

Successful Municipal Practices: Responding to New Challenges



Tools for Change

SERVICE SHARING:

Joint Regional Recreational Facility

City of Portage la Prairie and R.M. of Portage la Prairie

The City and the R.M. of Portage la Prairie councils opened the doors to a new, state of the art, regional recreation facility in March 2010. The new facility, the Portage Credit Union (PCU) Centre, includes a main and secondary arena, a fitness centre, an aquatic centre with wave pool, a 230 person multipurpose room, a large atrium, concession and banquet food services, offices and meeting spaces.

The PCU Centre is only one of many City and R.M. joint initiatives that began with a tax sharing agreement for commercial development in 2000. Today, a planning district, a regional landfill, regional library, fire services and a number of joint sewer and regional water projects are all initiatives shared by the two municipalities. The PCU Centre project is however unique in the size of the undertaking.

A public survey, undertaken by the councils in 2007, indicated that many citizens supported councils' vision for a multi-purpose facility that would provide recreational opportunities for all ages for the entire region. The Councils knew that a project of this magnitude would be costly and unaffordable for one municipality. In 2008 the Councils undertook a feasibility study on an age friendly 'one stop shop facility'. Once completed, another public meeting was held to present the outcome of the study that included the proposed design and floor plan of the new facility.

Construction of the PCU Centre began in 2009. The federal and provincial governments each contributed \$5 million in infrastructure funding towards the \$43.2 million project. Local fundraising has also provided over \$3.4 million for the project to date. The facility is located on 'The Island', a property owned by the Portage Agricultural Society, within the City limits. The City and RM have a 99 year lease with the Agricultural Society for the property.

The municipalities have established a corporation, the Portage Regional Recreation Authority Inc. (PRRA), to manage the PCU Centre. The PRRA Agreement, signed between the City and the R.M., establishes the terms and conditions on which the PRRA is established and governed. The agreement includes provisions for:

The City and the R.M. of Portage la Prairie have an established history of partnering to deliver services to their citizens.

A separate non-profit Board, with equal representation from both municipalities, manages the PCU Centre and delivers the recreational services and programs to the region.



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- **Board representation:** The PRRA Board is comprised of three council members and one citizen representative from each municipality appointed by their respective councils. Equal representation on the Board ensures that the City and the RM's interests are equally presented.
- **Service delivery:** The PRRA Board manages recreational services and facilities for both the City and the RM. This centralized management coordinates recreational services and programs delivered to the citizens and limits duplication.
- **Financial management:** The PRRA Board is responsible to manage recreational finances. The Board may not spend more than pre-authorized in the City and the RM budgets. Operating deficits will be paid three-quarters by the City and one-quarter by the R.M.; capital repairs relating to the PCU Centre, approved by both Councils, will be paid two-thirds by the City and one-third by the R.M. The funding formulas recognize the population difference between the City and the R.M. and the anticipated useage of the PCU Centre.
- **Dispute resolution:** The agreement provides for independent arbitrators, cost shared equally between the City and the RM, recognizing that in the future there may be a need to negotiate changes.

The PCU Centre is a multi-purpose facility that provides a broad range of recreational opportunities to the entire region.

The PRRA took over management from the City and the R.M. of Portage la Prairie councils on January 1, 2010. The facility, with its indoor aquatic centre, fitness centre and two regular size ice surfaces doubling to serve as entertainment venues, supports healthy living for citizens of all ages, providing a variety of recreational and leisure activities that were not available before.

The Councils agree that the PCU Centre would not have been achievable without partnering together towards this common goal. They anticipate that this newest jointly owned, operated and funded venture will be an investment in the future, serving all of the citizens of the region and developing a sense of pride and ownership in the community.

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