



Municipal Area Partnership

# REPORT

## Fall 2007

### What has MAP done for you?

In 2004 the Councils of all six municipalities (Mountain View County, Carstairs, Cremona, Didsbury, Olds and Sundre) approved the formation of the Inter-municipal Cooperation Steering Committee (ICSC) to be the working group for the six municipalities. This group has successfully obtained grant funds from the province, to implement partnership efforts in the areas of:

1. Adoption of a mission statement and principles for collaboration between the six municipalities.
2. Development of a new fire agreement between the County and each of the five urban municipalities.
3. Development of a regional sustainability plan.
4. Regional Employee Health and Safety Program - all six municipalities have joined together to hire a regional health and employee safety coordinator to develop a Health and Safety program for the employees of all municipalities.
5. Hosting a Shared Services Review Workshop in December 2005 that reviewed current shared services and targeted opportunities to pursue further shared service opportunities
6. Review of partnership agreements and governance options led to a change in status from Inter-municipal Cooperation Steering Committee (ICSC) to a permanent Municipal Area Partnership Committee (MAP) and governance terms of reference for the MAP; Committee has been adopted by all six municipalities
7. Development of a consistent Inter-municipal Development Plan (IDP) negotiation procedure between the County and each of the urban communities looking to annex lands, which have been adopted by Councils in Cremona and Carstairs, and Olds. The aim of this process was to reduce the time needed to negotiate IDPs between the County and each urban municipality, as the time frame for separate negotiations could be as long as two years with each urban community; with delays where the County needed to negotiate with multiple urban communities at the same time. This process had two major elements:
  - a. Development of a common template for an IDP Agreement. This IDP template has been reviewed and adopted by all six municipalities and has been used in negotiations between Mountain View County and the five urban municipalities. The template provides for each annexation to include land for 20 years of growth and to identify a fringe area reserved for future annexations that provides for a further 20 years of growth. This allows the urban communities and the County to plan for long term growth
  - b. A template Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) has also been adopted by the six member municipalities, which addresses issues such as recreation and culture program funding, property tax sharing, and water and wastewater access by developments in the County.
8. Started the process of hiring a consultant to compose a Regional Parks, Recreation and Cultural Master Plan, which will determine when and how municipalities will allocate the funding for parks, recreational and cultural facilities and activities. A final document is expected to be presented to the MVC Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Planning Committee on Sept. 1, 2008.
9. Hosting an information session for prospective Council candidates in Olds on June 14 . Potential candidates from Olds, Sundre, Carstairs and the County came out to talk first-hand with local municipal officials about the commitments and duties involved in being a Councillor, Mayor or Reeve.
10. Working together with local service providers to create a regional application for Family and Community Support Services (FCSS).

### Ahead of the curve

*When it comes to inter-municipal relationships, Ty Lund has seen the good, the bad, and the ugly.*

The MLA for Rocky Mountain House- and former Reeve of the M.D. of Clearwater- recalls an instance in central Alberta where relations between a rural and urban municipality deteriorated to the point that the town levied a surcharge on residents from the surrounding County to use a newly built recreation facility.

"Does that help at all towards a good relationship?" asked Lund. "You've got to build a community, and you should not be restricted by municipal boundaries."

While the Stelmach government as of late has advocated for stronger inter-municipal relationships, Lund acknowledges that rural and urban municipalities in Mountain View County are ahead of the curve province-wide when it comes to inter-municipal cooperation.

Well before Municipal Sustainability became a buzzword across the province, Lund recalls that representatives from the municipal governments throughout Mountain View County were meeting prior to 2004, leading up to the creation of the Inter-Municipal Cooperation Steering Committee (ICSC)- the predecessor to the Municipal Area Partnership (MAP).

"That is the sort of thing that is so critical, you have to get to know the folks that are in those elected bodies and get to understand the issues," said Lund. "The fact is that there's only one taxpayer, and to have inter-municipal squabbling benefits no one; but huge benefits come from cooperation and working together."

Mountain View County - and the communities of Carstairs, Cremona, Didsbury, Olds and Sundre -have moved beyond a sometimes adversarial past, and through ICSC and then MAP, have tackled a variety of issues which have potential ramifications across the region such as recreation and culture funding, fire protection and annexation.

