

Theme 3: Governance and Partnerships

Imagining who we could be: A governance and partnership story

It is all downhill from here. And in this case, that's a good thing. We're standing atop the highest point of the community's latest attraction, a wellness spa and adventure playground that's open all year, complete with outdoor adventure pursuits. Having cut the grand opening ribbon, we're about to discover the joy of downhill skiing in our own backyard.

As recently as 2011, this environmentally friendly spa was but a gleam in the eye of a few farsighted leaders. Boundless thinking coupled with partnerships made it real. Municipal and provincial governments rallied around, dismantling borders and giving the private sector confidence to invest in an expanding complex that already includes gold star condos, a guest ranch and chalets. All involved deserve to take a bow, and so they do on this opening day.

In a remarkable way, our community has become known for innovative partnerships as initiatives such as the spa prove what we can accomplish together. Rubbing shoulders, exchanging visions, partners find new reasons to respect each other. They readily share money, services and space and as a result, accomplish more with less. That's synergy!

Partners have built a post-secondary campus, expanded our arts festivals and established a strong alternative energy section here. Partners are protecting our water resources, managing our trails and golf course, diversifying our economy.

Partnerships also are behind a new one-stop shop for government services. Now we have one place to do much of our municipal, county, provincial and federal business. It's a particular relief for county residents to have their municipal government administrative services located right in our community. Avenues for grassroots involvement have also expanded. Anyone unable to attend council, committee or school board meetings can participate live online. Virtual links make some civic services available 24 hours a day. Local authorities regularly hold open houses and dialogue with voters through a variety of media. Both public and private leaders actively recruit volunteers and collaborate to meet community needs.

By being a team player, the community emerged as the place to turn for leadership. Those at the helm know constituents well enough to identify what needs attention and are adept at working together to find solutions. In this new and improved governance landscape, silos are out and collaboration has proven its worth.



“Work creatively and create partnerships to address the challenges of living in rural Alberta.”

Community Consultation Participant

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Who we are: A snapshot of governance and partnerships

Community leadership is shared among numerous boards, committees and grassroots groups working to advance specific causes. The insight brought to the table by residents who care about our community is essential to meeting the needs of the unique mix of people who live here.

Our community is served by two municipal governments: the Town of Hinton and Yellowhead County. Town residents are represented by the mayor and six at large councillors; those in surrounding rural areas are represented by the Ward 8 councillor for Yellowhead County. The entire community is represented provincially by the Member of the Legislature Assembly for the constituency of West Yellowhead and federally by the Member of Parliament for the Yellowhead Riding.

Among both residents and community leaders, there is a sense that a sustainable future depends on our ability to reach across divisions and differences and partner together to accomplish shared goals.

“Partnerships foster improved communication and trust, thereby creating community support and commitment. Partnerships increase resources and can achieve more than when initiatives are undertaken alone.”

Town of Hinton Social Development Strategy
Hargreaves & Associates, 2009



Good Governance: A recipe



What do we mean by governance and partnerships?

Governance refers to the system of processes and structures that dictate how the local government, elected representatives and other community leaders inform, direct, manage and monitor their organizations to achieve goals and objectives.

Partnerships are the relationships of two or more entities working together for mutual benefit.

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Our governance strengths

Local authorities (elected officials)

The following elected bodies exercise leadership in the Hinton service area.

Town of Hinton: The seven-member Hinton Town Council is elected by residents living within town boundaries. Council's mission states "Town Council serves the interest of our citizens to enable our community to reach full potential." As part of that mission, council has committed to

- Make decisions that meet the needs of the present without compromising long-term community viability
- Foster positive relationships
- Promote Hinton's strengths
- Ensure municipal service delivery that supports the changing needs of the community

Hinton Town Council Mission, 2011 – 2013 Business Plan

Council's business plan puts sustainability front and centre. In making all decisions, council does its best to weigh the likely impacts on our economy, environment, social, culture and governance.

