

Successful Municipal Practices: Responding to New Challenges



Tools for Change

SERVICE SHARING:

Regional Library

The RM of Alexander, The RM of Victoria Beach, The RM of St. Clements & The Town of Powerview – Pine Falls

Bibliothèque Allard Regional Library, one of the oldest bilingual libraries in Manitoba, provides library services to residents of the Rural Municipalities (RMs) of Alexander and Victoria Beach, The Town of Powerview-Pine Falls and part of the RM of St. Clements. The four municipal councils work together to deliver cost effective and efficient library services to their citizens and the construction of a new library building in 2008 marks the first step to continued success into the future.

The Library was founded in 1983 and was originally located in the École Communautaire School building in St. Georges to serve the residents of the RM of Alexander. In addition to the original location, an additional branch called “The Beaches Library” was added in the Walter White School to provide convenient service to the residents of the RM of Victoria Beach and St. Clements. In 2006, the Town of Powerview Pine-Falls became a member of the Library and services were extended to its residents. The Library, funded by the four member municipalities on a per capita basis, is managed by the Regional Library Board whose members are appointed by the municipal councils.

By late 2006, growing library memberships, growing school enrollments and limited space in the St. Georges School building made it necessary for the Board to search for a new location for its main library. Public consultations began and the Library Board and member municipal councils and residents soon agreed on the construction of a new facility on a property owned by the RM of Alexander in the community of St. Georges. This location, provided by the RM at no cost, is central to the entire region, easily accessible to the school and has ample room for parking and future growth. It is also a site of significant historical importance to the area as it is the location of the former “Bouvier Store” that served the community for decades as a store and gas station, as well as a popular meeting place.

Service sharing to provide essential library services works well for the four partnering municipalities.

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In the spring of 2007 The Library Board and the Community Development Corporation launched a local fundraising campaign to raise money for the new library and succeeded in raising over \$7,000 through events like yard sales, shows and community suppers. Grants from Hometown Manitoba, Economic Development Council for Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities, the Manitoba Community Services Council provided \$91,500 in additional funds towards the \$850,000.00 project. Provincial grants and the municipalities provided the remainder of the funding. Construction began in the spring of 2008 and on November 25, 2008 the doors of the new 4,000 square facility opened to the public.

Membership to the library is free to residents of participating municipalities and to date there are nearly 3,000 members. Non-resident fees are \$25 per person or \$45 per family per year, and residents of the neighbouring communities, including those of Sagkeeng and Brokenhead Ojibway First Nations communities, often use the Library. Open thirty two hours per week, the Library loans approximately 25,000 items annually. Summer reading programs, lifelong learning resources and literacy programs are all a part of the library program. The facility is also the administrative centre for the branch library located in the Walter White School that serves the municipalities of Victoria Beach and St. Clements.

The new Library is much more than books and magazines. It is the Community Connections centre for the area, and now provides a number of new services to library users including: access to computers equipped with internet service, and photocopy and fax services. The future plans are to have the location of an arts and crafts gallery that features the works of local artisans and includes museum displays. As a bilingual centre, it is a place where both English and French speakers feel at home.

Sharing the cost of the library facility enables these four neighbouring municipalities to build a state of the art library facility at significant cost savings compared with the cost of building one library for each municipality. The library also provides the added benefit of being a meeting place for all residents of the region.

The Councils of the RMs of Alexander, Victoria Beach and St. Clements and the Town of Powerview-Pine Falls agree that working together through a regional library board to provide essential municipal services benefits the entire region and the new library facility will serve them well into the future.

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The construction of a new library branch in 2008 marked the first step towards continued success for the regional library.

For more information on better municipal business practices, Successful Municipal Practices, and the Tools for Change program, see the Association of Manitoba Municipalities' website, at www.amm.mb.ca.