According to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for the Village of Cremona, the ability of local municipal leaders to look at the big picture has helped contribute to MAP's success.

Terry Lofstrom says the cooperative approach amongst the municipalities has made a big difference for his community.

"I think MAP was the forerunner for some funding and the hiring of the consultant who facilitated, and probably helped speed up our annexation and the IDP (Inter-Municipal Development Plan) and MOA (Memorandum of Agreement) process by about a year or two," he added.



According to Lofstrom, the IDP template worked out by the MAP partnership is being held up elsewhere in the province as a model agreement, and he characterizes it as "cutting edge."

Didsbury CAO Roy Brown agrees, adding that he's hearing from other municipalities that the communities of MAP are being seen as leaders in the province.

"I have had a number of phone calls and emails asking for material and recommendations, how should they proceed and what should we recommend to them," Brown added.

This is no surprise to Brian Austrom, former CAO of Camrose County, who at one time served as interim head of the Mountain View Regional Waste Commission. In his present capacity as facilitator for the annexation negotiations between the County and Carstairs, Cremona and Olds, Austrom says the difference in rural- urban relationships during the last five years is evident.

"When I first worked in this area four years ago, although there was some lip service being paid to trying to cooperate with your neighbours, at that time there was still a very strong 'them' and 'us' sentiment between the County and the five urbans. Today what I see, there is much more of a sense of 'we'- what's good for our region is good for the municipality," says Austrom.

"I would say that they're setting a standard for the communities in the central Alberta corridor of looking of ways to work together."

Having moved on from issues of the past, Olds CAO Dale Withage believes the County has made some significant moves in formulating joint use agreements and increased funding for recreation, libraries and fire.

"From the urban's perspective, we never felt the County was paying their fair share for library and recreation, that kind of thing. That got discussion going, and we now have this Memorandum of Agreement (MOA); so that's where it really addresses the County's need for water and the sewer, and the recreation and library funding," says Withage.

Doug Plamping, Chief Administrative Officer for Mountain View County, says one important aspect of the development of the agreements between all six municipalities was having each Council involved at every stage of the process.

"With forecasted decreases in revenues from oil and gas, the County needed to diversify its tax base; and with rapid growth in the region, each of the urban centers needed to annex sufficient land to allow for planned growth," says Plamping. "Working together only made sense."

According to Plamping, the MOA provides 20 years of growth for each urban centre within their boundaries, as well as a further 20 years of growth in a an adjoining fringe area.

"To support expanding recreation and culture programs in the region the County is increasing its support from the 2006 level of \$408,915 per year; to reach \$1,106,200 per year by 2011, plus inflation and increases for population growth," he added. Additionally, in return for access to water and sewer services, the County will share municipal tax revenues for developments outside urban boundaries that are connected to those services, says Plamping.

The spirit of cooperation has also proven to be essential when dealing with the Provincial government. With the 2007 provincial budget stipulating that between 20 to 100 per cent of available Municipal Sustainability Funding must be used in joint projects with other municipalities, Rocky Mountain House MLA Ty Lund says the MAP municipalities are ahead of the curve in being ready to profit from the Province's desire to foster inter-municipal cooperation.

"For every dollar we spend in municipalities, if the municipalities are working together, then we're going to get better mileage for every dollar we spend," says Lund. "It's just so beneficial to us as a provincial government if we don't have squabbling."

Sundre CAO Nita Bartholow agrees, adding that the positive relationship will also mean a more equitable relationship between Town and County ratepayers now, and in the future.

"The IDP's have impacted recreational and culture program funding significantly," says Bartholow. "As well, the County has significant developments on our town borders, so to allow these developments to have water and wastewater services right off the start does away with local improvement assessments on these properties at the point when the Town of Sundre grows and annexes these areas."

Roy Brown adds that as the inter-municipal relationships strengthens; ultimately the taxpayers will be the biggest beneficiaries.

"I think any time that you're working co-operatively it works to the benefit of both parties," says Brown. "When I look back at the short time I've been here, and the amount of cooperation that is now going on, we're saving dollars for the taxpayer; we're also getting better service."

