

# Annexation angst voiced at Regina meeting

BY EMMA GRANEY, LEADER-POST AUGUST 23, 2013



Regina Mayor Michael Fougere.

**Photograph by:** TROY FLEECE, Regina Leader-Post files

Lois Kerr just wants to be able to pay her taxes in either the City of Regina or the RM of Sherwood.

But, if the city's annexation plan gets the go-ahead, her 45 acres of land will be straddling both.

Although she has lived on her property bordering Highway 33 for 43 years, the uncertainty of it all has her considering a move.

"We're thinking about it," she said, following the Regina council's Thursday night meeting about the annexation plan.

"It's just getting too complicated."

With presentations from landowners such as Kerr to developers and representatives from the likes of the Wascana Country Club, the Regina and Region Homebuilders Association and the Islamic Association of Saskatchewan, the meeting covered concerns ranging from property zoning to taxes.

"I just hope we'll get a nice letter in the mail saying Regina won't annex our land," Kerr told council with a small smile, causing a ripple of laughter in the gallery.

Other presenters at the meeting weren't quite so reserved - president of Forster Projects, Blair Forster, for example.

Forster explained he just couldn't understand "why anybody would oppose the annexation plans," saying many who do want to be able to use City of Regina services without having to pay for them.

Stu Niebergall, executive director of the Regina and Region Home Builders Association, said his group also wholeheartedly supports the annexation proposal.

He also agreed that some residents on the fringe of the city simply don't want to pay taxes to Regina, adding he's not convinced the RM of Sherwood can deal with the development required for Regina's exploding population. Munir Haque, who represented the Islamic Association of Saskatchewan (IAOS), said his group is also in full support of the plan - though its reasoning is a little different.

For the IAOS, it comes back to a parcel of land the group purchased just inside the boundaries of the RM of Sherwood.

The plan was to build a new mosque and community centre there to cater to the Regina's rapidly growing Muslim population, but permission was denied by the RM.

The hope, Haque said, is that the city will annex their land and allow them to build the much-needed facility.

Following the meeting, Mayor Michael Fougere said council would pass to city administration the concerns raised and questions asked by presenters, with the hope there will be answers by the next public meeting on Sept. 9. "Tonight was very much in keeping with the letters we've received and it just amplified those concerns," he said.

"We tried to answer what we could tonight and we will give them more information about their concerns before the meeting next month."

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