



# Growing the Future

## Working Together to Enrich Our Region

**Wheatland County and Foothills County**

INTERMUNICIPAL COLLABORATION FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

# FOREWORD

Wheatland County and Foothills County share a common history. Both have distinct and similar municipal characteristics, and both are rural municipalities based upon building and maintaining core services including roads and bridges, which are designed to service an agricultural and resource-based economy. Together these same individual characteristics link them into a healthy and viable region.

A large majority of the public understands increasing the level of collaboration has an ability to provide more efficient and equitable service levels to citizens 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. Dovetailing the individual characteristics of the municipalities where feasible, creates expanded resources and advances quality of life opportunities to the people in the region. The image of “two municipalities – one purpose” describes the philosophy of the two communities.

Wheatland County and Foothills County are committed to identifying current and future issues where joint benefits may be realized through more formalized and rigorous processes and cooperation. Examples are evident in servicing areas such as planning, economic development, mutual aid and creating a complete region that is attractive for people to live, work and play.

As the Provincial Government seeks to encourage regional thinking, Wheatland County and Foothills County are well placed to lead proactively through the creation of this Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework (ICF) Agreement.





*Wheatland County  
and Foothills County  
share a common  
history and  
foundation based  
largely upon  
agriculture*



## *Goals of the Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework Agreement*

The Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework has five main purposes:

1. Conform to the requirements of provincial legislation.
2. To promote the principles of collaboration between neighboring municipalities with a common border.
3. To ensure municipalities consult and communicate on intermunicipal matters.
4. To clearly lay out a process that the partners to this agreement can utilize to review service levels and decide if the service would benefit from additional collaborative efforts.
5. To consider appropriate cost sharing mechanisms and deal with differences which may occur from time to time.

## *The ICF Agreement between Wheatland County and Foothills County will:*

Recognize and share the vision and priorities of the two municipalities toward providing effective and efficient service

**levels to their citizens:** Where feasible and practical – each municipality will work together to assess how commonly utilized services will be provided and funded for the benefit of citizens.

**Strengthening the region while maintaining local autonomy:** Each Council maintains the right to make individual decisions for their citizens, but each agree that they will always consider the bigger regional municipality in the decision-making process.

**Promote networks and linkages:** Developing positive joint approaches where practical to create efficiencies by sharing opportunities, connections, goals, knowledge and experience to promote the greater good between both municipalities.

**Embrace differences in respective municipalities:** The distinct characteristics of the individual municipalities is advantageous in providing choice and diversity.

**Cooperation not Competition:** 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 as such each Council will emphasize cooperation rather than direct competition with respect to setting municipal policy.

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

### *Commitment to Consultation and Cooperation – Consultation Protocol:*

The fundamental basis of this agreement is communication and consultation and as such, the two municipalities agree to consult on projects which have potential for regional impact. By recognizing the requirement to consult, each municipality will include the other in their regional scale project circulations and both agree to meet and work through matters as they arise. Where notification has been provided that a discussion is required it shall be first handled by the respective Chief Administrative Officers or their designate and if that does not resolve the concerns at hand it shall be dealt with by a committee from each Council recognizing time may be of essence. The purpose of this consultation protocol is to ensure that the municipalities leverage opportunities to collaborate and develop common solutions to any challenges that affect the region.

It is understood that this agreement will encourage communication at all levels of both organizations to ensure opportunities are recognized, information is passed through the respective organizations, and decision makers are



informed not just about their own municipality but about regional issues and concerns. Cooperation, collaboration and commitment to consult are not meant to constrain or restrict the authority or the ability of individual Councils, or to homogenize the unique culture and identity of each municipality. It is possible that there will be instances of differences in values, goals, beliefs, perspectives and decisions which are not common to both communities. In these instances, where differences remain, the commitment to communicate will enable the communities to develop proactive and positive solutions to issues that may arise.

## *Roles in Managing the Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework Agreement:*

### *The Role of both Councils:*

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 considered to ensure the impacts of services and actions taken in the region have the desired results and support the prosperity of the region. By signing onto the agreement each Council affirms the commitment to increased cooperation at both the political and administrative levels.

This agreement signals a shift towards maximizing regional benefit through collaborative decision making. Each Council member will demonstrate leadership to act strategically as they formulate plans for each of their organizations which will bring value to the citizens of both communities.

### *The Role of the CAOs and Administration:*

The CAOs have been identified as the principals responsible for maintaining this ICF, its implementation, and dealing with intermunicipal issues that surface from time to time during the term of this agreement. Administration brings continuity to the relationship between the municipalities and they each have the ability to initiate communication on an as needed basis to ensure that each municipality observes the principles of the agreement. The CAOs will foster communication and facilitate the sharing of information, identify opportunities and prioritize municipal actions for consideration by each Council. Disputes or disagreements between CAOs will be dealt with in accordance with the Conflict Resolution section of this agreement.

### *The Role of Staff:*

Staff at all levels will be responsible to ensure the principles of this agreement are implemented. This means that staff will work cooperatively with their municipal counterparts to address issues that may arise within the scope of their authority and mandate. Staff will also bring to the attention of their respective CAO any issues that arise which require their attention with respect to meeting the commitment and intent of this agreement. Disputes will be addressed in accordance with the Conflict Resolution section of this agreement.

