

Rural Municipality of Brokenhead

The Village of Garson and the RM of Brokenhead amalgamated on January 1, 2003, to form the new RM of Brokenhead. Located 44 kilometres east of Winnipeg, Brokenhead is predominantly an agriculture-based municipality. Its small urban communities, Garson and Tyndall, are home to many of the municipality's public and recreational facilities.

The Village of Garson was dealing with many pressures. The community, with its population of 350, was not growing. The municipality was having difficulty providing quality, affordable services to its citizens, while almost 40% of its budget was allocated to "general government services" (council and general administration costs). Four of five council members had announced that they would not seek re-election in the October 2002 municipal general election, and the CAO (Garson's sole staff member) was retiring at the end of 2002. The Village also had a very serious issue on its hands when it was placed on a Boil Water Advisory but, due to its limited borrowing capacity, could not finance a new sewer and water system. Council felt that it was necessary to consider restructuring if the community was to survive.

It seemed natural for the Village to approach the RM of Brokenhead to determine its interest in amalgamating. Garson and Brokenhead already had a long history of co-operation, and had several municipal services sharing agreements (i.e., sewer and water services and landfill site) and shared community facilities (i.e., Tyndall Curling Club, Garson Skating Rink, Tyndall Village Community Centre and the Community Hall). Garson also contracted Brokenhead to provide public works services.

Brokenhead was interested in amalgamating with Garson and saw many advantages. Mainly, Brokenhead was committed to its neighbour, and felt that Garson's survival was critical to the health of the region. It felt that it could combine the resources of the two municipalities to attract development to the community and find new uses for its existing facilities. As well, Brokenhead believed that amalgamation would ensure more control over development in agricultural areas.

The two Councils came together to develop their amalgamation plan and consulted with their citizens to provide information and an opportunity to ask questions about the amalgamation. Information was made available about the legal process, the existing level of co-operation between the two municipalities and the effect of a merger on mill rates. Because Garson was being proposed as a Local Urban District (LUD) to ensure urban residents received and financed urban services, information was also provided on LUDs and how they worked. The close proximity of the existing LUD of Tyndall to Garson triggered a proposal to combine Tyndall and Garson as a single LUD, to maintain local identity.

The Village of Garson Council faced many pressures and recognized that in order for their community to thrive, it needed to restructure.

The RM of Brokenhead was committed to its neighbour and believed a merger would maintain the strength of the region as a whole.

Throughout the discussions, the councils reported progress to the local media, to ensure clear, accurate information was reported. By taking this step, the councils enhanced public understanding and built public support for the amalgamation.

The amalgamation was successfully completed in time for the October 2002 municipal election so that a new council for the new municipality could be elected at the usual time. To facilitate a smooth transition to a single municipality, the terms of the council of the former RM and Village were extended to December 31, 2002 and the new council took office January 1, 2003, when the new municipality was officially established. During the post-election period (between late October and December 31, 2002) the newly elected council met to prepare for the commencement of their term.

The new RM of Brokenhead has been functioning with ease and experienced few, if any, transitional problems.

For more information contact: Christine Hutlet, Chief Administrative Officer
Rural Municipality of Brokenhead
(204) 268-6700

Strong public support for the merger was made possible by the ready availability of clear, accurate information.