

MD of Northern Lights # 22

Strategic Plan
2009-2012



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Background

Northern Lights was created in 1913 as an Improvement District within the Province of Alberta by Order in Council. In 1995 the Improvement District was incorporated as a Municipal District and has maintained that designation since that time. The Municipal District of Northern Lights #22 (MD) is located in an area known as the Peace Country, within North-western Alberta. The area contains rolling hills and beautiful valleys of agricultural land, along with several rivers and lakes. There are four hamlet/service areas within the MD, those being, Deadwood, Dixonville, North Star and Notikewin. The Town of Manning also lies within the boundaries of the MD.

The MD has a population of just over 3,500 and encompasses over 1,772,000 hectares in area. The MD's operating budget is close to \$15,000,000 on an annual basis which covers the costs of providing a variety of municipal services to the residents and business communities. The MD tax rate for both residential and non-residential properties has remained relatively constant over the past few years demonstrating consistent management of revenues and expenditures.

There are two forestry companies operating within the Municipal District of Northern Lights. Located north of the Town of Manning is the Manning Diversified Forest Products Ltd. (MDFP), which is an integrated value-added wood processing facility. Outputs include dimensional lumber and several value-added wood products such as decking, fencing and siding components. The mill employs over 150 people with an additional 100 seasonal jobs in the woodlands. South of Manning is Daishowa Marubeni International Ltd. (DMI), a pulp mill that annually produces approximately 480,000 air dried metric tonnes of kraft pulp.

Oil and gas is a major part of the economic makeup of the region and there are several gas plants located in the Chinchaga area, northwest of Manning. Companies with operations in the area include: BP, TransCanada Pipelines, Talisman Energy, and Penn West Energy Trust among others. These extraction companies are serviced by several local companies specializing in everything from construction to road building to wire line testing.

Agriculture is also a large sector given the long days in the summer and the top quality soils found the area. Wheat, canola, oats, barley and peas are the primary crops produced in the region. There are also livestock operations consisting of beef, bison and elk. As well, many honey producers can be found within the region. The area is also an important producer of forage seeds such as smooth brome and timothy.

The M.D. of Northern Lights #22 offers a lot to the recreational tourist. With three provincial parks: Notikewin, Twin Lakes, and Sulphur Lake, along with private campgrounds there are plenty of amenities for the outdoors person. Activities to experience in the region include: hiking, fishing, camping, golfing, water recreation, off-highway vehicle riding, canoe/kayaking. And in the fall and winter there is hunting, ice fishing, snowmobiling.



To the Residents of the Municipal District of Northern Lights # 22

In October 2008 your MD Council met and commenced a planning process which resulted in identifying four (4) critical issues facing the MD over the next few months and into 2009/10. The issues and their respective goals were further developed and are reflected in our 2009 operating and capital budgets. With the 2009 budgets approved we knew it was time to look again into the future issues facing our municipality and in January of this year we met to continue that planning process.



As a result of our latest planning workshop we have identified issues for the next three (3) years and have developed goals to strive for and action steps to guide us in accomplishing those goals. This Strategic Plan identifies the issues and goals which we are working on in 2009 and those which we are planning for over the next three (3) years. The first four (4) issues are the ones we identified in October and the later issues (#5 to #9) are the issues identified through our last planning workshop.

It is the wish of your MD council to share with you, our residents and taxpayers, those issues we feel are vital to the ongoing success of our municipality. While we acknowledge there are other issues facing our MD we felt these warrant our early attention. The following is a summary of the rationale behind each issue within this Strategic Plan:

Issue #1: Our ability to grow economically is deemed to be our top priority. We feel that by creating an environment which will lead us to developing an economically sustainable community, we will be able to lead the MD in a direction which will encourage development that can be managed and will benefit our region for years to come. We will keep track of developmental factors and report annually on our ability to develop and grow. This will be accomplished through the creation of an Economic Development Action Plan over the next year.

Issue #2: The transmission and distribution of potable water to areas of our municipality has been identified as another important issue within the MD. Our long term goal is to make potable water available to as many residents of the MD as makes economic sense. This will be accomplished by working with existing water co-ops and possible additional water co-ops in the future. Our administration will be developing priorities for future water line development through fiscal financial models aimed at providing water over a period of time.

