

**Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework**  
**Between**  
**Mackenzie County**  
**and**  
**the Town of High Level**

**March 2020**

**WHEREAS**, Mackenzie County and the Town of High Level share a common border; and

**WHEREAS**, Mackenzie County and the Town of High Level share common interests and are desirous of working together to provide services to their residents; and

**WHEREAS**, the Municipal Government Act stipulates that municipalities that have a common boundary must create an Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework with each other that identifies the services provided by each municipality, which services are best provided on an intermunicipal basis, and how services to be provided on an intermunicipal basis will be delivered and funded.

**NOW THEREFORE**, by mutual covenant of the Municipalities it is agreed as follows:

#### **A. DEFINITIONS**

The following are the definition of terms used in this document:

1. “Chief Administrative Officer” means the person appointed by Council to the position of chief administrative officer or their delegate.
2. “County” means Mackenzie County.
3. “Initiating party” means the municipality that gives notice in the event of any dispute.
4. “Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework” or “ICF” means a document that two or more municipalities are required to develop under the *Municipal Government Act*, which facilitates cooperation and ensures that services are provided to residents efficiently.
5. “Intermunicipal Development Plan” or “IDP” means a statutory plan developed jointly by two or more neighboring municipalities to coordinate land use planning decisions for an area of land in proximity to the boundaries of the municipalities, and which meets the requirements of the *Municipal Government Act*.
6. “Framework” means this ICF.
7. “Mediation” means a process involving a neutral party as the mediator who assists the municipalities and any other persons brought in by them to reach mutually acceptable settlement on the matter.
8. “Mediator” means a person or persons appointed to facilitate resolution of a dispute between the municipalities.

9. "Town" means the Town of High Level.
10. "Municipalities" means Mackenzie County and the Town of High Level.

## **B. TERM AND REVIEW**

- 1) In accordance with the *Municipal Government Act*, this Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework shall come into force on final passing of matching bylaws that contain the Framework by both Municipalities.
- 2) This Framework may be amended by mutual consent of both Municipalities unless specified otherwise in this Framework.
- 3) It is agreed by the Municipalities that the Councils shall review this Framework and the terms and conditions of the agreement at least once every five years, commencing no later than 2025.

## **C. INTERMUNICIPAL COOPERATION**

- 1) Both the County and the Town are committed to fostering intermunicipal cooperation in a non-adversarial, informal, and cost-effective manner.
- 2) The Councils of each Municipality shall be the forum for reviewing the Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework.

## **D. GENERAL TERMS**

- 1) Both Municipalities agree that in consideration of the shared services outlined in Section E, any costs in the future that require Intermunicipal agreements shall be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

## **E. MUNICIPAL SERVICES**

- 1) Both Municipalities have reviewed the services offered to residents. Based on the review, it has been determined that each Municipality will continue to provide the following services to their residents independently (either in-house or by a third-party):
  - a. Agricultural Services
  - b. Animal Control
  - c. Assessment Services
  - d. Emergency Services
  - e. Geographical Information Systems (GIS)
  - f. Information Technology
  - g. Library Services
  - h. Maintenance & Transportation
  - i. Municipal Administration
  - j. Pest Control

- k. Planning & Development Services
  - l. Police Services
  - m. Purchasing/Procurement Services
  - n. Recreation
  - o. Solid Waste Services
  - p. Water and Wastewater
- 2) The Municipalities have a history of working together to provide municipal services to the residents on an intermunicipal basis, with the following services being provided directly or indirectly to their residents:
- a. Affordable Housing/Seniors Lodging
    - o The Municipalities jointly, along with the Town of Rainbow Lake, La Crete Municipal Nursing Association, Dene Tha' First Nation, Beaver First Nation, Tall Cree First Nation, and the Little Red River Cree Nation are members of a management body known as the **Boreal Housing Foundation** as per Province of Alberta Ministerial Order H:042/16. A board comprised of representation from all members governs this management body. The Foundation may requisition Mackenzie County, the Town of High Level, and the Town of Rainbow Lake.
  - b. Airport Services
    - o The Municipalities entered into a **Regional Service Sharing Agreement** effective on July 1, 2008, along with an Amending Agreement effective February 6, 2014. Provision 8.8 of the Regional Service Sharing Agreement (RRSA) provides that County Residents:
      - a. shall pay the same user fees, charges or levies which the Town charges Town Residents for access to the Airport; and
      - b. are subject to the same rules and regulations governing use of the Airport as apply to Town Residents.
    - o The Airport is owned and operated by the Town. There is no managing partner. The Inter-municipal Planning Commission is the Subdivision and Development Authority for the IDP Area, which includes the land around the Airport. The Agreement includes cost sharing of capital expenditures required for the Airport.
  - c. Appeal Boards
    - o The Municipalities entered into a **Memorandum of Understanding** effective December 4, 2019, involving Mackenzie County, the Town of High Level, and the Town of

