

Best Practice

Legacy Regional Protective Services

CONTACT

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THE PRACTICE

The Rural Municipality of Wilton like many other continually evaluates for operational efficiencies and seeks to mitigate Liability and Risks. With continued economic downturns in the local economy resulting in budgetary impacts of over \$10 million over the last two years every budget line item was under scrutiny. The Municipalities funding of two local fire departments along with MOU's with the Rescue Services in the area to formulate its "Protective Services" came to the forefront as an area to perform a more extensive review. During this review it was also duly noted that the risk of litigation and liability regarding protective services was steadily increasing. This factor seen by the major contributing municipalities not as easily identified by the individual operating entities.

The Municipality conducted an extensive review of operational costs for the two fire departments it jointly funded, and identified an opportunity to provide a more cost effective operational model, while expanding the level of protective services to its communities. Identified were: rising costs, long term equipment needs, manpower training needs, and the liability risk that occurs when certification for both personnel and equipment are not met, we knew a new regional solution was required to adequately address these issues. A regional model would allow us to:

- To better serve a changing population
- Implement/update technology at play
- Effectively manage our resources and plan for long-term sustainability and resiliency
- Create an environment of excellence ,respect and enjoyment

Joining the protective services under one operational entity offered the following efficiencies:

- 1) Cost savings:
 - a) Elimination of duplicate administrations in various services
 - b) Reduction in requirement of outsourced resources
 - c) Ability to release excessive resources
 - d) Reduction in 'full mobilization' = maximize cost recovery / financial outcome
 - e) Training – courses/facilities more affordable
- 2) Increase in services: vehicle extrication, pre-hospital care, public safety programs, and junior firefighting program.
- 3) Single command structure
- 4) Succession planning
- 5) Standard Operating Procedures
- 6) Standardized administration processes including Invoicing and Reporting

- 7) Standardized training across the region – operate seamlessly anywhere the requirement is needed (vs. Trained person A not available), expanded training/skills then previous
- 8) Better insurance recovery opportunities
- 9) Large and coordinated resource pool (eliminates costly excess equipment)
- 10) Centralized and coordinated Public Education and volunteer programs
- 11) Coordinated grant funding program
- 12) Centralized purchasing
- 13) Shared specialized equipment costs
- 14) Long-term Asset management
- 15) Equipment preventative maintenance schedule
- 16) On-call personnel available for both extrication and fire no hindered by boundaries
- 17) Increase in level of service to communities with: resource allocation, quicker response times, geographical protection with minimal MOU's,

THE PROCESS

Discussions started early on and involved the Council's of the Municipalities of Wilton, Britannia and the Towns of Lashburn and Marshall. As data was evaluated and discussions progressed to presentations and meetings, Administration at all levels played a part in the gathering and reporting on this information. A community board was put together to review the information to date and the model proposed for Legacy Regional Protective Services. This included private sector CEO's, local MLA's, City Mayor, Financial Advisors, Safety personnel and neighboring municipal governments that had been through an emergency services amalgamation. The input of this community group was a key evaluator for all parties involved and propelled the project to the next stage of entering into agreements on the formation of the regional model.

Municipal councils held several discovery meetings where each separate entity as it existed, costs, funding and operational models were reviewed. From this a proposed financial model was developed and shared by the RM of Wilton with the other parties as to projected regional model. There were many meetings to digest and peruse this information both jointly and independently to determine the best course of action for each party at the table. In the end three out of four at the table agreed that there were benefits to be realized. The RM of Wilton had an individual in mind that could handle the next steps of putting together an action plan and timeline of events to move the regional model ahead. All parties agreed to the appointment of an interim Chief to develop and present the action plan for approval. The agreement to form Legacy Regional Protective Services happened in June of 2016 with the target date of operational January 1, 2017.

A community group was put together as identified earlier to have the proposed regional model presented to them showing the existing structure and costs against that of the regional model. Each participant had a chance to review the information presented, ask questions and provide their overall opinion along with operational suggestions to the Council's involved in the regional model.

Outside of this community group, the Interim Chief worked closely with each existing fire department's Chiefs, Deputy Chiefs and volunteers as the timeline was executed. Overall from inception through to formalization of agreements Each Council was responsible for providing requested financial and operational information to develop a 'go-forward' regional model plan. Thereafter, Council was responsible for deliberating and arriving at a consensus as to join the regional model, and enter into an Agreement as such.

Resources involved were the groups aforementioned, Chief Shortt, each respective Department, Administration from the Municipality and Towns, research and communications with community stakeholders, and local MLA's. As the project moved forward many vendors were involved as inventory and testing/certification of existing equipment was completed, and training was completed.

