

# Successful Municipal Practices: Responding to New Challenges



## *Tools for Change*

### **BETTER MUNICIPAL BUSINESS PRACTICE: Water Supply Project The RM of Wallace**

The Rural Municipality (RM) of Wallace is located in the rolling plains along the Saskatchewan border, approximately one hour west of Brandon. Most of the 1,500 residents of the municipality earn their living from farming and related agricultural services or from the oil extraction industry.

The RM of Wallace council had, for many years, been keenly aware that finding a new, reliable source of quality potable water would be critical for economic growth and development of the municipality into the future. The search became critical in 2003 when the community of Kola was placed under a boil water order. Council agreed that, in order to properly address this important challenge, all of the areas of the municipality in urgent need of an alternate water source must be identified. A municipal survey was conducted and the results revealed that 75 percent of the residents from all areas of the municipality were unsatisfied with either the water quality or quantity of their potable water supply.

The council took immediate action and, in August of 2003, an excellent and reliable water source was found just outside the boundaries of the RM of Wallace, in the RM of Miniota. The two municipalities, in conjunction with the federal and provincial governments, formulated a plan for the implementation of a new water system utilizing this source. With support from the citizens and the RM of Miniota council together with the Manitoba Water Services Board, the project proceeded to design and tendering stages. Construction would be in phases, beginning in 2004 with completion anticipated in 2008.

Phase one of construction began in August 2004 and was completed in February 2005 at a cost of approximately \$3 million. This included the construction of the well, a state of the art water treatment plant and 29 user connections. The local media, public meetings and mail-outs kept the citizens well informed on the progress of the project and project support and the number of requests for water line service connections continued to grow.

*Finding a reliable, quality potable water supply was a challenge for the municipality.*

*Once the project was underway public awareness grew and more and more citizens asked for a water service connection to their property.*

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The next phase of the project was completed in 2005 and consisted of the installation of the mainline pipe and service lines to the community of Kola. As well as providing much needed relief from a long standing boil water order, this mainline pipe formed an artery from which the project could continue to grow and expand into other areas of the municipality. Some of these branch lines were constructed in 2006 and the balance are scheduled for construction in 2007 and 2008.

Completing the project in phases has allowed residents to take advantage of the cost-sharing available under federal and provincial infrastructure programs. Customers are required to pay a 10% deposit before their service connection is installed, the cost varying from \$8,000 for the standard residential service connection to \$45,000 for a line with the capacity to service large commercial uses. After construction is complete, ratepayers have the option of paying the remainder of the cost up-front or in equal installments over 20 years as a part of their annual property tax bill.

The benefits of this water project are invaluable. The project has the capability of providing a safe, secure water supply accessible to all of the residents of the RM of Wallace and potentially to others in the RM of Pipestone and the RM of Miniota. It also provides a cost saving to the citizens who have been hauling water for many years. For the community of Kola, the convenience and peace of mind that comes from being able to turn on the tap and access clean, safe water is priceless. A good water supply is also necessary for economic development and was a key factor that prompted a feasibility study for the location of a small oil refinery in the RM of Wallace.

The Council of the RM of Wallace is proud that, through hard work and cooperation with many partners including Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA), Manitoba Water Services Board, and the RMs of Miniota and Pipestone, the water supply project has become a reality. Public awareness and involvement was key in the successful implementation of this major capital utility project. What makes Council proudest however, is the positive feedback that they receive from their citizens about the quality water supply and its benefits.

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*The system provides a safe, secure water supply accessible to all residents of the RM of Wallace and potentially others in the RMs of Pipestone and Miniota.*

*For more information on better municipal business practices, Successful Municipal Practices, and the Tools for Change program, see the Association of Manitoba Municipalities' website, at [www.amm.mb.ca](http://www.amm.mb.ca).*