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“Working in Williston all about being Resilient”
By Williston City Administrator David Tuan
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While oil and gas markets may have been slow to wake up from hibernation during the early months of 2017, the northwest region, by contrast, has been bustling with activity.

Despite all of this activity (and maintaining long hours in the office to keep up!), we sometimes forget to stop and breathe for a moment, in order to share updates and news with our partners outside of the region. And while I’m always inclined to lead with our successes, sometimes the sales pitch tactic gets old and people just want to know the bottom line: what’s really happening and where are we headed.

With that in mind, I’m here to tell you that for better or worse, we have one heck of a season ahead of us in the northwest. The oil and gas industry appears to be gearing up for a busier year than anticipated and we couldn’t be happier. We continue our discussions with our Federal Congressional delegation to deliver the annual FAA grants as planned, and our State Legislators are working to continue the commitment the 2015 Legislature provided to complete State funding as planned as well. The redevelopment of our existing airport site, Sloulin Field, is now a longer-term development plan due to the downturn in the market and slower growth. Furthermore, the staffing situation at Sloulin Field has changed with the departure of our Airport Director. And as if that wasn’t enough, on top of it all (literally...), we have a snowy, sloppy mess about town and at our construction site that will make a quick spring start challenging at best.

Not much of a sales pitch, right? But, wait, there’s more! In all seriousness, we have a stacked deck and getting through 2017 will not be easy. But, if there’s one thing I love about North Dakota, it’s the down-to-earth resiliency of the people. Whether it’s snow, flood, economics, politics or permits, we never seem to dwell, but instead band together and develop solutions that ultimately determine our success. North Dakotans will always find a way!

And the City of Williston is no exception. We’ve formed strong partnerships with the ND Aeronautics Commission, the FAA, state legislators, consultants and others to work together in finding financial solutions for XWA during these difficult times. We’re optimistic we’ll remain on schedule and on budget with our project priorities this spring and with substantial completion in 2019. In fact, we’re honored to be hosting Governor Burgum, Lieutenant Governor Sanford, and their staff in Williston next Tuesday to tour the XWA construction site and discuss strategies for the future redevelopment of the 850 acre Sloulin Field site.

In hopes of maximizing the construction season, the City of Williston has made great progress towards moving dirt, building roads, and rerouting utilities at XWA. Land has been acquired, many permit reviews and regulatory hurdles have been negotiated and contracts for construction have been awarded to North Dakota firms eager to go to work as soon as the snow melts. Construction and engineering firms, excited to participate in the largest infrastructure project in the history of our city, are lined up out the door for an opportunity to join the team.

Our airport operations staff have stepped up to the plate admirably, strengthened relationships with stakeholders and taken on the responsibility of maintaining our commitment to providing great air service to our region.

So, despite the unexpected twists and turns that life seems to throw at us, the future continues to shine bright for North Dakota and the Bakken in particular. Perhaps that's a bit of a sales pitch after all, but I truly believe in where we're going. And as long as we can rely on the continued support and commitment from our resilient partners throughout the state, I'm certain our success will be all but guaranteed.

For further information, frequently asked questions and updates on the Williston Basin International Airport project, please see our website at <http://xwaproject.com/>