



# STRONGER TOGETHER

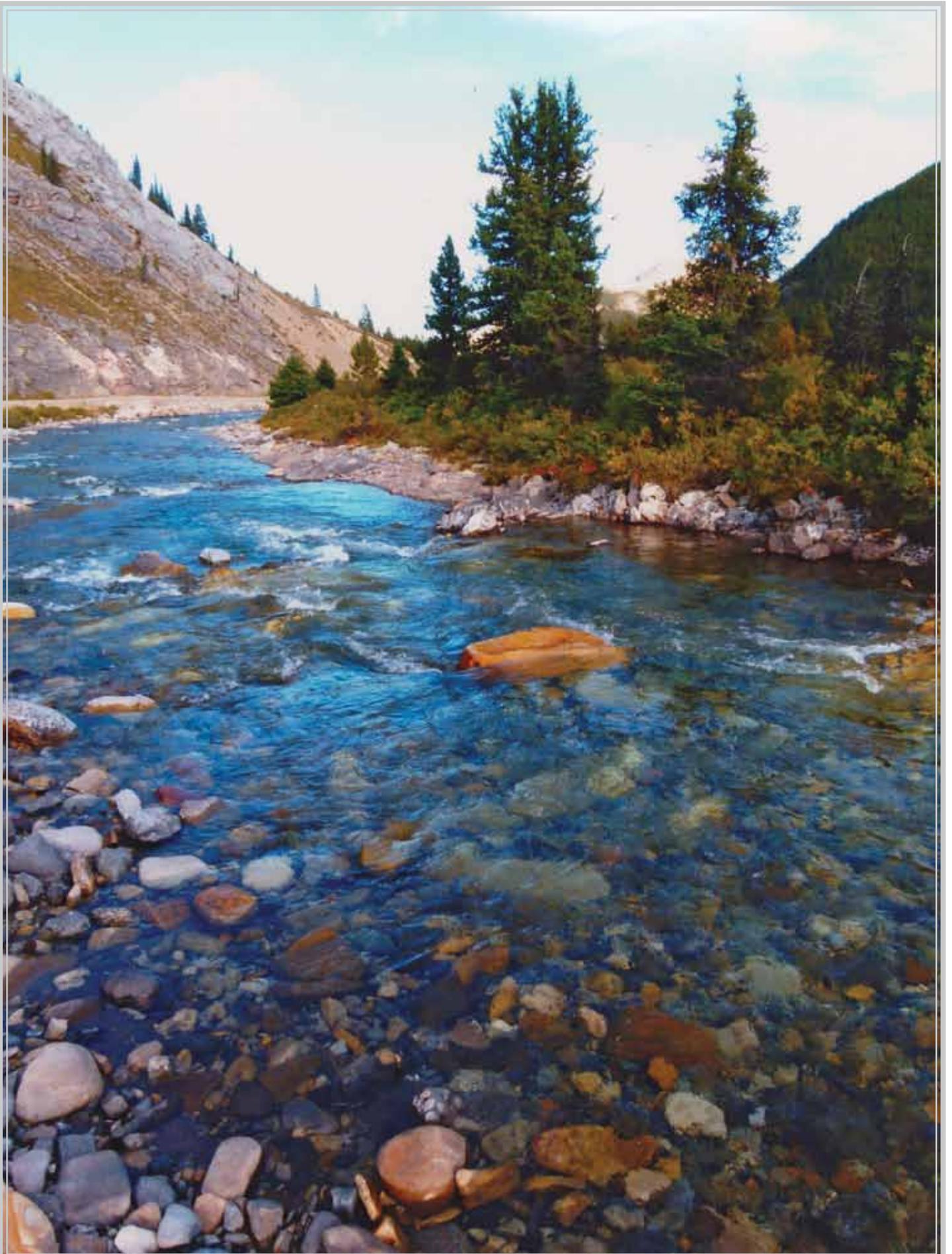
## Building Opportunities for Our Future

Rocky Mountain House – Clearwater – Caroline

AN INTERMUNICIPAL  
COLLABORATION FRAMEWORK

September 13, 2013



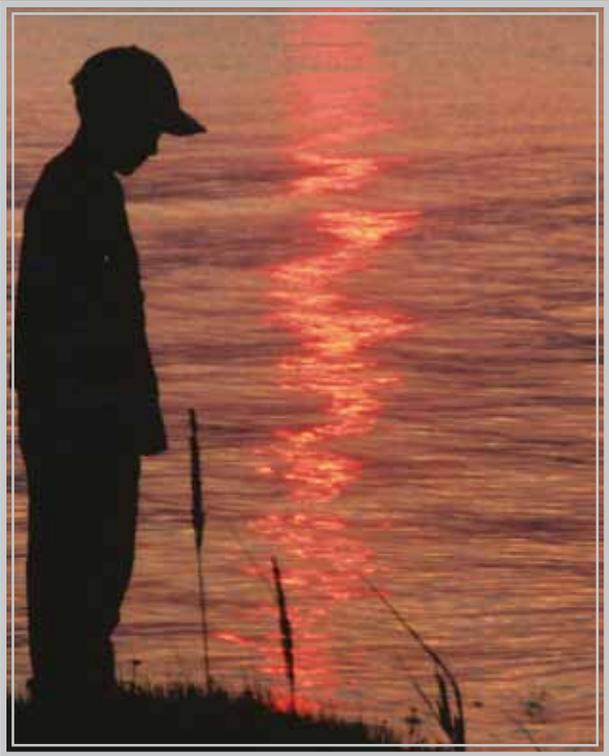




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*Building Opportunities for our future.*



