

Municipality of Killarney-Turtle Mountain

The Town of Killarney and the Rural Municipality (RM) of Turtle Mountain amalgamated on January 1, 2007 to form the Municipality of Killarney-Turtle Mountain. Located in southwestern Manitoba, agriculture and tourism play a large part in the municipality's economy.

For many years before amalgamating, the Town of Killarney and the Rural Municipality (RM) of Turtle Mountain partnered to provide municipal services to their citizens. This partnering helped to achieve cost efficiencies and avoid service duplication. The two municipalities had shared office space and administrative staff; as well as a renovated public works building shared by the two public works departments. The recycling depot, fire department, cemetery, community development corporation and the utility system were also joint ventures. The success of these partnerships and their strong working relationship encouraged the two councils to consider the opportunities and benefits of amalgamating to form one municipality.

Through public consultations, citizens generally recognized the need to maintain current businesses and community identity, while working to generate future growth. Youth in particular brought forward the need for increased employment opportunities that would enable them to remain in the community. Business owners thought that businesses would be more willing to locate in an area that worked together with a vision for the future, particularly in regards to land use planning and development. There was a general consensus that amalgamation would be beneficial in addressing these concerns.

Citizens also agreed that amalgamation would provide the area with a stronger voice. One entity with a larger geographic area and population would have an increased influence in discussions and negotiations with businesses, governments and other communities.

It was clear from the consultation process that council representation remained an important public issue. The citizens of Killarney and Turtle Mountain wanted equal representation on council for both the rural and the urban area to ensure both areas had the same amount of influence at the council table.

The two municipalities had a long history of cooperation including shared offices and administrative staff, public works building and many shared services.

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Using transitional tools available to amalgamating municipalities, the two Councils agreed that, for the first two election terms the council would be comprised of one urban ward for the “old” Town of Killarney, and one rural ward for the “old” RM of Turtle Mountain. Three councillors would be elected from each ward and the Mayor by all voters of the new municipality.

Maintaining the ward structure for two election terms provided the new municipality with adequate time to work through amalgamation implementation issues and consult with citizens on a new ward system for future elections.

An important amalgamation issue for the two Councils was how services delivered to different parts of the municipality would be financed. The municipality used varying mill rates to ensure that the urban and the rural area pay for services they enjoy in their respective areas.

The hard work of council and staff and the creative use of transition measures made the amalgamation of the two communities a relatively smooth process. The valuable input and support from the citizens enabled the two communities to move forward with a united voice.

Taxpayers were concerned about how services delivered to different parts of the municipality would be financed.

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