Rainbow Lake. The Agreement ensures that all Participants will maintain an inventory of qualified and appointed appeal board members and clerks that may be utilized and appointed by any Participant. There is no managing partner. Each Participant is responsible for the costs of training for their appointed members. Costs incurred from the formation of a panel is the responsibility of the initiating municipality.

d. Community Services

- The Municipalities entered into a **Regional Service Sharing Agreement** effective on July 1, 2008, along with an Amending Agreement effective February 6, 2014. The Agreement includes the provision of access to County and Town recreational services and facilities to all residents at the same rates charged to their own residents. There is no managing partner. The Agreement includes cost sharing of capital expenditures.
- The Mackenzie County Library Board has a Partnership Agreement with the High Level Municipal Library for the collaboration and provision of services to County residents.

e. Emergency Services

- The Municipalities have the following agreements in place to aid in the event of emergencies:
  - i. The Municipalities entered into a **Regional Service Sharing Agreement** effective on July 1, 2008, along with an Amending Agreement effective February 6, 2014. The Agreement includes the provision of fire services by the Town to the County within the Fire Service Area. There is no managing partner. The Town shall invoice the County for responding to fire calls in accordance with the rates set in the Agreement. The Agreement includes cost sharing for the purchase of fire capital equipment.
  - ii. The **Mackenzie Region Mutual Aid Agreement**, dated March 2020, involving Mackenzie County, the Town of High Level, and the Town of Rainbow Lake. As a mutual aid agreement, there is no managing partner. The Calling Municipality agrees to pay the Responding Municipality for aid in accordance with the terms of the Northwest Alberta Emergency Resource Agreement.
  - iii. The **Mackenzie Region Hazardous Materials Agreement** between Mackenzie County, the Town of

High Level, and the Town of Rainbow Lake, effective January 1, 2014. All partners proportionally split cost sharing for the replacement of the Regional Hazardous Materials Unit, and contributions are made annually for mutually agreed-upon specialized equipment. As a mutual aid agreement, there is no managing partner. The Calling Municipality agrees to pay the Responding Municipality for aid in accordance with the terms of the Agreement.

- iv. The **Northwest Alberta Emergency Resource Agreement** between the Town of High Level, Mackenzie County, and various other Municipalities throughout Northwest Alberta. The Agreement provides the ability for signatories to access needed resources to mitigate or support emergency response initiatives from sources outside predetermined mutual aid agreement. The managing partner is the Town of High Level. The Responding Party providing assistance pursuant to the Agreement shall be entitled to bill or charge the Requesting Party for equipment or services, or for the assistance being provided.

f. Governance

- o The Municipalities made a commitment for meaningful collaboration and some form of collective decision-making through the Tri-Council and CAO Secretariat Governance Protocol dated June 7, 2013. Mackenzie County, the Town of High Level, and the Town of Rainbow Lake form the Tri-Council. The intention is to strike a fair balance between economic prosperity and social and environmental responsibility, to acquire optimum value from the resources entrusted to the Region and, ultimately, to achieve a quality of life for the region that will benefit all its citizens. The Tri-Council and the CAO Secretariat derive their authority from their respective Councils. The Tri-Council meets once every calendar quarter. Costs associated with the Tri-Council meetings are the responsibility of the hosting municipality on a rotational basis.

g. Solid Waste Services

- o The Municipalities jointly, along with the Town of Rainbow Lake, agreed to establish and become members of a regional landfill commission known as the **Mackenzie Regional Waste Management Commission** as per Province of Alberta Order in Council 380/2003 and Alberta Regulation No. 264/2003.

The costs associated with operating the Commission are charged to each of the members based on usage.