The great Fire Departments coming together to create this service are steeped with history. This is a fantastic way to continue on with the memory of all the people who sacrificed time, sweat and tears along with support from their families for these departments rich with history. Hence the name Legacy was born from all the work of others, protective services was added to encompass all the emergency services which may be included in the future of Legacy Regional Protective Services.

Mission Statement: Working Together for Excellence

Vision: Provide an environment for the growth of excellence, respect and enjoyment

Core Values: Safety, Strive for Excellence, Achieve with Integrity, Well being of others

Goals:

TO BETTER SERVE A CHANGING POPULATION:

- Expand and Strengthen our public efforts
- Strive to reflect and connect with the diverse area we serve

IMPLEMENTATION OF TECHNOLOGY

- Plan for data and services to evaluate performance and costs
- Creations of better tracking for funding and grant opportunity

EFFECTIVELY MANAGE OUR RESOURCES AND PLAN FOR LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY

- Make optimal use of operational, training and capital budgets to efficiently meet the needs of the service area

CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT OF EXCELLENCE ,RESPECT AND ENJOYMENT

- Establish effective processes and systems for internal communications
- Establish professional development pathways and succession planning

THE RESULTS

The formation of the regional model allowed the repurposing of costs to the same or less of its predecessor separate operating entities, achieved in the reduction/removal of liability and risks to the Municipalities while drastically enhancing the level of services provided to the region. Regional protective service is a special district of departments coming together to form a cohesive unit. This unit provides services to respond and mitigate emergencies that threaten life, property and the environment. The regional protective service provides a coordinated response to emergencies and provides emergency medical pre-hospital care, training, fire prevention and life safety education. LRPS has been able to attend to emergencies they previously could not, the addition of Quick Response units has decreased response times on average 5 – 8 minutes and to our farthest boundaries on average a decrease by 20 minutes compared to 1 hour previous. Therefore we have been able to aide in early loss prevention that previously would have resulted in greater property damage/loss at a much higher cost due to resources allocated to the call. The communities it serves are far better protected, and its members now highly skilled. The way in which the department has developed has seen an increase in volunteer base also, it's a place those called to provide these services are proud to join and are choosing over others.

So much success to look back upon in a short amount of time – what started as a list of Goals has been for the better part been materialized. Most of the heavy equipment is now in place, with the long-term planning including a 10 year business plan and Budgeted Asset Management for 20 years to be completed. This model will be a Tiered budget allowing for inflationary items. This model will provide for tighter operating budget regionally allowing for the Board to remain and Advisory board vs. a Management board. This process will assist in outlining any remaining unknown costs and how each municipality shares responsibility in that fiscal model on a move forward basis.

As the project is still ongoing there has not been a formal evaluation completed, however what is readily available to measure the success of these efforts as been a Chief Financial Officer overview of preliminary budgets and input to the best design on a go forward basis, all proposed Timelines and Targets have been achieved. The largest measure of success has been that of our increased level of service to all ratepayers while making a significant impact in the overall liability and risk to the Municipalities. Reduced response times means less property damage and loss, implementation of technology and Standard Operating Procedures has reduced unnecessary deployment expenses which in turn sees an increase in the rate of return on payable calls. A unified training model and the level of training across the region makes us stronger as an entity and better prepared to mitigate the emergencies we are entrusted to work within – this is a hard one to put a dollar value to as it is simply invaluable to our communities. Legacy Regional Protective Services are able to aid our ratepayers in the most dire of events to which they personally have little to no experience – this immediately reduces their stress.

The imminent challenge faced was producing a model that all could build trust in, as well as having three Council's agree upon Put before that arising at an agreeable plan for two independently run halls to come under a Regional Authority (akin to a company merger). A challenge not forecasted was that the RM of Wilton had a current joint Fire Department with an adjacent Municipality, elect not to join the regional model which delayed the project as those two parties tried to negotiate, and in the end had to dissolve the existing entity. This then resulted in the splitting of assets of that Hall and the need for a new Hall for that portion of the Legacy Protective Services region.

Other notable challenges included the change in operational model for all members uniting the culture of the separate halls to one, with one set of operating practices; Orchestrating detailed Standard Operating Procedures with a large geographical response area; changes in technology implemented from what it had 'always been' to today's best practices, adapting to limitations of the Standard Operating Procedures until all members were trained to certain levels

LESSONS LEARNED

Overall from an operating timeline to where we stand today what we have accomplished and the direction we are heading is nothing short of admirable. Many times along the way the question was raised if we should have involved the individual departments in the formulation of that operating timeline, however given the gravity of planning and Risk Responsibility we believe the way in which this was developed served the ratepayers and all parties involved the best. This avoided lengthy development of 5 year plans subject to mass opinion. The team assembled were experts in there area and hit the objectives given to them. In a project this size the best lesson taken from this is to ensure that your timelines and expectations are flexible knowing the paths along the way will require adjustment.