed to address the problems and legal action was necessary to protect the County's interests.

As we previously advised in our periodic updates, a lawsuit was started against the parties involved in the design, project management, and construction of the Administration Building. This lawsuit is ongoing, with the objective of obtaining financial recovery from the parties responsible for this situation in order to offset the cost implications to the County.

Based on advice from the County's legal counsel, only limited information can be shared until the lawsuit is concluded.

Lac Ste. Anne County Council and Administration sincerely thank ratepayers for their understanding and cooperation as they continue their work protecting the County's interests and ensuring that we have a quality building to support the services the County delivers.

The County will continue to provide periodic updates on this matter on its website and social media platforms.

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