# Collaborative Leaders

The municipalities of Clearwater County, Village of Caroline and Town of Rocky Mountain House are bonded together in a regional context. All have distinct municipal characteristics according to their land base, population and services. However, these distinctions do not mean they work in isolation of each other. On the contrary it is these same individual characteristics that inherently link them into a healthy and viable region.

The region's geography is described as being a large landmass with a relatively small population that is somewhat secluded from the Alberta urban centers on the Queen Elizabeth II corridor. This physical situation has been a catalyst to these municipalities establishing bonds and linkages with their neighbours ahead of other regions in the province. While others in Alberta have become polarized and competitive the Rocky Mountain House-Clearwater-Caroline Region has established a reputation for working together and maintaining a good relationship. This leadership has been illustrated through many positive joint initiatives such as:

- Progressive Recreation Agreements
- Regional Fire Agreements
- Solid Waste Management
- Physician Retention Initiative
- Sharing public works equipment/knowledge between the municipalities

These services have largely been developed on a service-by-service basis as need arose and some benefit could be seen for the municipalities involved. In the past this approach has for the most part worked well and is a good foundation for expanding the level of collaboration. In 2004 the three municipalities experimented with devel-

oping a regional outlook through the creation of the CRC Partnership. This experience was useful in influencing the current collaborative efforts by emphasizing the need for clear protocols and guidelines to support the efforts of the municipalities.

Most people understand increasing the level of collaboration as an ability to provide an increased number and level of services to people in the region. However, while some services can possibly be provided solely in a single municipality the increased opportunity in working together is also recognized in increased economies of scale, sustainability of some services, quality of services and efficiency in delivery. In other words dovetailing the individual characteristics of the municipalities creates expanded resources and advances quality of life opportunities to the people in the region. The image of "one community governed by three Councils" describes the concept being proposed.

This regional community includes the residents and businesses of Rocky Mountain House-Clearwater-Caroline. This community will need to be informed and educated about the importance of regional initiatives and the benefits they will derive from this governance framework.

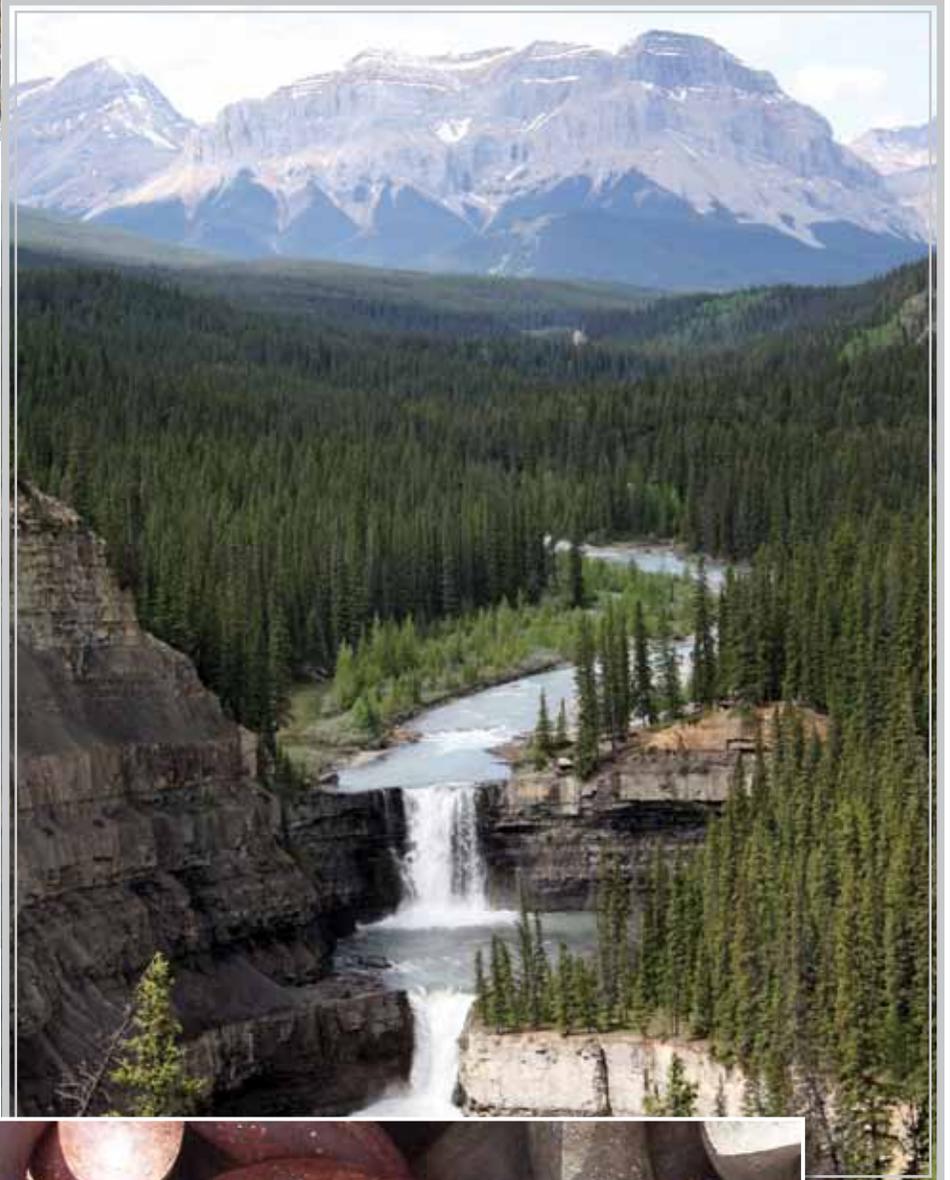
The three municipalities have been able to identify current and future issues where joint benefits may be realized through more formalized and rigorous processes and cooperation. Examples are evident in service areas such as planning, economic development and creating a complete region that is attractive for people to live, work and recreate.