Yellowhead County: The Hinton service area includes much of Yellowhead County Ward 8, including Cadomin, Brule and the area around Hinton. The nine-member Yellowhead County Council governs according to a policy statement that "requires accountability, transparency, participation, regulation and role clarity to ensure the practices are consistently understood and applied." The Town of Hinton is not governed by Yellowhead County, but Cadomin, Brule and other smaller hamlets are. The County Office is in Edson, an hour east of Hinton on Highway 16.

Both town and county councils use Committees of Council to add depth to their deliberations about community matters. A blend of councillors and appointed public members, the committees address concerns specific to their mandate and promote a positive community environment.



Grande Yellowhead Public School Division: Seven trustees govern the public school division, including two from and representing Hinton and area. Stretching from Jasper National Park to Evansburg and north to Grande Cache, the jurisdiction includes 18 schools. Our community is served by three public schools: Crescent Valley, Harry Collinge High School and Ecole Mountain View School.

Evergreen Catholic Separate Regional Division: Eight trustees govern the Catholic school division, with the trustee for Ward 4 representing Hinton. Stretching from Spruce Grove to Hinton, the division operates two schools that serve our area: Gerard Redmond Community Catholic School and St. Gregory Catholic Elementary School.

Pondering city status

Hinton is nearing a size at which we could move from "town" to "city" status. Opinions differ about whether the shift would be wise. Some residents welcome city status as a door to expanded opportunities and influence; others fear losing the small town atmosphere we so enjoy. It's a topic needing continued discussion as we move forward together.

Elected leaders as sustainability champions

As our community imagines the leadership we would like in the future, it's useful to remember that local authorities can play four important roles in moving communities toward sustainability.

- **Direct service delivery:** providing services that are legally mandated or needed, but not being met by other agencies.
- **Partnership:** working with others within or beyond the community to address common community issues, find funding and build capacity for integrated, holistic service.
- **Leadership:** as an employer; responding to family needs; encouraging volunteerism; offering mentorship opportunities; removing barriers for persons with disabilities; recent immigrants and Aboriginal Canadians.
- **Advocacy:** calling for action regarding both immediate needs and long-term social change, recognizing that municipalities are not in full control of their destinies.

(Adapted from the Town of Hinton Social Development Strategy)

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Our partnership strengths

Guiding documents for both Hinton and Yellowhead municipal governments encourage participation and involvement, recognizing that elected leaders need citizens and other governments to achieve the sustainable future we all envision.

Yellowhead County and the Town of Hinton work together, regularly, to address overlapping concerns. For example, the county helps pay for services used by county residents, and the two jurisdictions team up in planning the town/county fringe. As well, the two municipalities sit together on several boards and committees, including the Hinton Inter-Municipal Committee, the West Yellowhead Regional Waste Management Authority, Community Futures - West Yellowhead, the Athabasca Watershed Council, the Grande Alberta Economic Region (GAER), the Evergreen Foundation and the Foothills Research Institute.

Our community benefits from many valued partnerships because that is the way we do business. Local authorities, businesses, industry and community groups regularly partner up to address issues and deliver programs. Working together, we have the breadth of viewpoints needed to identify key community issues, find funding, integrate services and make wise decisions. Recent successes include a private-public partnership to provide subsidized housing at Happy Creek Estates and a partnership involving the private-public sector and community groups to buy a new Handibus.

Industry generously supports many partnerships in our community, including our water and wastewater treatment system, rural roads, community policing, Beaver Boardwalk, Mountain Bike Park and the Natural Resource Interpretive Park.



Beyond that, the Town and County team up with neighbouring governments and industry to advance mutual causes. Hinton joined Jasper and a host of cultural organizations, for example, in a joint application to become a Cultural Capital of Canada for 2011, Hinton's 100th year as a community.

