

Successful Municipal Practices: Responding to New Challenges



Tools for Change

WORKING REGIONALLY WITH NEW PARTNERS The Town of The Pas, The RM of Kelsey and Opaskwayak Cree Nation

The Town of The Pas is an urban municipality (5,800 residents) located 610 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg. Adjacent to The Pas is Opaskwayak Cree Nation (OCN), a First Nation community (2,300 on-reserve members), and the Rural Municipality (RM) of Kelsey (1,750 residents).

The Town, the RM, and OCN all face challenges that are unique to the north and remote communities. Goods and services are more expensive in the north than in the south which means the communities have to accept higher costs to achieve an equal standard of service. Also, like many other northern municipalities, The Pas and Kelsey have experienced a decline in population. OCN, on the other hand is growing and seeking ways to improve efficiency in the delivery of services to its residents.

To overcome these challenges, The Pas, Kelsey and OCN determined that they needed to work together to find economies of scale and service delivery efficiencies, and to promote their communities. The communities are now actively building on existing regional approaches to service delivery, and are forming new partnerships in support of community economic development and tourism promotion.

Developing this partnership approach first involved a commitment on all sides to recognize and reduce barriers, both real and perceived, that come with different legal, political and cultural systems of First Nations and non-aboriginal communities. Critical to its success was an understanding of traditional and current Aboriginal land use principles, social structure, decision making structures and how these factors influence Aboriginal decision making.

Service sharing is not something that is new to this northern region and a multitude of arrangements, both old and new, exist:

- **Delivery of sewer and water:** Since 1970, The Pas has provided sewer and water to an on-reserve trailer court as well as two single family dwellings on OCN land located within Town limits.

First Nations and Municipalities provide similar services to their communities. Developing a partnership approach to deliver these services may improve efficiency.



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- **Shared public facilities:** The Pas has long-standing agreements with Kelsey to deliver Town services to the RM on a cost-shared basis. These include sharing the waste disposal grounds, cemetery, recreation facilities and the sewage lagoon.
- **Delivery of regional services:** Currently, The Pas, Kelsey and OCN all support a regional waste recycling centre and used oil recycling centre, and cost share in the use of the local RCMP service dog. The Town also provides firefighting protection to the RM. A unique example of service sharing is the three communities' sponsorship, together with the Anglican Church Army of Canada, of the Northern Gateway Chaplaincy project, which promotes social, emotional and spiritual health in the communities.
- **Economic development / tax sharing:** In 2004, The Pas and Kelsey entered into a tax sharing agreement to support their joint effort to attract new industrial and commercial development to the region. Under the agreement, the host municipality retains 30% of municipal tax revenues generated by the new development (and any development costs associated with the development), with the balance of the revenue going into a tax pool. Ten percent (10%) of the funds allocated to the tax pool are retained to fund future development projects, and the balance distributed between the municipalities in accordance with a formula that is structured into the tax sharing agreement.
- **Municipal Services and Development Agreement:** The Town and OCN are presently completing the negotiation of a Municipal Services and Development Agreement that will provide a framework for the provision of municipal services, compatible zoning and development and dispute resolution for urban reserve lands within the Town.
- **Community economic development / Tourism:** The three communities support the Economic Development Tourism Commission. The Commission is searching out new ways to promote and develop the area and is presently investigating ethanol production, modular housing and joint tourism initiatives.

Service sharing has enabled the Town, the RM and the Opaskwayak Cree Nation to capitalize on the strengths of their region and to overcome the challenges that each community would face if it tried to go it alone. By sharing services and building partnerships, citizens have access to a broader range of affordable services and to a greater range of opportunities.

For more information contact: The Town of The Pas (204) 627-1100
 The RM of Kelsey (204) 623-7474

The Town and the RM have had long standing agreements on cost sharing and this year entered into a tax sharing agreement.

For more information on municipal service sharing Successful Municipal Practices, and the Tools for Change program, see the Association of Manitoba Municipalities' website, at www.amm.mb.ca.