

Saskatchewan Municipal **Best Practice**

North of Divide Planning District Commission

CONTACT

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THE PRACTICE

The North of Divide Planning Commission is a provincially established body that provides many opportunities for participating municipalities to share successes and examine shortcomings. North of Divide provides the potential to collectively access services that would otherwise be unaffordable, or beyond the management capabilities of individual municipalities. The current services being offered are Municipal Planning and Bylaw Enforcement. Discussion and planning for implementation of other future services is ongoing. The need for this practice arose as a result of increased expectations on the member municipalities to plan for logical development and prepare for growth.

THE PROCESS

The North of Divide Planning District Commission is a group of member municipalities that initially formed in 2010 as the North of Divide Community Association (NODCA). After the success of the initial meetings of NODCA, the group began to investigate concrete ways to acquire and share resources that go beyond the capacity of individual municipalities. The board established common areas of concern and focus. Then the board determined how they would provide services related to these focus areas. An active search began to identify and communicate with potential partners who could assist the North of Divide in meeting its goals. Several grants were received. The assistance of the Municipal Capacity Development Program (MCDP) was commissioned at the initial stages and played a key role in developing such documents as the Memorandum of Understanding, Community Action Plan, and Community Profile. Once an Action Plan and Memorandum of Understanding were in place, the next step was to begin the process of renewal of official community plans and zoning bylaws. A consulting firm was hired to support this goal and an administrator was also hired. In September 2011 the Ministry of Municipal Affairs provided the ministerial order to establish the North of Divide Planning Commission as a legal entity. In December 2011, the North of Divide proceeded with the establishment of a Development Appeals Board. In 2012, it was decided that the North of Divide would begin to offer bylaw enforcement services, as well as, community planning services.

THE RESULTS

The overall result is a progressive and cooperative partnership of rural and urban communities promoting growth and common goals for a thriving, safe and stable and sustainable region. North of Divide promotes the concept of

“one voice with a shared understanding, offering knowledge, guidance and proactive planning in an economically efficient and affordable way for the betterment of all citizens in the region.”

LESSONS LEARNED

Municipalities do not have to reinvent the wheel. If there is something new that a municipality is faced with, another municipality has likely dealt with the same situation, or something very similar. It is far more effective and efficient to learn from another’s experiences than to try and solve a problem on one’s own. Municipalities share similar needs and yet there are times when large amounts of capital are directed to multiple contractors to provide essentially the same work. By having a regional group that is focused on regional cooperation and the sharing of resources, jobs could be combined, where applicable, to save costs and increase efficiencies.