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Alberta

Getty's spending grates on farmers

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Stettler

Amid the bustle of the provincial summer games, some Stettler farmers are beginning to grumble about reckless spending in Premier Don Getty's backyard.

Whether it's the \$13 million slated to calm the waters of Buffalo Lake near Getty's hilltop home or county money to upgrade a dead-end dirt trail between two of the premier's cattle pastures, some locals are questioning the priorities.

A woman who farms with her husband just eight km away says people have to wonder when the county spends a day graveling and grading what has historically been little more than a horse trail just west of Getty's ranch-style home. In the meantime, she said, other narrow and washboard roads in the area are going untended.

Local farmers are particularly galled by the amount of government money that's flowing into the Buffalo Lake revitalization scheme, and into campground and park facilities at the lake.

"There's too much money tied up into that, and yet a farmer can't even have a decent road to do their farming duties on," she said.

A 66-year-old retired farmer now living in Erskine, 12 km down the road from the Gettys, put it more bluntly but was just as leery about being identified as critical of such an influential neighbor.

"There's just too much money spent on foolish things," she said.

One of Getty's closest neighbors just shook her head at the roadwork that's going on in the region. Alberta Transportation recently offered the county an extra \$1 million in road grants, about double the provincial roadway funding the county had expected to receive. Part of the money will be devoted to continued upgrading of secondary Highway 601, an east-west corridor just south of Getty's home that would serve as a quicker route to and from Edmonton.

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The woman says most local residents are not inclined to look too critically at a gift horse that seems to be bringing more government grants and services to the riding.

"There's no doubt in my mind that he'll get elected if he runs again," she said.

"You're not going to vote against Santa Claus now are you."

Effie Butterwick, a senior living in Alix, said she doesn't accept the suggestion that Stettler is receiving favored status because it elected a premier as its MLA.

"Edmonton and Calgary have benefited and benefited and benefited. And we country people are left out in the cold. And so if a fellow moves down to Stettler it's just too damn bad for those city people," Butterwick said.

Stettler is only getting its fair share of projects and government support, she said.

"I think Stettler feels pretty good about Don Getty."