As the Provincial Government now starts to encourage regional thinking the Rocky Mountain House-Clearwater-Caroline Region is well placed to lead proactively through the creation of an Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework.





*The municipalities  
of Clearwater  
County, Village of  
Caroline and Town  
of Rocky Mountain  
House are bonded  
together in a  
regional context.*



# Purpose of the Framework

The Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework has three main purposes:

1. To actualize the philosophy and principles of collaboration in ways representative of the three municipalities.
2. To commit the municipalities to consultation and communication on intermunicipal matters.
3. To clearly lay out a process that the partners to this agreement will deal with differences which occur efficiently and in an appropriate manner to maintain their good relationship.

## Actualizes Collaborative Philosophy and Principles

**Recognizes and shares the vision and priorities of the three member municipalities toward community enhancement:** A joint effort will be needed that supports and encourages each municipality.

**Strengthening the region while maintaining local autonomy:**

Each Council maintains the right to make individual decisions for their citizens while balancing their perspective toward building a strong region.

**Promoting networks and linkages:** Developing positive joint approaches will create efficiencies by sharing opportunities and connections and through a heightened regional profile.

**Embracing differences in respective municipalities:** The distinct characteristics of the individual municipalities is advantageous in providing choice, diversity and support for each other while making a more robust area.

**Rises above boundaries and politics:** Although each municipality is responsible to its citizens there is recognition that the citizens and businesses of the region share similar needs and interests and therefore should stress cooperative verses competitive action.

**Fosters an environment of openness and trust:** Cooperation and collaboration requires communication that in turn encourages understanding and results in recognition of common goals.

## Commits to Consultation and Cooperation

Collaboration encourages the municipalities to consult and stresses cooperation. By creating this protocol the three municipalities will formalize, streamline and help to advance areas of intermunicipal interest. This includes taking advantage of opportunities and developing common solutions or responses to broader challenges that affect the region. In addition it encourages communication at all levels of the organization to ensure opportunities are recognized, information is passed through the organizations and decision makers are informed not just about their own municipality but about impacts on the others.

## Defines how problems will be solved

Cooperation, collaboration and a commitment to communication are not the same as seeing all matters the same way. In particular, in maintaining the unique identity, culture and autonomy of each municipality, it is likely there will be instances of differences in values, goals, beliefs and perspectives. In these instances there is a need to address problems in a predictable and efficient way to achieve an outcome or decision. In cases where differences remain, there has to be understanding of the basis of those disparities so the municipalities can continue to work together well.





## Roles in Managing the Agreement

### The Role of Council

Each Council retains the ability and responsibility to make decisions on behalf of their residents. As the public is at the center of any governance initiative their voice needs to be taken into account to insure the impacts of services and actions taken in the region have the desired results and support the sustainability of the region. By signing on to the agreement each Council affirms the commitment to increased cooperation and will drive the need for increased communication at the administrative and staff levels. Furthermore, this agreement signals a shift towards maximizing a regional perspective in local decision making by recognizing the cumulative value of the municipalities dovetailing their interests.

The Mayors and Reeve will be at the forefront of this relationship and they will be responsible for showing the leadership for the elected officials to their organizations and in public.

### The Intermunicipal Collaboration Committee

The Intermunicipal Collaboration Committee (ICC) will become the focus for matters of intermunicipal consideration. Although this committee will be non-decision making they will be responsible for the negotiating and management of intermunicipal opportunities and challenges. Comprised of elected officials and administration representing their Councils, the ICC will strategically identify opportunities and prioritize intermunicipal actions to formulate recommendations for respective Council's consideration.

