

Intermunicipal Economic Collaboration

Location: Saskatchewan

Topic(s): Building Intermunicipal Relationships

Please describe the situation.

In 2016, the City of Prince Albert entered into a Prince Albert Region Intermunicipal Business License (IMBL) Agreement with the Town of Duck Lake, The Town of Rosthern and the Town of Shellbrook. This agreement was a two-year pilot project with the intent to reduce the amount of regulations for businesses that want to work in more than one municipality in the area.

Under the pilot project, a business with an annual business license in one of the participating communities would have the option to purchase an IMBL which would allow the business to legally operate in each of the participating municipalities. The annual licence fee is split with 50% going to the municipality where the IMBL was purchased and 50% divided equally amongst the remaining participating municipalities.

What was the current political environment? What factors led to the situation? What were the events that unfolded in this particular scenario?

Over the last few years, there have been many changes in local, provincial and national economies. Today businesses, industry, municipalities, agencies and others are continually challenged to understand how to best position themselves for success within a changeable economic environment. Economic development, then can be understood as the effort to increase wealth and improve the quality of life within a community or region. The most successful economies are often organized on a regional basis.

There is a long history of the Prince Albert Planning District (PAPD) and member municipalities working cooperatively, overcoming challenges, and working towards a shared vision for the future of the region.

How did you respond to or address the situation?

Recognizing this, stakeholders within the Prince Albert region wished to pursue an economic development approach that would be tangible, practical and sustainable. The desire is to create a regional framework for an organization which would play a critical role in the connection, coordination and implementation of economic development planning and projects. This organization would be the cornerstone of support for regional economic development. As it evolves, it will help bring financial and technical resources to the table in support of projects and initiatives. It will also serve as an important link to related agencies and organizations as well as proactively market both the province and the region.

In 2017, Prince Albert City Council commissioned the development of an economic development framework for the region. While there was a professed need for enhanced coordination and support for regional economic development activities, further research, analysis and consultative facilitation were completed to clarify the circumstances whereby an economic development organization might be established. Differentiation and efficiency were two primary drivers for stakeholders to consider a regional partnership.

The result was a recommendation for the establishment of a regional, non-profit economic development alliance, supported by four strategic focus areas and funded by six regional shareholder members through an incremental, flat-fee approach.

What lessons did you learn from this scenario?

This IMBL project has allowed the City to collaborate with our neighbours to promote business and economic prosperity in the region. During the first year of the project the City received \$1,500 in additional business license revenue and \$4,125 in year two.

There is a long history of the Prince Albert Planning District and member municipalities working cooperatively, overcoming challenges and working towards a shared vision for the future of the region. The Prince Albert District Planning Commission has been a successful partnership that spans over 60 years, one of the oldest planning districts in the province.

What advice would you give to someone going through a similar situation?

In order to recognize and support economic opportunities, regional collaboration must become the standard operating procedure. Regions best understand their assets and what is important for long-term prosperity as players can come together to establish priorities and successfully implement initiatives.