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Issue #3: Our MD is blessed with a wide variety of community cultures and your council acknowledges that each community within the MD is unique unto itself. Within the early months of 2009 we want to develop a plan which will identify the differences within the communities and determine future requirements.

Issue #4: The finalization of the development of Highway #35 is identified as an issue requiring immediate attention. By identifying this issue as a priority within this Plan we are determined to finalize this matter early in 2009. This will be done by ensuring the necessary meetings with all parties affected are arranged and conducted with the aim to finalize the issues surrounding the completion of this project as soon as possible. We believe that everyone involved with the completion of this project wants it concluded quickly and your MD council will act as the catalyst to draw all parties together for an early conclusion.

Issue #5: Ensuring our MD residents are provided with access to services, either within our MD or within a neighbouring municipality, is considered an important attribute in retaining and attracting residents. Your council is of the belief that through interacting with neighbouring municipalities (Manning, Peace River, and Grimshaw) we will be able to provide service amenities to the region which will benefit the majority of our residents. This issue identifies the MD's desire to collaborate with our neighbouring municipalities in areas which we feel would be beneficial to everyone. Over the summer and fall of 2009 council and administration will meet with those municipalities in an effort to identify areas where collaboration would be preferred and to develop working agreements and details of joint projects beneficial to all.



Issue #6: The ongoing management of solid waste within the MD is considered another high priority. It is recognized that the Long Lake Regional Waste Management Service Commission is responsible for the overall management of solid waste in the MD and as such the MD council will work closely with the Commission to consider increasing services offered within the MD.

Issue #7: Water and Sewer services within the North Star community requires action on the part of the MD. This issue will be specifically addressed by indentifying the need for a feasibility study so that proper cost estimates can be prepared and considered by council. Once costs are determined, council can then consider the budgeting and construction of the service upgrading requirements over the next few years.

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Issue #8: In conjunction with the Economic Development initiative (Issue #1) council is convinced that interaction between residents and the MD as well as interaction between the MD and private/public sector corporations could be improved upon. With this in mind, council wants to develop action steps aimed at increasing its image in the eyes of its residents and non-residents. It is hoped that the MD can present itself to others as a prosperous municipality and a good place to carry on business and to live.

By following through with this updated Plan we feel that we will be addressing the most urgent issues facing the MD over the next few years. By continually assessing this plan we will be able to report progress on each of the issues and also modify the Plan as conditions warrant. We are looking forward to the next couple of years as we serve you, the residents of the MD of Northern Lights # 22.



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Issue # 1: The inability of the MD of Northern Lights to investigate and secure economic development opportunities				
Goal: To create an environment conducive to the development of a sustainable community				
Measurement: Continual increase in measurable items such as property assessment, development permits, population growth, and industrial development. (ongoing and annual assessment growth factors)				
What has been done or needs to be done to address this item?	Detail Specific Objectives Required to Complete each Action Step	Identify the Person Responsible for Carrying out this Objective	Identify Resources Required to Accomplish this Objective (Time, Dollars, Personnel)	Specify the Date when this Objective is to be Completed
Action Steps:				
1. Engage a consulting firm specializing in economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare RFP to select an appropriate consulting firm to engage; • Select a firm to assist the MD in establishing an action plan to promote the MD as a good place to work and live; 	CAO	\$50,000	April – 2009
2. Implement the Economic Development Action Plan prepared by the Consulting firm referred to in Step # 1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire the necessary assistance required to implement the Plan • Be prepared to work cooperatively with the neighbouring municipalities 	CAO	\$150,000/yr	May – 2009
3. Establish monitoring criteria for the MD to keep track of ongoing development resulting from economic activities over time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a list of related measurable factors which will be used to establish the MD's base line for comparison. • Evaluate the factors and analyze effect on the MD. • Continue to evaluate the cost/benefit of economic development promotion to ensure value is being maintained. 	Director of Finance	In-house monitoring	January – 2009