### The Role of CAOs and Administration

The CAOs have been identified as the principals responsible for maintaining the agreement, its delivery and durability. Administration brings continuity to the relationship

between the municipalities and has the ability to initiate communication on an as needed basis and ensure staffs adhere to the principles of the agreement. The CAOs in each municipality are seen as "conduits" of the agreement. Their knowledge of each other's municipality, structure and personnel is significant and all intermunicipal information will flow through and be managed by the CAOs.

### The Role of Staff

Staff at all levels will be responsible to ensure the principles of the agreement are carried out operationally. This means that staff will work with their municipal counterparts to address issues that arise within the scope of their authority and mandate. Staff will also raise issues and be accountable for informing the appropriate levels of authority about matters that require attention for the mutual benefit of the municipalities.



# == The Framework Protocols

## Intermunicipal Cooperation Guidelines ==

The creation of an Intermunicipal Cooperation Committee (ICC) is contemplated to give expanded focus to intermunicipal opportunities and considerations. Although individual Councils maintain the authority for decisions in the respective municipalities, the ICC is seen to be the foundation for intermunicipal matters. Without interfering with the good work being accomplished in existing intermunicipal committees the ICC has five primary functions.

### Five Primary Functions of ICC:

1. Proactively identify new service areas or opportunities.
2. Address intermunicipal opportunities that arise on an as needed basis where no existing structure exists to deal with the matter.
3. Prioritize activity and develop appropriate measures, processes and sub-committees to address areas in consideration.
4. Represent the region locally and provincially.
5. Address areas where intermunicipal differences in need of resolution may arise.

### == Composition of ICC

The ICC will be composed of two (2) elected officials and CAOs from each municipality.

- One elected official from each municipality will be the CEO, (Mayor or Reeve).
- The opportunity to rotate elected officials into the committee will be at the discretion of each municipality respecting their policy on attendance while maintaining some consistency.
- Quorum will consist of at least one elected official from each municipality attending each agreed upon meeting.
- Other elected officials, administration or staff may attend as observers.
- Should presentations to the ICC be required the invited parties will be agreed to and coordinated ahead of the meeting by the CAOs.

Meetings of the ICC will be held at minimum four (4) times per year with recognition more frequent meetings will need to be added as opportunities arise and issues are developed.

- The four meetings per year will be scheduled annually to:
  - Summarize and update progress on issues to date.
  - Inventory and prioritize matters to be addressed.
  - Strategize, plan and schedule for new items.
  - Address any outstanding matters.
  - The additional meetings will be utilized to address specific matters.



## == Communication with Councils

Common meeting notes from ICC meetings and joint presentations will be developed to guide how the committee interacts with and updates individual Councils prior to recommendations.

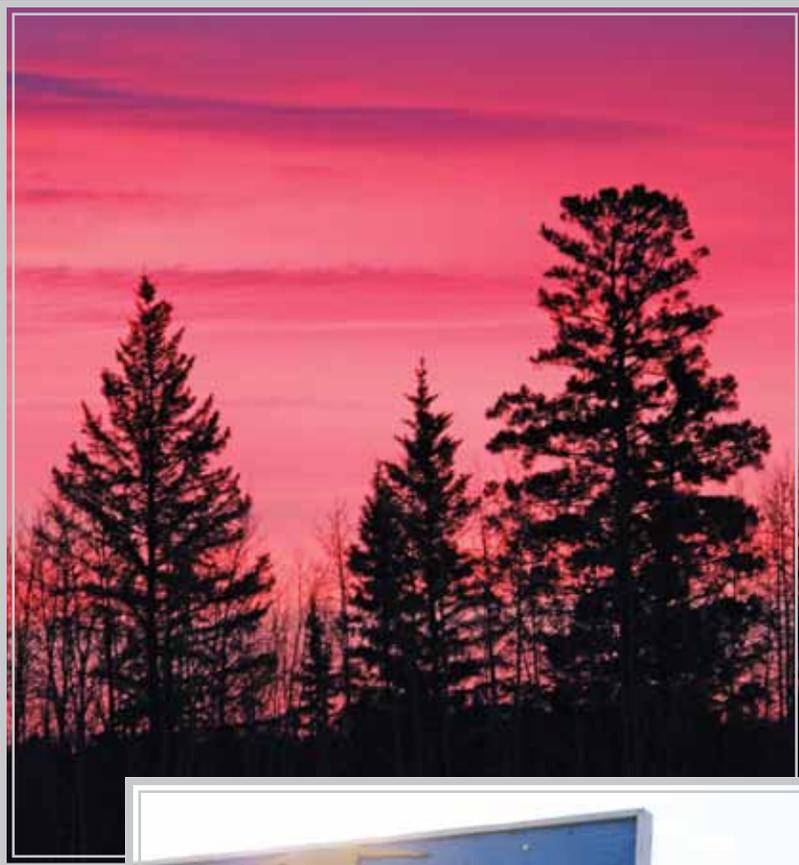
- Common notes will be kept during meetings although members may make individual notes of their own.
- The common notes will be circulated following the ICC meeting and each CAO will review, edit and sign off on the notes before they are shared with Councils.
- From time to time the ICC may direct elected officials or CAOs to make joint presentations to individual Councils to encourage Council understanding and inclusion on priority intermunicipal and regional matters.