- h. Water and Wastewater
    - o The Municipalities entered into a **Regional Service Sharing Agreement** effective on July 1, 2008, along with an Amending Agreement effective February 6, 2014. The Agreement includes the provision of potable water being supplied by the Town to County residents in the Service Area and the Norbord Mill (referred to as the Footner Potable Water Line and the High Level Rural (South) Water Line). There is no managing partner. The agreement period is for 12 years. The fees associated with the agreement are charged to the County on a monthly basis.
  - i. Economic Development
    - o The Municipalities, along with the Town of Rainbow Lake, the Paddle Prairie Metis Settlement, Northern Lakes College and the regional chambers of commerce, formed the Regional Economic Development Initiative for Northwest Alberta, a regional economic development alliance (REDA), providing economic development research, advocacy and services to the larger Mackenzie Region.
  - j. Tourism
    - o The Municipalities, along with the Town of Rainbow Lake, formed the Mackenzie Frontier Tourism Association (MFTA), a destination marketing organization, to promote attractions, accommodations and activities in the larger Mackenzie Region.
- 3) The Municipalities acknowledge that in addition to the shared service agreements in place between the Municipalities, they each have independent agreements with other regional partners.
- 4) The Municipalities have reviewed the aforementioned existing agreements and have determined that these are the most appropriate municipal services to be conducted in a shared manner.

## **F. FUTURE PROJECTS & AGREEMENTS**

- 1) In the event that either Municipality initiates the development of a new project and/or service that may require a new cost-sharing agreement, the initiating Municipality's Chief Administrative Officer will notify the other Municipality's Chief Administrative Officer in writing.

- 2) The initial notification will include a general description of the project, estimated costs and timing of expenditures. The other Municipality will advise if there are any objections to cost-sharing for the project and the reasons.
- 3) The following criteria will be used when assessing the desirability of funding of new projects:
  - a. Relationship of the proposed capital project to Intermunicipal Development Plan or any other regional long term planning document prepared by the Municipalities;
  - b. The level of community support;
  - c. The nature of the project;
  - d. The demonstrated effort by volunteers to raise funds and obtain grants (if applicable);
  - e. The projected operating costs for new capital projects;
  - f. Municipal debt limit; and,
  - g. Projected utilization by residents of both Municipalities.
- 4) The Councils of each Municipality will be the forum used to discuss and review future mutual aid agreements and/or cost sharing agreements. Upon receiving written notice of a new project, the receiving Municipality shall provide a response to the initiating Municipality within sixty (60) calendar days. In the event they are unable to reach an agreement, the dispute shall be dealt with through the procedure outlined within Section H of this document.
- 5) Both Municipalities recognize that the decision to participate in or not participate in a project ultimately lies with the respective municipal councils, who, in turn, must rely on the support of their electorate to support the project and any borrowing that could be required.

## **G. INTERMUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

- 1) The Municipalities adopted an Intermunicipal Development Plan in 2009 (Mackenzie County Bylaw 712/09 & Town of High Level Bylaw 881-2009), in accordance with the *Municipal Government Act*. The Intermunicipal Development Plan will be reviewed by both Municipalities once every three years, with the first review to take place in November 2011.

## **H. DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

- 1) The Municipalities are committed to resolving any disputes in a non-adversarial, informal, and cost-efficient manner.
- 2) The Municipalities shall make all reasonable efforts to resolve all disputes by negotiation and agree to provide, without prejudice, open and timely



disclosure of relevant facts, information, and documents to facilitate negotiations.

- 3) The Municipalities will provide notice to each other of any news release related to the dispute.
- 4) In the event of a dispute, the Municipalities agree that they shall undertake a process to promote the resolution of the dispute in the following order:
  - a. negotiation, followed by;
  - b. mediation, followed by;
  - c. binding arbitration.
- 5) If any dispute arises between the Municipalities regarding the interpretation, implementation, or application of this Framework or any contravention or alleged contravention of this Framework, the dispute will be resolved through the binding Dispute Resolution Process outlined herein.
- 6) If the Dispute Resolution Process is invoked, the Municipalities shall continue to perform their obligations described in this Framework until such time as the Dispute Resolution Process is complete.
- 7) Despite H(5), where an existing intermunicipal agreement has a binding dispute resolution process included in the agreement, the existing intermunicipal agreement shall be used instead of the dispute resolution outlined in this Framework.
- 8) A party shall give written notice (“Dispute Notice”) to the other party of a dispute and outline in reasonable detail the relevant information concerning the dispute. Within 30 (thirty) days following receipt of the Dispute Notice, the Intermunicipal Committee shall meet and attempt to resolve the dispute through discussion and negotiation unless a time extension is mutually agreed by the CAOs. If the dispute is not resolved within 60 (sixty) days of the Dispute Notice being issued, the negotiation shall be deemed to have failed.
- 9) If the Municipalities cannot resolve the dispute through negotiation within the prescribed time period, then the dispute shall be referred to mediation.
- 10) Either party shall be entitled to provide the other party with a written notice (“Mediation Notice”) specifying:
  - a. The subject matters remaining in dispute, and the details of the matters in dispute that are to be mediated; and
  - b. The nomination of an individual to act as the mediator.
- 11) The Municipalities shall, within 30 (thirty) days of the Mediation Notice, jointly nominate or agree upon a mediator.