# The Framework Protocols

## Development of an Intermunicipal Communication Protocol

Understanding that the success of this agreement is based upon respectful dialogue, the municipalities are committed to ensuring the provision of information is communicated in a transparent and honest manner. The agree to observe the following communication protocols:

1. The protocol should recognize that cooperative communication is the key to a successful relationship. At all times and through all levels of each organization, when dealing with one another, the following principles should apply:
  - a. Seek to understand
  - b. Avoid personal attacks either privately or publicly
  - c. Asking for clarification on policies of interest adopted by the other municipality to ensure understanding
  - d. Resolve common issues from a perspective of collaboration
  - e. Seek to maximize the benefits for both parties
2. The Protocol should seek to establish collaboration and cooperation in each municipal organization.
  - a. Both organizations agree to ensure proper training takes place with elected officials on intermunicipal collaboration following a municipal election
  - b. Both organizations agree to provide additional training and adequate orientation with this agreement, as may be required, following any change in elected officials or senior administration
3. The protocol should ensure that each municipality provides to the other information pertaining to:
  - a. Issues of a nature which may impact the other municipality

## Conflict Resolution

The municipalities recognized that the development of this agreement is the start – not the end of the process. Recognizing that not all issues may be agreed upon, the municipalities recognize the need to establish a conflict resolution process based upon the following principles:

1. At the earliest opportunity, and at the point closest to where a problem is initiated, the CAOs will seek to address matters of conflict.
2. All matters of conflict should be attempted to be resolved swiftly, inexpensively and in an uncomplicated



way.

3. All matters of conflict should be resolved using a clear procedural pathway.
4. Respect and collaboration should be maintained on common issues, even though conflict may exist.

#### Process

If a municipality believes an obligation under the agreement has been breached, the matter should be immediately brought to the attention of the respective CAO. The CAO will investigate and if it appears that a 'breach' of the agreement has occurred, the matter will be immediately brought to the attention of the other municipality's CAO. Once notification has occurred, an effort to resolve the matter through informal problem-solving discussions is to be initiated.

If differences occur outside of an outright 'breach' of an agreement, which may include divergent expectations in the delivery of a joint service, variance on how the committee wishes to proceed on an issue, or any circumstance which may impact or disrupt service delivery or relationships, an informal discussion between CAOs will be conducted.

If this does not resolve the issue, an Intermunicipal Dispute Committee shall be appointed by both Councils who will attempt to decide on and negotiate an effective solution.

If the subcommittee negotiation process is unsuccessful, a mediated process will be initiated using the services of a jointly agreed upon mediator with costs shared equally between the municipalities. The mediator will be solely responsible for the governance of the mediation process.

If the process is not resolved through mediation, the municipalities will select an arbitrator, sharing all costs in doing so, and will have the matter resolved through the process defined in the Municipal Government Act. The arbitrator is governed by the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.



**This Agreement encourages the municipalities to consult with each other and develop opportunities for collaboration for the benefit of both communities.**

# ICF Agreement – Statutory Provisions

Amendments to the Modernized Municipal Government Act have revised the purpose of municipalities. The new Act requires municipalities to work collaboratively with neighboring municipalities to plan, deliver and fund intermunicipal services. The Act requires municipalities with common borders to develop an Intermunicipal Collaborative Framework Agreement. The following services have been considered; transportation, solid waste, recreation, wastewater, water and emergency services.

## Transportation

No agreements exist or are currently required between Wheatland County and Foothills County in the area of transportation. Coordination of construction of transportation corridors that connect the two municipalities will be undertaken at the administrative level to ensure that both municipalities' strategic transportation goals are in alignment. Opportunities to partner on capital road construction will continue to be brought forward as they have in the past. Boundary grading road maintenance activities will be reviewed to determine if efficiencies can be recognized.

## Solid Waste

No agreements exist or are currently required between Wheatland County and Foothills County in the area of solid waste. Should opportunities to collaborate come forward, both municipalities will examine the regional and municipal benefit that an initiative of this nature would bring forward.

## Recreation

No agreements exist or are currently required between Wheatland County and Foothills County in the area of recreation. Should opportunities to collaborate come forward, both municipalities will examine the regional and municipal benefit that an initiative of this nature would bring forward.

## Waste Water

No agreements exist or are currently required between Wheatland County and Foothills County in the area of waste water. Should opportunities to collaborate come forward, both municipalities will examine the regional and municipal benefit that an initiative of this nature would bring forward.

## Water

No agreements exist or are currently required between Wheatland County and Foothills County in the area of water systems. Should opportunities to collaborate come forward, both municipalities will examine the regional and municipal benefit that an initiative of this nature would bring forward.

## Emergency Services

Wheatland County and Foothills County are both member municipalities of the Foothills Regional Emergency Services Commission, and as such, receive emergency service dispatching through this organization.

Wheatland County and Foothills County may also consider formalizing a Mutual Aid agreement in respect to Fire Services in the future.



# Intermunicipal Development Plan

An Intermunicipal Development Plan was adopted by separate bylaws between Wheatland County and the Foothills County. Wheatland County and the Foothills County Intermunicipal Development Plan is a statutory planning document that fosters ongoing collaboration and cooperation between both municipalities regarding planning matters and clarifies land use expectations within the Plan area.

Wheatland County adopted Bylaw No. 2019-19 on August 7, 2019.

Foothills County adopted Bylaw No. XXXXXX on XXXX XX, XXXX.

## Commitment to Collaboration

Wheatland County and Foothills County acknowledge and affirm that they will seek to fulfill both the intent and the spirit of this agreement by seeking opportunities to collaborate where practical as well as to honor all applicable legislation with respect to intermunicipal collaboration within the Province of Alberta.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF** the parties have hereunto set their hands and affixed their corporate seals as witnessed by the hand or hands of its proper signing officers duly authorized in that behalf as of the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2020.

**FOR FOOTHILLS COUNTY**

**FOR WHEATLAND COUNTY**

PER: \_\_\_\_\_

REEVE

PER: \_\_\_\_\_

REEVE

PER: \_\_\_\_\_

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

PER: \_\_\_\_\_

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER