

# Successful Municipal Practices: Responding to New Challenges



## *Tools for Change*

### **SERVICE SHARING:**

### **Regional Police Services Agreement**

### **The Town of Altona and the Town of Plum Coulee**

The Town of Altona and the Town of Plum Coulee are neighbouring urban agricultural centers located in the Pembina Valley region of south-central Manitoba. Both are progressive communities experiencing population growth, with Altona's population increasing from 3,434 to 3,709 and Plum Coulee's from 725 to 770 residents, between the 2001 and 2006 census. With this welcome growth came the responsibility to provide and pay for policing services.

Urban municipalities with populations greater than 750 must provide and pay for police services to their residents. When the 2006 census figures confirmed a population increase for Plum Coulee, Council immediately began exploring policing options. Council considered three options for the provision of police services:

- Continuing with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), as it had been providing excellent service to the citizens of the Town for many years;
- Establishing a local police force, which could provide benefits such as increased police visibility, community involvement and quicker emergency response times, but would be the most costly option;
- Service sharing with a nearby police service, which would provide the benefits of a local police force, but at a lesser cost.

Plum Coulee's Council ultimately decided to pursue the sharing of police services with the Town of Altona. The Altona Police Service (APS) had been providing service to the Altona community for over 60 years and the two communities were located only 25 kilometres apart. Both municipal councils appreciated the benefits of the service sharing option, as it provided all the benefits of a local police force, but at a reduced cost compared to establishing a new local police force for the Town.

The councils of Plum Coulee and Altona began consultations and negotiations to establish a Regional Police Services Agreement in early 2007. Manitoba Justice representatives attended all meetings and assisted the Towns in a consultative manner. In 2008 a Memorandum of Understanding, endorsed by Manitoba Justice, was entered into by the two municipalities. The agreement was negotiated for three years and will be reviewed annually to determine whether additional police resources are needed.

*Urban municipalities with a population of more than 750 residents are responsible to provide police services to their citizens.*

*The Councils of Plum Coulee and Altona believe that, by working together, they can meet future police capacity and accountability requirements at a lower cost than either could do on their own.*

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The APS began providing police service to Plum Coulee on April 1, 2008. The first year of the policing agreement is now complete and feedback from members of APS and the citizens of both communities has been overwhelmingly positive.

The Town of Plum Coulee is pleased that officers are available in the community office for proactive policing for nearly 20 hours per week, which includes having a constable available in the Plum Coulee civic offices two days a week. Proactive patrols and general investigations occur on a daily basis and emergency response is provided twenty four-hours a day, seven days a week. Regular reports are provided to Council on all police related activities within the town. The local police force also provides educational programs to the citizens of both communities, working with local businesses, seniors and school children on safety programs and initiatives.

The Town of Plum Coulee utilizes the increased revenue received through the Province of Manitoba General Assistance Grant to pay for police services. Urban municipalities required to provide policing qualify for increased per capita funding through this unconditional grant from the Province. Although the increased funding received does not pay the entire cost of the service, Council agrees that the minimal additional cost to their taxpayers is far outweighed by the value of service the community receives.

The Town of Altona is also pleased with the service sharing agreement, as it enables Council to reduce their annual policing costs while continuing to provide the high standard of service that residents have come to expect. Expanding service into the neighbouring municipality has provided APS with additional funding to provide ongoing training opportunities to its officers and staff.

The policing agreement between the Town of Altona and the Town of Plum Coulee, endorsed by Manitoba Justice, stands as a model for future regional policing initiatives. Sharing police services has met and surpassed the expectations of the councils and both are confident the arrangement will continue long into the future. Both Councils also believe that, by working together, they can meet future capacity and accountability requirements by utilizing their existing police service infrastructure to work “harder and smarter.”

***The policing agreement between the Towns of Altona and Plum Coulee stands as a model for future regional policing initiatives.***

***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).***

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