- 12) Where a mediator is appointed, the Municipalities shall submit in writing their dispute to the mediator and afford the mediator access to all records, documents, and information the mediators may reasonably request. The Municipalities shall meet with the mediator at such reasonable times as may be required and shall, through the intervention of the mediator, negotiate in good faith to resolve their dispute. All proceedings involving a mediator are agreed to be without prejudice and the fees and expenses of the mediator and the cost of the facilities required for mediation shall be shared equally between the Municipalities.
- 13) In the event that:
  - a. The Municipalities do not agree on the appointment of a mediator within 30 (thirty) days of the Mediation Notice; or
  - b. The mediation is not completed within 60 (sixty) days after the appointment of the mediator; or
  - c. The dispute has not been resolved within 90 (ninety) days from the date of receipt of the Mediation Notice; either party may by notice to the other withdraw from the mediation process and in such event the dispute shall be deemed to have failed to be resolved by mediation.
- 14) If mediation fails to resolve the dispute, the dispute shall be submitted to binding arbitration. Either of the Municipalities may provide the other party with written notice ("Arbitration Notice") specifying:
  - a. the subject matters remaining in dispute and the details of the matters in dispute that are to be arbitrated; and
  - b. the nomination of an individual to act as the arbitrator.
- 15) Within 30 (thirty) days following receipt of the Arbitration Notice, the other party shall, by written notice, advise as to which matters stated in the Arbitration Notice it accepts and disagrees with, advise whether it agrees with the resolution of the disputed items by arbitration, and advise whether it agrees with the arbitrator selected by the initiating party or provide the name of one arbitrator nominated by that other party.
- 16) The Municipalities shall, within 30 (thirty) days of the Arbitration Notice, jointly nominate or agree upon an arbitrator.
- 17) Should the Municipalities fail to agree on a single arbitrator within the prescribed time period, then either party may apply to a Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta to have the arbitrator appointed.
- 18) The terms of reference for arbitration shall be those areas of dispute referred to in the Arbitration Notice and the receiving party's response thereto.
- 19) The *Arbitration Act* (Alberta) in force from time to time shall apply to arbitration proceedings commenced pursuant to this Framework.

- 20) The arbitrator shall proceed to hear the dispute within 60 (sixty) days of being appointed and proceed to render a written decision concerning the dispute forthwith.
- 21) The arbitrator's decision is final and binding upon the Municipalities subject only to a party's right to seek judicial review by the Court of Queen's Bench on a question of jurisdiction.
- 22) If the Municipalities do not mutually agree on the procedure to be followed, the arbitrator may proceed to conduct the arbitration on the basis of documents or may hold hearings for the presentation of evidence and for oral argument.
- 23) Subject to the arbitrator's discretion, hearings held for the presentation of evidence and for argument are open to the public.
- 24) If the arbitrator establishes that hearings are open to the public in Section 22, the arbitrator, as their sole discretion, may solicit written submissions. If the arbitrator requests written submissions, they must be considered in the decision.
- 25) The fees and expenses of the arbitrator and the cost of the facilities required for arbitration shall be shared equally between the Municipalities.
- 26) On conclusion of the arbitration and issuance of an order, the arbitrator must proceed to compile a record of the arbitration and give a copy of the record to each of the Municipalities.