## == ICC Decision Making

The ICC is a recommendation making committee, interacting with and advising individual councils for decisions.

- Recommendations to individual councils will occur when:
  - The ICC members, excluding those who may have “opted out”, have consensus on how the committee wishes to advise individual councils on a given issue. This may include:
    - Recommendations on options for proceeding.
    - Advising no agreed upon recommendations have been reached in the allotted timeframe.
    - Advising on moving to the Problem Resolution Guidelines or some other process to resolve the issue.
- These recommendations or advisements may be delivered to Councils by:
  - A joint council meeting.
  - A joint presentation to individual councils.
  - A joint written submission agreed to by the ICC for delivery to individual councils.





*Collaboration encourages the municipalities to consult and stresses cooperation.*



# Opportunity and Challenges Identification and Handling Guidelines

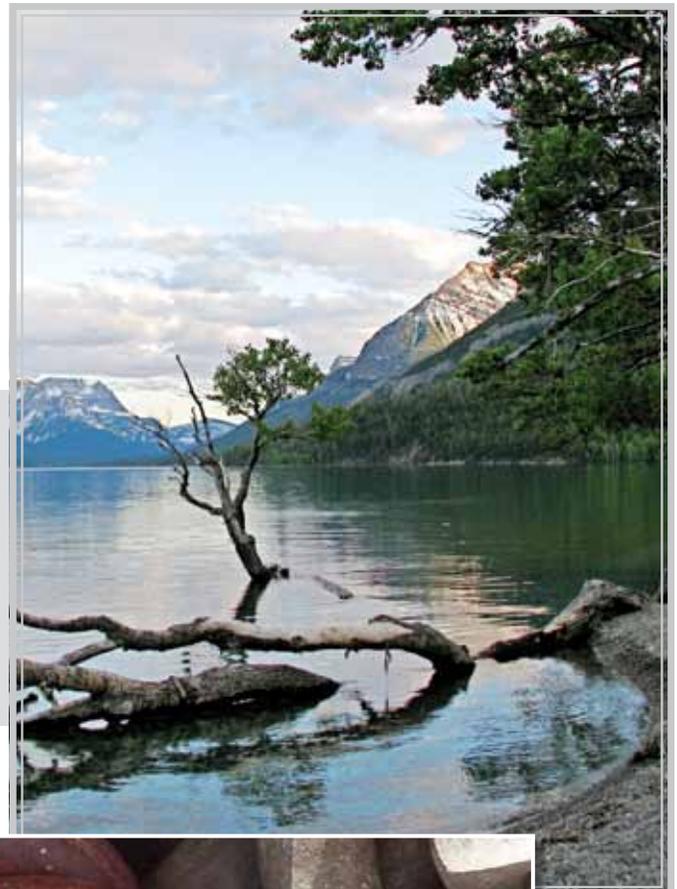
A number of means exist by which opportunities or considerations may be brought to the ICC's attention. Once the committee has become aware of the situation they will together choose how they hope to address the matter.

1. Matters may be developed within the ICC or more frequently will be brought to the ICC. Issues may come to the ICC for discussion from:
  - One or more Council's direction.
  - CAOs or Administrations addressing matters through staff discussions or experiences.
  - Other intermunicipal or regional committees request.
2. Once a matter has been identified through the means above it will be brought to the attention of one or more of the CAOs. The CAO will determine if the matter is intermunicipal in nature and if so contact the other affected CAO(s). The CAOs may decide to:
  - Send the matter to the ICC (the default option should any indecision or uncertainty exist among the CAOs).
  - Address the matter at an administrative or operational level if appropriate.
  - Gather more information.
  - Purposefully put the matter aside.
  - Develop a problem resolution strategy as per the protocol.

Regardless of what action is decided on if the matter is intermunicipal in nature it will be described along with the resulting action taken and reported on at the next ICC meeting.

3. If the matter is sent to the ICC the CAOs are jointly responsible for structuring the information necessary, arranging the agenda and facilitating the proceedings for the ICC to consider the matter. The committee has a number of options for addressing the matters including but not limited to:
  - Use the ICC as the standing committee.
  - Create a sub-committee.
  - Send to an existing Committee.
  - Monitor the work under an existing committee.
  - Any single municipality may choose to "opt out" or participate as an observer on a matter where it is jointly agreed their contribution or impact directly on the issue is not warranted.

*Recognizes and shares the vision and priorities of the three member municipalities toward community enhancement.*



# Creating a Regional Culture: Communication and Consideration Guidelines

For the Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework agreement to be successful it will need to be embraced beyond the Intermunicipal Cooperation Committee and the CAOs. The commitment to collaboration will need to be understood and communicated throughout the organizations and into the public to outlive the Councils of the day. Fostering the longevity and durability of this agreement will be achieved by:

1. Cooperative communication will be encouraged at all times between all levels of the organizations. This may be described by the following principles:

- Seeking to understand.
- Avoiding being positional and defensive by asking for clarification and rational.
- Addressing issues as joint problems to be resolved together.
- Looking for cooperative rather than competitive outcomes.
- Maximizing benefits for all involved.