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Issue # 2: Transmission of potable water				
Goal: To make potable water accessible to residents of the MD of Northern Lights				
Measurement: The number of additional water connections recorded on an annual basis (Ongoing time frame)				
What has been done or needs to be done to address this item?	Detail Specific Objectives Required to Complete each Action Step	Identify the Person Responsible for Carrying out this Objective	Identify Resources Required to Accomplish this Objective (Time, Dollars, Personnel)	Specify the Date when this Objective is to be Completed
Action Steps:				
1. Meet with Manning coop to determine their status, future plans, funding position, and determine future viability of the coop to delivery water to MD residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider future viability of MD supporting water coops or if MD should take on responsibility themselves of delivering water to residents. Look at other options available to MD ensuring potable is delivered to MD residents; Council decide on future water provider to residents. 	Director of Public Works	Internal – Time Allocation	End of November – 2008 Winter – 2008/2009 Spring – 2009
2. Determine the water priority by location (Peace River Area and Manning area and proposed line to Breaking Point)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify specific cost factors in constructing transmission lines to Weberville, Warrensville, and Manning area coop; Establish a policy on funding water delivery responsibilities; including testing and quality of water; 	Director of Public Works/Council Directors of Public Works and Finance	Internal	Mid – 2009 Mid - 2009
3. Establish funding alternatives for future water coops as they are created.		Director of Finance	Internal	Mid – 2009
4. Allocate budget amounts to proceed with water connections		Council		By 2010 budget approval

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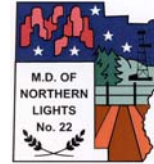


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Issue # 3: Individual community uniqueness				
Goal: To develop a strategy to deal with the uniqueness of communities within the MD of Northern Lights				
Measurement: Council passing a resolution detailing a strategy to deal with the uniqueness of individual communities within the MD				
What has been done or needs to be done to address this item?	Detail Specific Objectives Required to Complete each Action Step	Identify the Person Responsible for Carrying out this Objective	Identify Resources Required to Accomplish this Objective (Time, Dollars, Personnel)	Specify the Date when this Objective is to be Completed
Action Steps:				
1. Council to define community		Council	In house	January 2009
2. Council to decide how they want to provide communities within the MD an opportunity to place the community's interests and priorities before council		Council	In house	January 2009
3. Discuss the development of a strategy to approach the different communities		Council	In house	Early 2009



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Issue # 4: Development of Highway #35				
Goal: to complete the development of improvements to Highway #35				
Measurement: The development is completed (2009)				
What has been done or needs to be done to address this item?	Detail Specific Objectives Required to Complete each Action Step	Identify the Person Responsible for Carrying out this Objective	Identify Resources Required to Accomplish this Objective (Time, Dollars, Personnel)	Specify the Date when this Objective is to be Completed
Action Steps:				
1. Meeting with MD, Province, and Town of Manning to discuss project status		Administration	In House	Oct – 2008
2. Provide council with progress on status and seek direction		Administration	In House	Nov - 2008



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Issue #5: Intermunicipal Collaboration				
Goal: To assist our service communities (Manning, Peace River, and Grimshaw) in maintaining sustainable service access to our residents.				
Measurement: An increase in facilities and services provided to residents; as well as growth of our services communities. This measurement will be based on 2008 base figures.				
What has been done or needs to be done to address this item? (Action Steps)	Detail Specific Objectives Required to Complete each Action Step	Identify the Person Responsible for Carrying out this Objective	Identify Resources Required to Accomplish this Objective (Time, Dollars, Personnel)	Specify the Date when this Objective is to be Completed
Action Steps:				
1. Have Reeve meet with Mayors of the respective Towns and advise of strategic initiative of the MD on assisting municipalities in providing sustainable services to the MD residents	Purpose is to initiate discussion with the respective communities on this strategic step in the MD plan; items to be discussed include: Facility operation and capital, bylaw enforcement, recycling, nuclear power, regional water shed including the Peace Region Watershed Protection plan, and planned amalgamation.	Reeve	In House	Spring 2009
2. Determine what financial and service commitments are presently in place between the MD and the service communities	Meet with the service communities and prepare details on financial commitments already in place	CAO and Department Heads	In House	Summer 2009
3. Ask the service communities to prepare a list of services where the MD could participate in providing future services to benefit the MD residents	Expect service communities to provide detail of future facility and services which will have a benefit to the residents of the MD	CAO and Department Heads	In House	Summer/Fall 2009
4. Prepare a multi year budget incorporating the present and future operational and capital expectations of the service communities	This will allow the MD to assess the overall financial commitment expected in order to address intermunicipal assistance	Director of Finance	In House	Fall 2009
5. MD to engage discussions with service communities to finalize financial assistance including conditions and recognition of funding commitments of MD	Meet with each Town and prepare drafts agreements prior to council providing approval	CAO	In House	Fall and winter of 2009/10

