

## Setting Intermunicipal Precedence

Location: Alberta

Topic(s): Collaborating on Municipal Services

Please describe the situation.

Over a two-year period, our town went through an amalgamation process including an arbitration process for recreation funding. Both initiatives were a first for the Town and the Province. The Town initiated forced amalgamation discussions under a section of the Municipal Government Act. The reason to do so was to let the County know that the partnership was broken and we could no longer carry the financial burden of providing a variety of services. The amalgamation study was completed and submitted to the Minister. The minister decided that amalgamation was off the table and instructed both municipalities to focus on a recreation study and agreement. The study was completed however the parties could not agree on a few factors. Since there was no agreement the next step was arbitration.

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

The political environment at the time between both municipalities was at an all-time low even though we worked out a fire agreement. The Town told the County that over 50% of the users of recreation services were county residents and they refused to accept those numbers.

How did you respond to or address the situation?

Knowing the reasons the town took such drastic steps, and being the first town in Alberta to do so, I knew that we were entering a new turf. I needed to remain strong and objective. Our Council members spent two years on both of these issues and they remained strong with conviction that this was the right time and way to make a difference. It was one of the most positive experience I've had in local government, even though there was a lot of extra work and emotions were high.

What lessons did you learn from this scenario?

Sometimes you need to jump off the diving board without knowing how deep is the water. Having a strong Council is everything when going into controversial issues and possibly setting precedents in your own province.

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

Be there for your Council, be as informed as possible, and recognize stress factors for your staff, Council members and yourself.

If you would like more information regarding this case study, please contact:

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