

Hosmer Fire Hall – Board Speech

Chair, Directors,

I'd like to take a few minutes to speak about the Hosmer fire hall and the process we've gone through to get to where we are today.

When I was elected to represent Area A, I stepped into the middle of a conversation that had already been going on for quite some time around the future of that fire hall. It didn't take long to realize this wasn't just about a building. This file is tied to history, identity, and a lot of pride in the Hosmer community.

Early on, I heard from residents who felt the earlier stages of this project had moved too fast, and that not everyone felt included or informed. Those concerns were real, and that mattered.

So one of the first things I did was pause the process.

I felt it was important to step back, take a fresh look, and let the information, the experts, and the community help shape the direction. I wanted to make sure we looked at every reasonable option and understood the full picture before coming to any conclusions.

That meant looking at the condition of the existing building, the possibility of renovation or rebuilding locally, and also exploring whether there were opportunities to work with neighbouring communities. We had conversations and explored what it might look like to work with Fernie and Sparwood to understand if there were any viable regional service solutions.

As we worked through it, it became clear that this isn't a simple choice. It's not just about keeping something the same or building something new. There are several things tied together.

There is a very real attachment to the current fire hall. It's been there a long time. It represents years of volunteer service and community effort. For many people, it feels like that's where it belongs. It's familiar and it's part of what people picture when they think about Hosmer.

I want to acknowledge that, because it matters.

For some residents, that building holds memories. It represents the people who served out of it. It represents a sense of continuity in a small community where those things matter. Wanting to keep it where it is doesn't come from resisting change — it comes from pride in the community and a desire to protect something that feels important.

I spent a lot of time listening to people who felt strongly about keeping the hall where it is. Those conversations were valuable. They slowed the process down in a good way. They made us ask better questions and take a closer look before moving forward.

At the same time, the reports we reviewed made it clear that the current building has some real challenges. From a structural standpoint, from an operational standpoint, and from a servicing standpoint, it has limitations. It wasn't built for the equipment, training needs, or building standards that exist today.

One of the biggest things for me was realizing just how connected the fire hall is to the community centre. Because they're part of the same structure, any major work on the fire hall would likely mean upgrades to the whole building. Even something that seems straightforward on the surface can quickly become something much bigger once you get into it.

And that brings in another concern — the future of the community hall.

Through the advisory group and through conversations with residents, it became very clear how important that space is. It's where people gather. It's where events happen. It's where the community comes together. In many ways, it's the heart of the place.

The idea of putting that at risk is something people feel strongly about, and I understand why.

So this decision isn't just about a fire hall. It's about how we support our firefighters, how we make sure public safety is protected, and how we look after the spaces that bring the community together.

As we worked through all the information, Option 1 — building a purpose-built fire hall at the Kmiecik and Dicken Road location — gradually started to stand out as a long-term solution that helps balance those things.

A new, purpose-built hall gives us the chance to design something that actually fits the needs of today and the future. It gives firefighters the space and functionality they need. And just as importantly, it separates fire services from the existing building so the community hall can continue to be used as a gathering place.

I want to be clear about something.

I know there are still people who would rather see the fire hall stay right where it is. That hasn't changed, and it hasn't been ignored. In fact, those voices played an important role in shaping this process. They pushed us to take another look. They made sure we slowed down. And they helped make this a more careful and thoughtful discussion.

Disagreement is part of any healthy community. It doesn't mean people aren't being heard.

I also want to take a moment to recognize the people who've been part of this process:

- Staff who worked through a lot of technical details, and helped gather the information we needed.
- The advisory group members who stepped up and gave their time to share community perspectives.
- The fire department who continues to serve their community while working out of a building that has its challenges.
- And the residents who stayed engaged, asked questions, and shared their views — even when the conversations weren't easy.

That level of involvement says a lot about how much people care about Hosmer.

This hasn't been an easy file. There's emotion tied to it. There's history tied to it. And there's a responsibility to make the right decision for the long term.

As the Director for the area, my job has been to listen, to learn, and to think not just about what works today, but what's going to serve this community 20, 30, or even 50 years from now.

After going through that process, I believe that Option 1 is a responsible path forward. It supports long-term public safety, gives the fire department what it needs to do its job, and helps protect the community spaces that matter to residents.

My hope is that, even if people don't all agree, they can see that the process has been thoughtful, respectful, and done with the best interests of the community in mind.

At the end of the day, we all want the same things — a safe community, a strong fire department, and a place where people can continue to gather and feel connected.

This decision is about looking forward while still respecting the views of the community.

Thank you.