Elected officials, administration and staff will be supported in training to advance the communication and cooperation skills needed to attain this goal.

2. Include a commitment to intermunicipal cooperation at all levels of the organization through orientation sessions and job descriptions.

- Councillors will be asked to review this Framework upon election and commit to their understanding of its intention. Furthermore, Joint Councils will within four (4) months upon election or by-election attend an orientation session on the Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework,

the working of the ICC, the protocols, the importance of intermunicipal collaboration and introduction to current intermunicipal matters being addressed.

- CAOs as the connection between elected officials and operations will have additional intermunicipal responsibilities and are expected to be the model and focus of collaboration. These duties may be described by:
  - Advancing, as one of the core competencies of their respective job responsibilities, intermunicipal cooperation and consultation between the municipalities.
  - Management of the business of the Intermunicipal Collaboration Committee.
  - Process management of the Problem Solving Protocol.
  - Where necessary may seek training to advance their understanding and abilities to demonstrate this duty.
- All senior staff will have an appropriate level of understanding of the other municipalities included in their job description. This includes meeting with their counterparts at least once each year in a Senior Administration meeting.
- Each municipality will assure new staff receives, as part of their orientation, information about co-operation and collaboration between the municipalities. This should include specific information relevant to an area of operation that describes in operational terms the collaborative arrangements that affect specific staff.

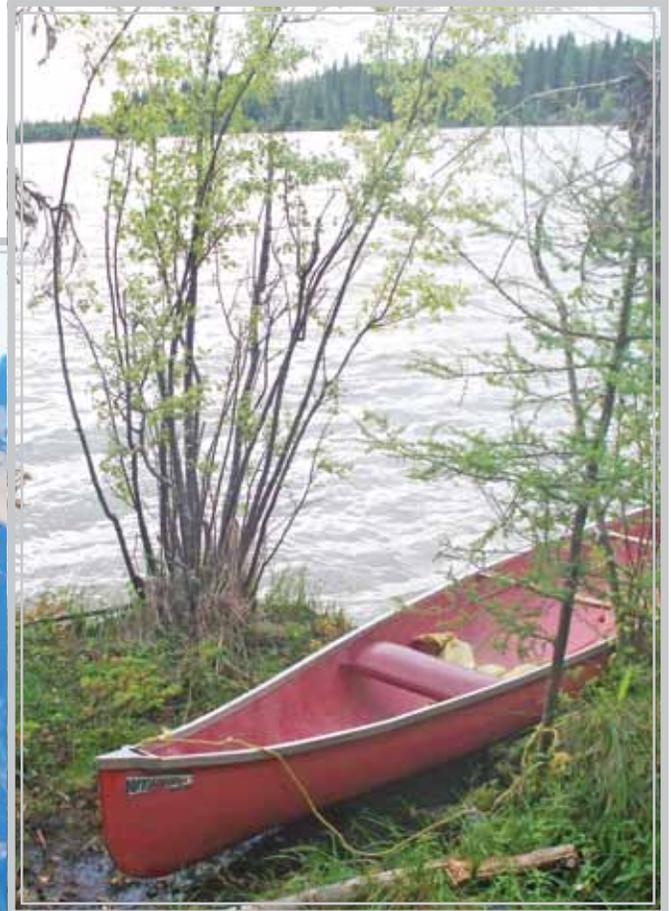


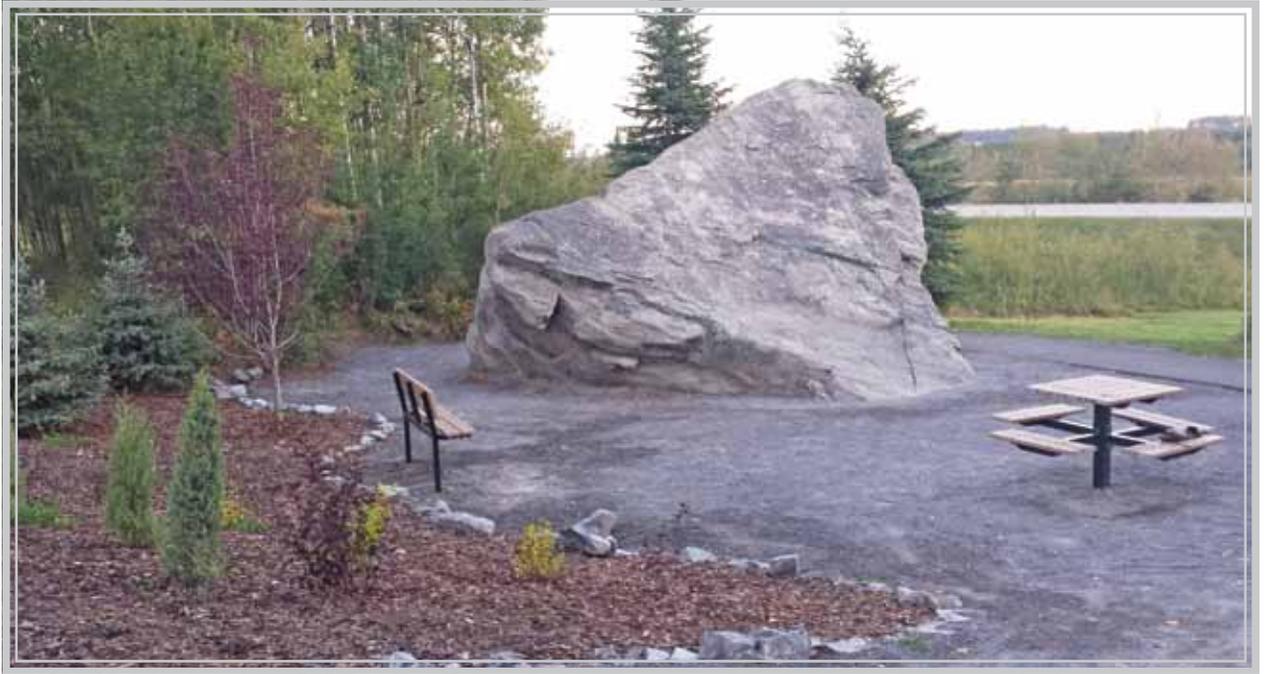
3. Each municipality agrees to keep the others informed of its vision as it is projected and changed from time to time. All municipalities will seek to align their visions in areas where there may be collaborative or cooperative opportunity. The municipalities will set their visions with regard to the general benefit of the region and its inhabitants and industries. This will be accomplished through:

