

# Successful Municipal Practices: Responding to New Challenges



## *Tools for Change*

### **SERVICE SHARING:**

## **The Town of Neepawa & The RM of Langford**

The Town of Neepawa is located along the Yellowhead Highway in the Westman Region. The community is located 45 minutes northeast of Brandon, the Region's largest centre, and 2 hours northwest of Winnipeg. The RM of Langford surrounds the southern half of the Town of Neepawa.

Cooperation between communities is commonplace in Neepawa - many local organizations identify themselves as representing "Neepawa and Area" or "Neepawa and District", from the Chamber of Commerce to the Collegiate to the Hospital to the local development corporation.

Over the years the Town of Neepawa and the RM of Langford have recognized the value of partnering. There are some 20 agreements with various neighbouring municipalities in order to bring services as economically as possible to their citizens. One example of a sharing agreement was when the Town of Neepawa, the RM of Langford, and the RM of Rosedale shared office space in the historic Court House building located on Hamilton Street in Neepawa's Business District. The three councils had several common goals:

- encourage community heritage leadership;
- demonstrate the economic viability of Manitoba's heritage resources; and,
- minimize the cost of office operations and use savings to improve existing services, provide new services, or reduce taxes.

This shared accommodation worked well for many years, however with expansion of municipal records, additional office equipment due to new technologies, increased staff complements, and organizations requesting space within the office, the municipalities realized that additional space was required.

Initially only one municipal office relocated, the Town of Neepawa moved to its current address – 421 First Avenue in Neepawa. The next year coincidental CAO vacancies in the Town of Neepawa and the RM of Langford triggered the initiative of a joint Chief Administrative Officer and sharing municipal office space.

Prior to committing to a course of action, several joint council meetings were held to discuss the proposal. The councils contacted other municipalities where joint administrations had been successful. Regular communication to citizens was important and the councils ensured they provided progress reports through the media.

*The Town of Neepawa and the RM of Langford recognized that 'pooling' their financial resources for the purpose of hiring a CAO would enable them to attract a professional with the experience and expertise they required.*



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The councils recognized that there are 3 keys to efficient delivery of municipal and community services:

1. know your area, its strengths, and its history, what makes it an area;
2. have a strong level of communication between the municipal jurisdictions; and,
3. understand how people adopt or buy into new ideas.

The councils agreed on the terms of the shared services and requested their administrators to jointly draft an agreement, which was then ratified by both councils. This agreement included several key features designed to meet local needs and smooth the transition process. For example, the cost sharing arrangement was set out (based on population and relative workload), as was the protocol for purchasing equipment, council meeting schedules, and the establishment of a CAO selection committee comprised of members from both councils.

The sharing of the CAO placed both municipalities in a position where they were able to afford and attract a professional with the experience and expertise they required.

Although the two municipalities both relocated their administrative offices they remained committed to the tri-partnership of the viability of the Court House Building. The RM of Rosedale remains situated in the historic Court House together with other organizations which are funded by one, two, or all three of the municipalities (i.e. Chamber of Commerce, Lily Festival Committee, Neepawa & Area Planning District Office, Youth Employment Program, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, and the Archives Committee).

The shared administrative office is considered a benefit by both municipalities. It is an economical solution for operating costs such as heat, lights, and office equipment. It has enhanced service to ratepayers – because there are staff from both municipalities in the office, there is no need to close the office to accommodate lunch breaks, sick days, or vacation schedules – there is always adequate coverage.

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*Council  
recognized the  
importance of  
having the  
administration  
office ‘open for  
business’.*

*For more  
information on  
municipal  
restructuring,  
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).*