

# Regional Cooperation Challenge

The Municipal District of Bonnyville Council believes in Regional Cooperation – not Regional Government.

M.D. Council has been a leader in Regional Cooperation over the last 10 years as it has entered into several cooperative funding agreements, supported various regional service initiatives and donated to a multitude of community groups in our three neighbouring urban municipalities. There is a long list of projects and donations which demonstrates this point.

Through our Regional Community Development Agreement, which was increased after the mediation process in 2009, both the Village of Glendon and the Town of Bonnyville benefit annually, with \$126,528 and \$860,538 respectively allocated this year. The City of Cold Lake refused to sign this agreement, which has since essentially cost the City \$6 million. The M.D. entered into a Part Nine 50% ownership of the Bonnyville and District Centennial Centre with the Town of Bonnyville, which equates to an annual cost of over \$1 million. The M.D. also approached the City of Cold Lake in regards to a Part Nine cooperative ownership when the Energy Centre construction was first talked about, but the offer was rebuffed. The M.D. did give \$2.5 million to the construction of the Energy Centre and Arena. The M.D. also gave the City of Cold Lake \$1 million in 2013 for the new Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) building which opens in August.

Council has given \$314,000 over three years to the Glendon Ag Society for renovations to the Glendon Arena. Council also supports the Bonnyville Chamber of Commerce by giving \$23,000 annually to help cover rent and staffing costs. The M.D. assists the Town of Bonnyville, which owns and operates the Bonnyville Regional Airport, with annual operational costs.

This spring, M.D. Council donated \$200,000 to support the Town of Bonnyville's new splash park. Approximately four years ago, Council agreed to provide \$25,000 to the City of Cold Lake for their splash park, which is not constructed yet. The M.D. gives the Glendon, Bonnyville and Cold Lake Agricultural Societies \$20,000 each as an annual donation to help support them. The Cold Lake and Bonnyville Museums enjoy an annual operating grant of \$17,500. The Glendon Seniors received a grant of \$12,000 in 2013.

But that's not all. The M.D. also supports both the Bonnyville Health Foundation and Cold Lake's Hearts for Healthcare to the tune of \$10,000 each, annually. In the past, Council also provided funds to both healthcare foundations to support doctor recruitment to the tune of \$63,000 each. The M.D. is also entering into a partnership with the Town of Bonnyville and the Bonnyville Health Foundation for a future doctor recruitment and retention program.

Presently, the majority of the local municipalities are part of the Beaver River Regional Waste Management Commission to coordinate the removal of waste through the urban landfills and rural transfer stations. The Town of Bonnyville and the Municipal District of Bonnyville also partner on the Bonnyville Regional Fire Authority, which encompasses ambulance services for the two municipalities as well.

The abovementioned partnerships demonstrate how the M.D. is helping to create a Regional Community, without the need for a Regional Government.

As we move towards more Regional Cooperation, logically the next steps would be to expand the Fire Authority to include Glendon and the City of Cold Lake for both fire and ambulance. In conjunction, the municipalities must continue to work for the provision of regional water. Presently there is a Regional Water Commission, but Cold Lake has a veto in that organization, so the governance method would have to be adjusted to have equal representation.

Cooperation is a two-way street. These types of Regional Cooperation ventures cannot be one-sided. Everyone needs to benefit. Our MLA can take the lead and encourage each municipality to manage their own affairs. If more money is needed, then each municipality should be encouraged to look for new money, as the City of Cold Lake did with the Air Weapons Range. This agreement netted the City an additional \$13.9 million in 2014. It's expected to grow to over \$24 million annually in the coming years.

If we are going to talk about cooperation then we need to stop talking about Regional Government. The M.D. of Bonnyville Council has no intention of splitting our municipality, or assessment, with either the Town of Bonnyville or the City of Cold Lake. If our neighbouring urban municipalities want the M.D. to come to the table, then they need to be prepared to talk about the sharing of specific projects – a two-way street.

The concept of Regional Government is not new for the M.D. of Bonnyville. In the late 90s, the M.D. and Improvement District #18 (which encompassed what is now the east end of the M.D. and the rural area around Lac La Biche) were amalgamated by the province. Regionalization with the Lac La Biche area did not work, or last. The M.D.'s stance on Regional Government is one based on experience. That is why the M.D.'s goal is to create strong Regional Cooperation.

The M.D. of Bonnyville Council is prepared to take the lead to move forward towards greater Regional Cooperation. Council will host a meeting in late September with all the local municipalities – Town of Bonnyville, Village of Glendon, M.D. of Bonnyville, City of Cold Lake, Summer Village of Pelican Narrows and the Summer Village of Bonnyville Beach – to begin the discussions and develop a timeline for success.