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Issue #6: Solid Waste Management				
Goal: Increase Solid Waste services to allow residents to dispose of their solid waste by offering more facilities and options.				
Measurement: Keeping track of tonnage of solid waste disposal on an annual basis.				
What has been done or needs to be done to address this item? (Action Steps)	Detail Specific Objectives Required to Complete each Action Step	Identify the Person Responsible for Carrying out this Objective	Identify Resources Required to Accomplish this Objective (Time, Dollars, Personnel)	Specify the Date when this Objective is to be Completed
Action Steps:				
1. MD to urge the Long Lake Regional Waste Management Services Commission to investigate options of solid waste management within the MD including recycling.	MD pass a resolution directed to the Solid Waste Commission to review options available and report back to the MD its findings along with relative cost options.	CAO	In House and cooperation with the Commission	Spring/Summer 2009

Issue #7: North Star Water/Sewer				
Goal: Study the feasibility of installing water and sewer to encourage future growth				
Measurement: Adoption of study by council.				
What has been done or needs to be done to address this item? (Action Steps)	Detail Specific Objectives Required to Complete each Action Step	Identify the Person Responsible for Carrying out this Objective	Identify Resources Required to Accomplish this Objective (Time, Dollars, Personnel)	Specify the Date when this Objective is to be Completed
Action Steps:				
1. Feasibility study to be completed	Insure consultant firm completes the study on time and budget.	Director of Public Works	Outside Consulting Engineering Firm	June 2009
2. Presentation of study to council for approval	Review costs associated with construction, as well as frontage/local improvement charges, long term budgets, and cost recovery through utility fees	Director of Public Works	In House	August 2009
3. Prepare construction drawings and tendering of project		Director of Public Works	Outside Consulting Engineering Firm	Winter 2010
4. Undertake construction		Director of Public Works		Summer 2010

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Issue #8: Improving the public image of the MD				
Goals: 1) Increase the opportunities for interaction between council and residents 2) Increase the MD's image to private/public sector both within and outside the MD				
Measurement: Positive feedback to council and staff on image of MD				
What has been done or needs to be done to address this item? (Action Steps)	Detail Specific Objectives Required to Complete each Action Step	Identify the Person Responsible for Carrying out this Objective	Identify Resources Required to Accomplish this Objective (Time, Dollars, Personnel)	Specify the Date when this Objective is to be Completed
Action Steps:				
1. Ensure that regular meetings are held between council and ratepayers	Establish a specific time to hold events with ratepayers; such as open houses, Bar B Q's, picnics, etc.	CAO/Reeve	In House	Spring/summer 2009
2. Publish annual report of MD and circulate to residents as an information item		CAO	In House	Annually
3. Council to work with the Economic Development aspect of the MD operations and seek avenues which can be used to high-light the MD at conferences, trade shows, conferences, etc. which showcases the MD in a variety of venues.	Identify those industrial areas which relate to the MD industries and determine ways of participating in areas which will promote the MD.	Reeve in conjunction with the Economic Development Plan developed from Issue # 1 above.	In House	Periodically
4. Review policies of MD to ensure any administrative process which may frustrate a resident is amended to minimize a negative reaction.	Negative image towards MD are something caused by what appears to be the insensitivity of bureaucratic processes. The MD should review its policies which reduce this perception.	CAO and Staff	In House	Ongoing
5. Continue to support the positive image within the MD organization whereby staff takes pride in working for the MD	Council to make sure regular social events occur when staff are recognized for the positive things they do; celebrate staff accomplishments	CAO and Staff	In House	Ongoing