- Joint Council meetings at least two (2) times per year.
- Councils receiving reports back from the ICC.
- Councils being committed to balancing regional perspectives with municipal responsibilities.

4. Each municipality agrees to include the other in its celebrations and ceremonies, engaging officials or staff at the appropriate level.

5. All municipalities will promote collaborative successes, jointly when possible, including with their local publics, at municipal functions and to the Province.





## Problem Resolution Guidelines

All the municipalities recognize the need for a joint understanding about how to address conflicts when any municipality is of the opinion that an obligation of the other under an agreement has been breached or matters arise where differences of opinion over actions or services need to be worked out.

### The municipalities want to resolve problems:

- At the earliest opportunity and at the point closest to where problems originate;
- In a swift, inexpensive and uncomplicated way;
- Using a clear procedural pathway to a solution;
- To maintain a smooth working relationship even when disagreement survives.

It is acknowledged that the processes in this protocol are in addition to, and do not replace, processes and remedies provided in legislation or under existing agreements between the municipalities.

If an elected official, administrator or any staff person from any of the municipalities thinks an

obligation under an agreement between the municipalities has been “breached”, the matter should be brought to the attention of the CAO. The CAO will investigate it and, if it appears that a breach occurred, the matter will be brought to the attention of the other municipality’s CAO.

Once that has happened, the matter may be resolved directly between the municipalities through informal problem solving discussions.

Similarly, differences may occur outside a “breach” of an agreement. These may include divergent expectations in delivery of a joint service, a



variance in how a committee or board wishes to proceed or any circumstance that may adversely affect or disrupt a service or relationship(s) between the municipalities.

If the problem identified is not resolved through informal discussions, the municipalities agree to address it using the following processes. The municipalities have identified the attributes of a mediated process, (facilitated negotiation), as a preferential process to be encouraged. The municipalities may, by agreement, proceed directly to mediation without first exhausting an unassisted negotiation process.

## == Negotiation

The municipalities will identify the appropriate personnel who are knowledgeable about the issue and those staff will work to find a mutually acceptable solution through negotiation.

Those in the negotiation will negotiate in good faith to find a solution.

Those in the negotiation will seek an integrated outcome in the decisions they make. An integrated outcome is one in which the parties elect to work together, integrating their resources, originality and expertise.

Those in the negotiation will attempt to craft a solution to the identified issue by seeking to advance the interests of all in the negotiation rather than by simply advancing their individual positions. The parties will fully explore the issue with a view to seeking an outcome that accommodates, rather than compromises, the interests of all concerned.

### Negotiators will seek to:

- Clearly articulate their interests and the interests of their municipality;
- Understand the interests of other negotiators whether or not they are in agreement with them; and,
- Identify solutions that meet the interests of the other municipalities as well as those of their own.

## == Mediation

If the issue cannot be resolved through negotiation, the municipalities will find a mutually acceptable mediator. For assistance finding an acceptable mediator, the municipalities may consult the Municipal Dispute Resolution Services at Alberta Municipal Affairs or may consult the Alberta Arbitration and Mediation Society.

Mediation is a process of assisted negotiation in which the municipalities retain power over the substantive outcome of the negotiation and the mediator facilitates the process.

The mediator will be responsible for the governance of the mediation process.

