

Best Practice

Jean Louise Legare Regional Park Expansion

CONTACT

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Project Date: **April 12, 2020 – on going**

Project video: <https://youtu.be/okDcVtnYyrw>

THE PRACTICE

What was the issue?

Considering the Federal decision to transition away from coal generated power, the community and region had to explore other ways to sustain the community. Transitioning from coal will have a negative economic impact on Willow Bunch and the surrounding communities with an estimated loss of over 300 jobs and \$30M in annual salary. An independent committee was formed with a group of diverse volunteers including elected officials from the RM of Willow Bunch No. 42 and the Town of Willow Bunch. This committee had a vision and desire to develop adjoining land to the Jean Louise Legare Regional Park for park expansion, tourism, and economic opportunities. Both municipalities have come together to provide support to the park expansion project by addressing the main priority, providing safe, potable water to the current park.

What was the project?

The RM and the Town of Willow Bunch councils recognized that the committee's vision was an important initiative that could help meet the collective need of the region. This project would provide continuous, uninterrupted treated water to be supplied via a pipeline from the Town of Willow Bunch water treatment plant to the Jean Louis Legare Regional Park. This project includes a provision for continuous sewage disposal at the Town of Willow Bunch's community treatment facility.

THE PROCESS

In April of 2020 the RM of Willow Bunch No. 42 passed a resolution to take the lead in the water and sewer project for the park. The RM applied for funding via Federal and Provincial grants to install and maintain the critical infrastructure. After discussions with the Town of Willow Bunch, the town council passed a resolution in May of 2021 to collaborate to provide provisions for the supply of treated water and accept the effluent from the Jean Louise Legare Regional Park via the RM's infrastructure.

An independent non-profit committee, Jean Louise Legare Coulee Project Plan Committee, was also involved in the development of this project. The committee commissioned a development and infrastructure plan through BCL

Engineering Ltd. to provide guidance on the shortfalls of the current infrastructure and requirement of the proposed project plan.

The requirements for potable water are based on an engineering survey completed by BCL Engineering Ltd. and discussions with the Water Security Agency. Initial findings indicated that the current facility requires significant upgrades to accommodate future growth of the park. These upgrades are required to receive water management from the Water Security Agency as needed for this project. Additionally, all facets of the infrastructure were patched together, presenting the opportunity for contamination, leaks, and sever component failures. The replacement of the distribution system will meet the goals of the park and provide dependable services for the next 20 to 40 years.

The project was a collaborative endeavor developed by the RM of Willow Bunch in collaboration with the Town of Willow Bunch and the Jean Louise Legare Coulee Project Plan Committee. The development of the Infrastructure and Development Plan provided by BCL Engineering Ltd. provided the basis for requirements of the project.

It is important to note that the RM applied for Federal funding and was successful in attaining \$950,000 towards the project. This funding is especially important since ageing and failing infrastructure poses a considerable threat to a community and its organizations, not only from a health and safety standpoint but also a financial and economic standpoint. The impending loss of 300+ jobs and \$30M in payroll results in difficulty planning for future infrastructure expenses. Resources involved to date are in-kind by both councils, administration, and public works.

THE RESULTS

Once complete, this project will result in expansion of the Jean Louis Legare Regional Park, with plans for additional features such as the development of cabins, a Métis Interpretive Centre, the creation of a Historical Village, and safe walking trails to and from the park. This project also supports job creation, economic opportunities for the park, the Town and RM of Willow Bunch, and the tourism industry in the surrounding area.

This project is ongoing, and a formal evaluation will follow at completion. A review of expectations and outcomes will also follow.

COVID has presented many challenges in terms of community engagement opportunities, planning, services, contractor, and equipment provisions. Funding has also been a challenge. Federal and Provincial grant opportunities require time and considerable planning, and deadlines are not always in line with Municipal planning or timelines. Proper permitting and license requirements are challenging and time consuming, although we understand the importance.

LESSONS LEARNED

As this project is ongoing it is a continual learning process. Understanding the fundamentals for the provincial health requirements and any other legislative requirements (design process, tendering, etc.) are all part of the learning process.

Like many projects, the lessons have included how to deal with delays, adjacent property owners, funding requirements, resource development and management, and ensuring there is transparency with all projects and user groups.