

'Booming' Lorette wants to leave RM, be town

By Bill Redekop

ANOTHER community wants to split from its capital region municipality, this time the Village of Lorette in the Rural Municipality of Tache.

Lorette, a 15-minute drive from the Perimeter Highway and with a population of about 2,200, may leave Tache and incorporate as a town.

"Lorette is a booming, happening place. It is the pulse of Tache right now," said Ron Tardiff, who is part of a group spearheading the move. "(But) there are a lot of decisions being made that affect

Lorette by councillors who don't even live in the community, and often (the decisions) affect the community adversely."

Other communities in the capital region around Winnipeg are also making rumblings. A group in the Village of Oakbank in the RM of Springfield recently announced it is exploring leaving the RM to become a town. Villages such as Stony Mountain, north of Winnipeg, and Landmark, to the southeast, are also interested in obtaining town status.

Chris Leo, a University of Winnipeg urban studies professor, said the same

forces are at work when communities such as Lorette split from their rural municipalities as when Winnipeggers leave the city limits for bedroom communities.

People leaving Winnipeg are no longer required to pay taxes to help poorer neighbourhoods.

The same applies when a community with more finances, such as Lorette, leaves an RM.

"You end up with wealthy enclaves and poorer ones. From the viewpoint of the wealthier community, they see it as unfair that they are paying more taxes. In the long run, you create poorer com-

munities," said Leo, a frequent critic of urban sprawl.

The tax disparity in Tache is large, however. A recent study commissioned by Lorette found the community pays out about \$360,000 more in taxes to the RM than it receives in return in services — money it would hold onto if it incorporates as a town.

For example, it costs Lorette \$52,000 to use the Tache landfill when it could use one run by the City of Steinbach for \$23,000, the study found.

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Lorette

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Another irritant is Lorette's sewage lagoon, built in 2001. If the lagoon had been built a decade ago, before it ran into local political opposition, it would have cost Lorette ratepayers \$600,000. Coming a decade later, the lagoon ended up costing \$1.7 million, Tardiff said.

"It tends to cost us more money than it's worth (to stay in Tache)," said Tardiff, chairman of the Local Urban District committee for Lorette. An LUD is a three-person elected committee for Lorette that acts in an advi-

sory role to the Tache council but doesn't have power to set bylaws, approve subdivisions or attract business with incentives or subsidies.

Lorette is in the midst of a growth spurt, having expanded by about 45 homes a year since 2001, and a new subdivision called Serenity Trails may eventually add another 150 homes.

"The effects (of losing Lorette) would be severe, no question," said Tache Reeve Bill Danylchuk. Lorette comprises more than 20 per cent of Tache's tax base, he said.

Neither does Tache have an industrial base that contributes tax dollars to Lorette.

In Springfield, taxes collected from industry, such as auto wreckers and sand excavation companies, help pay for residential services.

"Tache is basically a farming community. We don't have major industries located in the municipality," Danylchuk said.

The loss of Lorette wouldn't necessarily raise taxes in the rest of the municipality if there was some restructuring, Danylchuk maintained. Lorette would have to buy some services from the municipality, and vice versa, he said.

Danylchuk attended a public meeting last week where those for seceding laid out their cards. Lorette residents have

talked with the RM about creating some kind of hybrid government between Local Urban District status and town status, but couldn't reach a compromise.

Lorette's desire for more autonomy is part of the evolution of the capital region, said Tardiff.

"When we were kids, our parents made our decisions for us. Our analogy is Lorette has grown up past that point."

A vote of Lorette residents would have to be held before a final decision is made on town incorporation, Tardiff said. The next move is to formally notify the province of Lorette's intentions.

➔ bill.redekop@freepress.mb.ca

Lorette seeks public say on incorporation

by Gladys Terichow

THERE is a possibility that people in Lorette may be electing a mayor and four councillors in the October 2006 municipal elections.

