

**Mark Melnychuk**  
Meadow Lake Progress

The North of Divide Communities Association has come one step closer to realizing its plan for the northwest's future.

NODCA met with several companies applying to create a community plan for the region at the Meadow Lake city council chambers on Jan. 20. Five firms from Saskatchewan and Alberta made their pitch to the board. They included Stantec, Scheffer Andrew Scheffer Ltd., Prairie Wild Consulting, Plan-

ning Alliance, and Crosby Hanna & Associates.

"We had five very committed applicants, who I think really prepared for the interviews and came with a description of the work that they would undertake," said NODCA chair Murray Rausch.

Planners were tasked with convincing NODCA why they were the best choice to usher in the development of regions within the organization.

"We're talking about the management of resources, we're taking about the management of the land based. We're taking about the

future uses and applications that land has," said Rausch.

In the case of northwest Saskatchewan, these developments could apply to tourism destinations, industrial projects and agriculture initiatives.

Planning firms such as Andrew Scheffer Ltd. highlighted their understanding of the region's unique features.

"It's a little more rural here, more spread out, so there's just a different flavour that you have to be aware of," said Rebecca Row, a planner for the firm.

Unlike other NODCA members,

the rural municipality of Meadow Lake is already further ahead with community planning. However, Reeve John Lawson still wants someone up to the challenge for the larger regional plan.

"You want to know that they have the manpower to do it, the expectations they have, what resources they have," said Lawson.

Councillor Toby Esterby, who sits as the city's representative on NODCA, wants to see planners map out a path forward, but take the time to do it right.

"I want to see a firm that's going to do some legwork in our commu-





nity, get the local perspective, get on the ground and no do it from an office," said Esterby.

After the interviews were held, NODCA members held a meeting behind closed doors to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the applications.

They won't be able to make a choice just yet. The group is still waiting on government funding to share the cost of the planning work, which would be supplied through the province's Planning for Growth initiative.

"The scope of this is broad and we do really depend on the guidance, the assistance of the province with the Planning for Growth fund," said Rausch.

NODCA failed to gain access to the grant during the first intake, and will find out if its second attempt was successful by the end of the month.



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