Hinton is also active in global relationships. They have been twinned with Wanouchi, Japan since 1998, as one of several Alberta municipalities twinned with Japanese counterparts to encourage cultural and economic interchange.

Hinton had also partnered with Tabora and Mtwara Mikindani municipal councils in Tanzania to share best practices for governance and service delivery as part of an African Local Governance Program initiated by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. In addition, local industry, schools and volunteers have forged ties with Mexico and elsewhere.



The community also benefits from partnerships with Hinton and District SPCA for animal welfare; with West Fraser Mills Ltd. for water/wastewater treatment; with Hinton, Edson and Yellowhead County to manage our landfill, operate a 911 centre, and hosted the 2006 provincial winter games; with the Hinton Friendship Centre for Aboriginal programming; with the former Yellowhead Regional Education Consortium (now part of Campus Alberta) for post-secondary education, and with many others.

One Hinton community member is appointed by the province to sit on the Tamarack Health Advisory Council. Of the 12 councils set up in 2009 when Alberta's health regions were amalgamated into one, Tamarack Health Advisory Council gathers community input so that it can advise Alberta Health Services about our healthcare needs and service delivery.

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Community perspectives on governance and partnerships

Residents consulted for this plan see great value in pulling together toward the common goal of a sustainable future. They urged elected leaders to be more intentional about engaging citizens and fostering partnerships as a way of building synergy and momentum.

Make involvement easier. County residents who live in the Hinton service area say participating in their local government is difficult not only due to the distance to the County office but also because the County does not post agendas on its website prior to council meetings. There is a need to improve communications with residents.

Improve leadership. Some residents praised Hinton Town Council and administration for taking progressive action for the betterment of the community. While others residents provided a mixed review identifying the need to improve customer service.

Increase collaboration among schools. Some residents asked why the school divisions do not get together to address youth challenges in the community, for example by offering shared extra-curricular opportunities. Also, they wondered why Yellowhead and Evergreen cannot fully share one school bus system to reduce transportation costs.

Go to the people and listen. One focus group noted that social media can be useful for sharing and understanding an organization's roles and initiatives, but said strengthening partner relationships requires dedicated time in face-to-face meetings. They said organizations seeking input need to go where the people are, rather than expecting people to come to them, especially in the case of cultural organizations.

“While a number of positive initiatives and actions were mentioned in the stakeholder interviews, there remain concerns that innovation and cooperation between programs and services was a missed opportunity and was not as strong as it needs to be if the Town is to achieve its community goals.”

Town of Hinton Social Development Strategy
Hargreaves & Associates, 2009

To pull together, we need a shared destination. As amended and approved by stakeholders and partners, this Community Sustainability Plan will give us a roadmap with goals worth uniting around. All local authorities and groups will be invited to align their policies and plan with what the community says here, so that we can move toward a future we can be proud to have our grandchildren inherit.

Archery as a team sport

A new indoor archery centre opened five minutes east of Hinton in 2010, making the sport available both indoors and out. The story of how the facility came to be puts partnership front and centre a common theme behind many of our successes. Brainchild of the Yellowhead Arrow Launchers Association, the archery centre stands on land shared with Hinton Fish and Game Association. The two groups will also share the facility for complementary events and programs such as fly-tying lessons and hunter training courses. All three orders of government provided financial support with the facility along with substantial non-profit and industry support.

Achieving our governance and partnerships' vision

The following strategies reflect the collective views of community stakeholders regarding the steps we must take to ensure the sustainability of the community's governance and partnerships

- Ensure local governments and authorities are responsible to the needs of the community.
- Enhance, strengthen and promote partnerships within the community, throughout the region and among all levels of government.
- Foster vibrant non-profit organizations and groups by providing guidance and training support (e.g., effective governance, organizational stability, program delivery and fund development).

These plans will almost certainly evolve. But at this point in our history, they give us a united focus for moving forward together.

The actions we need to take to achieve these strategies are included in Appendix B.