## == Final Proposal Arbitration

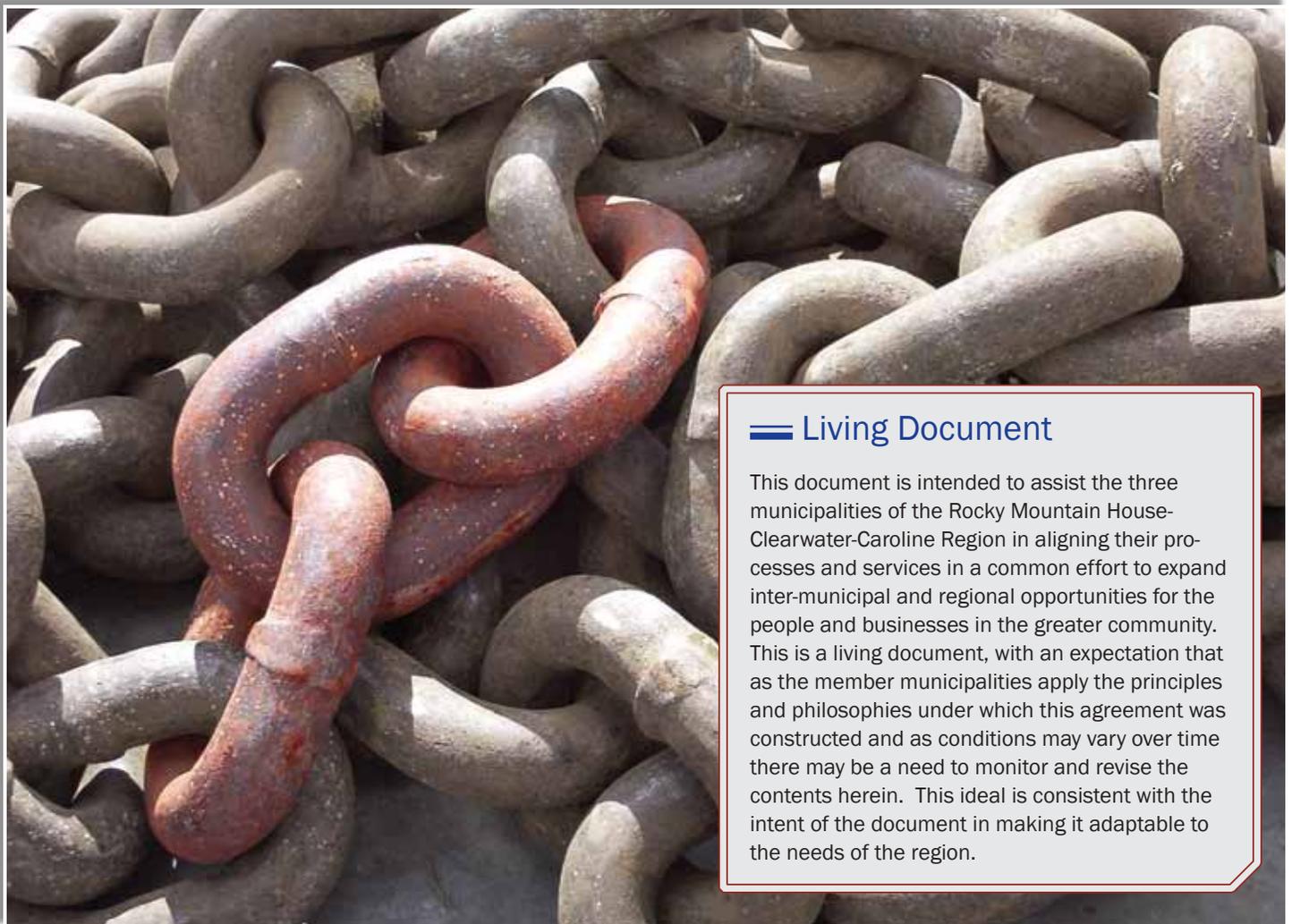
If the issue cannot be resolved through mediation, the municipalities will have the matter resolved by final proposal arbitration using a single arbitrator.

In final proposal arbitration, the arbitrator must conduct the proceedings on the basis of a review of written documents and written submissions only, and must determine each issue by selecting one of the final written proposals submitted by either of the municipalities respecting that issue; no written reasons are to be provided by the arbitrator.

If the municipalities can agree upon a mutually acceptable arbitrator, arbitration will proceed using that arbitrator. If they cannot agree on a mutually acceptable arbitrator, each municipality will produce a list of three candidate arbitrators. In the event there is agreement on an arbitrator evident from the candidate lists, arbitration will proceed using that arbitrator. If a mutually agreeable arbitrator is not found, Alberta Arbitration and Mediation Society will make the selection of an appropriate practitioner.

Subject to the above definition of final proposal arbitration, the arbitrator will be governed by principles of natural justice and fairness and may make rules and procedures (including reasonable time limits), as the arbitrator shall see fit.





## Living Document

This document is intended to assist the three municipalities of the Rocky Mountain House-Clearwater-Caroline Region in aligning their processes and services in a common effort to expand inter-municipal and regional opportunities for the people and businesses in the greater community. This is a living document, with an expectation that as the member municipalities apply the principles and philosophies under which this agreement was constructed and as conditions may vary over time there may be a need to monitor and revise the contents herein. This ideal is consistent with the intent of the document in making it adaptable to the needs of the region.



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