## **I. CORRESPONDENCE**

- 1) Written notice under this Agreement shall be addressed as follows:
  - a. In the case of Mackenzie County to:

Mackenzie County  
c/o Chief Administrative Officer  
4511-46 Avenue  
Box 640  
Fort Vermilion, AB T0H 1N0

b. In the case of the Town of High Level to:

Town of High Level  
c/o Chief Administrative Officer  
Town Office  
10511-103 Street  
High Level, AB T0H 1Z0

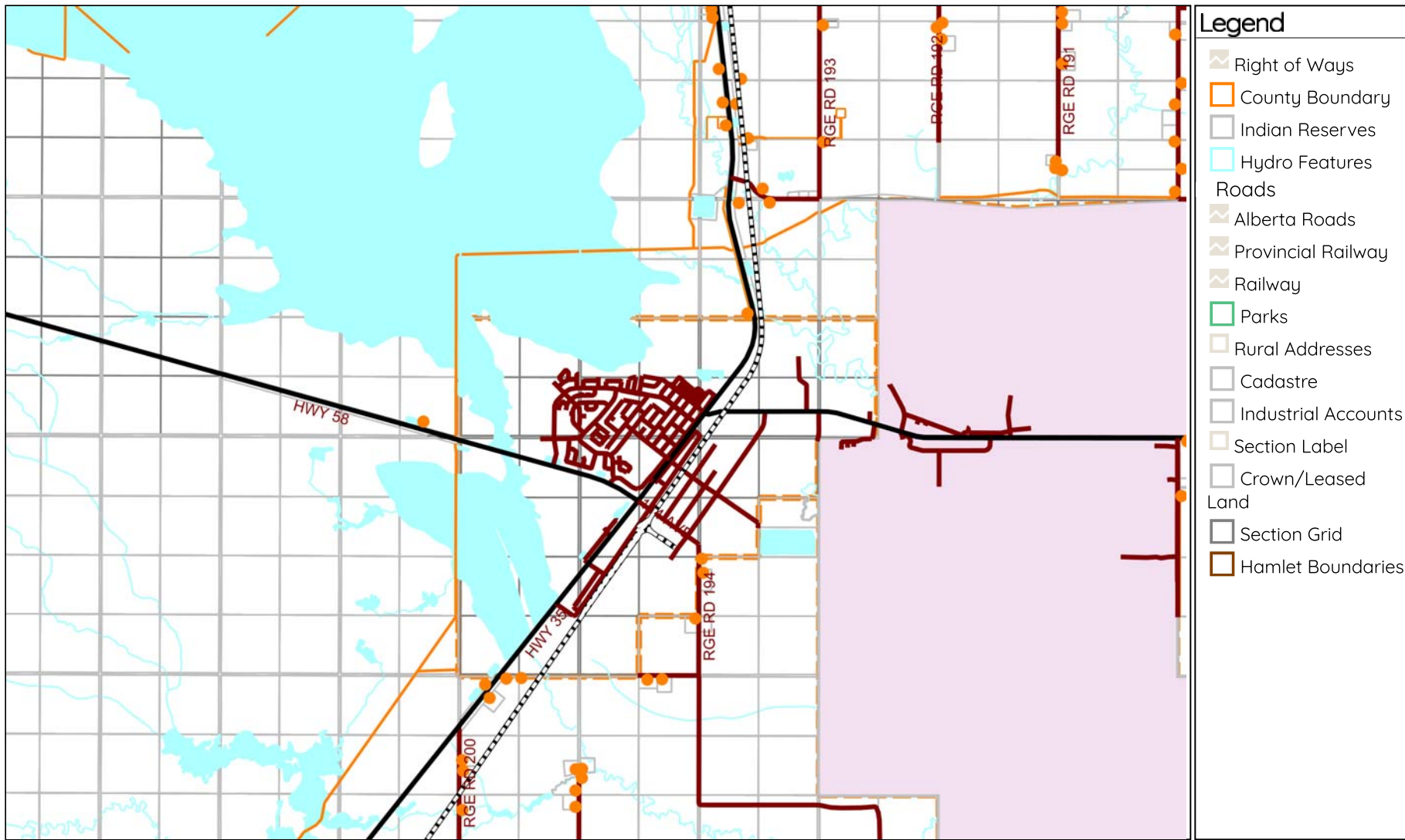
2) In addition to I. 1), notices may be sent by electronic mail to the Chief Administrative Officer.

a. In the case of Mackenzie County to:

cao@mackenziecounty.com

b. In the case of the Town of High Level to:

cao@highlevel.ca



Scale 1: 75,000

1 Mi  
1 Km

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