The committee for the Local Urban District (LUD) of Lorette held an information meeting Tuesday evening to begin the process of restructuring and forming an urban municipality.

Public response and feedback will determine the next step in this process, said Ron Tardiff, chair of the LUD committee.

About 60 people attended the meeting. "This is an information meeting only—we are not seeing a mandate tonight," said Tardiff.

Towards the end of the meeting, several members of the audience requested a straw vote to determine public opinion. The show of hands indicated the majority of people at the meeting favour incorporation.

Lorette is currently part of the RM of Tache, has a population of about 2,000 and is experiencing strong growth. The LUD is part of Ward 4 and is represented by the Ward 4 councillor on the RM of Tache council.

The meeting was told that greater autonomy could improve present and future direction of community development.

A summary of a feasibility study prepared by Ernest Lajoie, the former CAO for the RM of Tache and Roger Bouvier, who has worked as a municipal service officer for the province, was distributed at the meeting and is available at the RM of Tache office and on the LoretteOnline.ca website.

Bouvier said Lorette is one of 74 LUDs in the province and one of the largest in the province. Some LUDs have a population base of fewer than 25 people, he noted.

There are 72 towns in the province and if Lorette becomes incorporated as an urban municipality, it would be among the 15 largest towns in the province.

"It is nice to be on your own, but what will it cost?" asked Bouvier.

The study shows that taxes could

increase by one mill. This represents about \$30 on a house assessed at \$100,000.

"Is it worth one mill to have your own autonomy?" he asked.

The feasibility study proposes boundary changes that would transfer 39 properties, 507 acres and 19 existing dwellings to Lorette from the RM of Tache.

Another source of new assessment, although not taxable, is property owned by the municipality within the LUD of Lorette. This includes the municipal office, shop, fire hall, police station, arena, curling rink and baseball and soccer field.

A member of the audience noted he expects there will be more opposition from people outside the boundaries of Lorette than inside.

Lajoie said Lorette currently generates about 17 percent of the assessment in the municipality.

It was noted the transfer of expenses to Lorette from the municipality would offset this loss in assessment. The municipality would also gain revenue through cost-sharing agreements with Lorette for shared services.

In response to questions about the new boundaries, Tardiff said they are based on the natural growth of the town and changes would take place in consultation with property owners. A major parcel of land in the proposed boundary change includes the Lorette golf course and some of the surrounding property into the town boundaries.

"We won't try to impose anything on anybody," emphasized Tardiff.

The meeting was told the proposed one mill increase is an estimate that does not take into account added taxes of new residential and commercial development in Lorette.

Last week, work started on the first phase of a 150-lot development. Within the next few months, another 150-lot development is expected to be approved.

"Expenses are easy to predict, revenue is not as easy to predict," said Tardiff, adding he expects revenue to be higher than predicted.

The audience also raised questions

about the town's water supply and water services.

Committee member Ross Deschambault said Lorette draws from three wells, noting the costs of improving the water supply system are included in development agreements.

New water supply options could include a fourth well or negotiating an agreement with the City of Winnipeg to connect to the water supply at Deacon's Corner, at the intersection of PR 207 and the Trans-Canada Highway.

Lotteries share paid

THE City of Steinbach will be receiving a cheque for \$65,460 in the near future as its share of provincial gambling profits.

The payment represents the second of two instalments for the year.

Municipalities received base funding of \$5,000 each plus an additional \$1,300 per person.

Design contract awarded

THE contract for the design of a \$2 million cancer treatment and birthing centre at Bethesda Hospital in Steinbach has been awarded to a Winnipeg firm.

South Eastman Health awarded the contract to Stantec Consulting.

Work on design should begin this week, chief executive officer Reg Toews told the regional health board on Thursday.



Carol Laramée, Ross Deschambault, Ernest Lajoie and Roger Bouvier at the information meeting in Lorette.

GLADYS TERICHOW-THE CARLETON