For Olds CAO Dale Withage, the open communication fostered through the MAP partnership has transformed his community's relationship with Mountain View County.

"There's been so much discussion when you go to the AUMA (Alberta Urban Municipalities Association) conference, and they talk about all the issues we used to talk about between the urbans and the rural, and I'm thinking 'boy, it's taken a lot of work, but we've got a good working relationship with our County.'"

## Like hockey, MAP's success is a team effort

*Hockey has been credited on many occasions with bringing Canadians together as a nation.*

Therefore, it isn't surprising that hockey may also have been the catalyst that first brought the members communities of the Municipal Area Partnership (MAP) to the table.

What was to become the Inter-municipal Cooperation Steering Committee (ICSC), and later MAP, can trace its roots to a social function in the most unlikely of locations- Fort McMurray.

It was in 2002 when former Olds- Didsbury MLA Robert Clark was in Fort McMurray as Chairman of the Board of the Alberta Junior Hockey League. While at a reception, he encountered Guy Boutellier, MLA for the bustling oil sands burg, and Provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs in the Klein government of the time.

Clark struck up a conversation with the Minister, and as the evening progressed, talk shifted towards the state of inter-municipal relations in Mountain View County- which at that time were less than ideal.

"I offered to help Boutellier with inter-municipal cooperation in Mountain View County, and within a week he called about getting things going," says Clark.

The Minister asked Clark and Tom Forgraves, a former assistant Deputy Minister in the Department of Municipal Affairs, to take on the challenge of bringing the County and five municipalities closer together. With the urban municipalities exploring ways of working together minus the County, the Ministry sent a letter to the municipalities informing them that all six would be expected to come to the table.

Clark called the initial meeting on his home turf, the Carstairs Golf Course, in what would prove to be an icy start for ICSC. "There wasn't much enthusiasm by anyone," recalls Clark.

However, progress was made and it was decided that a committee of the Chief Administrative Officers from all six municipalities would work together with Clark, Forgraves, and a consultant paid for by the Ministry to get things moving.

"We held meetings on what we're going to do for the region. We asked 'how can we do this?'" says Clark. "The key thing was to build some trust- There was no trust."

Members of each Council began working with the committee, and according to Olds Chief Administrative Office (CAO) Dale Withage, while there wasn't agreement amongst all of the parties all of the time, the partners agreed to stay at the table to try and find something that worked.

"That group started before the 2004 election and zeroed in on a couple of things, one was the fire agreement, and we made good progress through that, and the commitment was there to continue on," says Withage.

A terms of reference for what was to be called the ICSC was passed, and by December of 2004, the Councils of all six municipalities approved the formation of the ICSC to be the working group for the six municipalities.

Since the election of 2004, the scope of the ICSC group has expanded, branching out into the creation of a number of regional partnerships. In 2006, the ICSC evolved into a permanent Municipal Area Partnerships Committee (MAP), with governance terms of reference for the MAP Committee being adopted by all six municipalities.

Upon reflection, Clark believes the creation of MAP partnership is as significant a move as the construction of a regional water line south from Innisfail through Mountain View County to Crossfield in the 1970s.

"In the beginning we looked around at examples in Vermilion and Wetaskiwin. Now people look at what happened in Mountain View," Clark added. "It's a feather in everyone's cap, and it's nice to be seen as a municipal leader in this region."



## What is MAP?

Founded in 2004 as the Inter-Municipal Cooperation Steering Committee (ICSC), the Municipal Area Partnership is a diverse group of unique and independent communities working together to provide a great place to reside, work, play and grow in a safe and healthy environment, while enhancing economic development, leading to prosperity and sustainability for all.

For more information on the Municipal Area Partnership, please contact Doug Plamping at 403-335-3311 ext. 112

## Our membership

### Mountain View County - Managing Partner

- Two Council members and one administrator

### Town of Olds - Member Municipality and Chair

- One Council member and one administrator

### Town of Sundre - Member Municipality and Past Chair

- One Council member and one administrator

### Town of Carstairs - Member Municipality

- One Council member and one administrator

### Village of Cremona - Member Municipality

- One Council member and one administrator

### Town of Didsbury - Member Municipality

- One Council member and one administrator