

# Successful Municipal Practices: Responding to New Challenges



## *Tools for Change*

### **BETTER MUNICIPAL BUSINESS PRACTICES: Sustainable Community Plan Town of Snow Lake**

Snow Lake is a remote Manitoba town located 685 km north of Winnipeg, nestled on the shores of the lake from which it takes its name. Mining is Snow Lake's major industry and the community, currently home to approximately 800 residents, is very familiar with the booms and busts of the industry as mines open and close. Fluctuations in the population and the local economy mean changing municipal service and infrastructure demands, no small challenge for a Town to address effectively and efficiently.

*Snow Lake recognized the need to plan for significant anticipated growth.*

In 2007, with the announcement of new discoveries of rich deposits of copper and zinc and the possible reopening of the gold mine, the future looked promising for Snow Lake. Council agreed that it was time to plan for the anticipated influx of new workers and their families and embark on the development of a Sustainable Community Plan.

In January 2008 Council contracted a consulting firm to assist in developing a Sustainable Community Plan that would address economy, environment and community issues for the next twenty years. One of the first steps in the process was the establishment of a twelve member Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives from the municipality, the school, local businesses, the mining industry, the Regional Health Authority, seniors' organizations and the Province. The mandate of the Advisory Committee was to contribute their experience, knowledge and expertise to the planning project and to act as liaison between Council and the consulting firm.

*Stakeholder interviews and community visioning workshops identified the community's vision for Snow Lake in 2028.*

Public consultation was an important and a unique aspect of the strategic planning process. The consulting firm conducted stakeholder interviews with representatives from all walks of the community including local businesses, agencies, volunteer organizations, the mining industry and provincial government. Three community visioning workshops, facilitated by the Advisory Committee, were also conducted with residents and stakeholders of all ages who identified their concept of Snow Lake today and their vision for Snow Lake in 2028.

The consulting firm prepared a draft Plan based on information gathered at the public consultations, as well as historical population and economic information. The draft Plan was presented to the Advisory Committee and Council for review and input, revised with their recommended changes, and then released to the community at a public open house session.



*Tools for Change*

## **Successful Municipal Practices: Responding to New Challenges**

In November 2009 the Sustainable Community Plan was complete. The Plan sets out short and long term goals for Snow Lake over the next twenty years, and strategies to meet these goals. It is unique as it provides housing and growth options based on various population projections, from a declining or zero growth population to an increase of more than double the current population of the community.

Goals and strategies outlined in the Plan include:

- Accommodating development in a cost-efficient and environmentally responsible manner by utilizing existing residential developments and improving existing infrastructure.
- Expanding housing opportunities, particularly apartment housing and affordable seniors housing.
- Creating a prosperous and diverse local economy by supporting regional economic development initiatives and promoting the tourism industry.
- Providing residents with active and healthy lifestyle opportunities by sustaining and enhancing recreational services and facilities and promoting volunteerism to run them.
- Providing visionary leadership by pursuing public and private partnerships and seeking assistance from other governments for infrastructure improvements.
- Protecting the environment by promoting solid waste reduction, community beautification and protection of the natural environment.

The Town has already moved forward on several short term goals and strategies. They are using in-fill lots for development as needed and have already upgraded the wastewater treatment plant and repaired many unsafe sidewalks. Council is also currently negotiating for affordable seniors housing and promoting the partnership between the Manitoba Age Friendly Initiative and the Senior Centre. To help create a greener economy council has banned plastic bag use and is maintaining existing green space. The complete Sustainable Community Plan can be accessed at [www.snowlake.ca](http://www.snowlake.ca).

Council agrees that the Sustainable Community Plan outlines realistic goals for community sustainability to meet the economic and population fluctuations that have long been a reality for Snow Lake. Although mining companies put their expansion plans on hold in early 2009, awaiting improvement in the global demand for metals, the Town of Snow Lake is well prepared for the inevitable recovery of the industry.

For more information contact:

Beverley Atkinson  
Community Development Officer  
Town of Snow Lake  
(204) 358-7630  
E-mail: [snowlake\\_cedo@mts.net](mailto:snowlake_cedo@mts.net)

***The Sustainable  
Community Plan  
sets out both short  
and long-term goals  
for the community.***

***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).***