

Successful Municipal Practices: Responding to New Challenges



Tools for Change

BETTER MUNICIPAL BUSINESS PRACTICES: Dufferin Wetlands Tax Credit Program Rural Municipality of Dufferin

Small shallow wetlands commonly referred to as sloughs or prairie potholes, once plentiful across the prairies, are quickly disappearing as they are drained and farmed. The Rural Municipality of Dufferin is no exclusion to this trend and where there used to be a slough on nearly every quarter section very few now remain. The inevitable loss of even more wetlands prompted the RM of Dufferin Council to find a way to preserve and re-establish them and in 2010 the Dufferin Wetlands Tax Credit Program was introduced.

Wetlands play a key role in controlling water runoff and reducing soil erosion, holding back water during times of spring melt and heavy summer rains. Draining wetlands puts extra water flow into ditches and creeks, increasing downstream flooding as well as the amount of phosphorus that makes its way into lakes and streams. Wetlands are also important to the environment, providing a natural habitat for vegetation and wildlife and serving as a natural purification system, filtering impurities and pollutants from the water.

Landowners drain their sloughs so the land can be farmed and generate revenue. The RM of Dufferin Council understood this and agreed that a cash incentive would be necessary to encourage owners to retain wetland acres. In March 2010 Council passed a by-law identifying eligible wetlands in the municipality and establishing the Dufferin Wetlands Tax Credit Program.

The Dufferin Wetlands Program includes:

- A financial incentive: landowners receive a \$40 per acre property tax credit for each eligible acre retained or re-established as wetland.
- Eligibility criteria: the minimum acreage required to qualify for the Program is one acre of retained or re-established wetland.
- Partnerships: Council includes \$10,000 in the budget each year (2010, 2011 and 2012) for the Wetlands Tax Credit Program. A three year contribution of \$15,000 from the La Salle Redboine Conservation District helps top up the Program.

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To get the program started, council members went door to door explaining and offering the Program to those landowners who may be interested. In only one case the offer was refused and the door knocking quickly resulted in 35 landowners signing on 365 acres for a three year term – 2010, 2011 and 2012. Council notes now that 2010, the first year of the Program, turned out to be one of the wettest years in memory for the RM of Dufferin.

The Dufferin Wetlands Tax Credit Program has been well received and Council envisions the Program continuing beyond 2012 with at least double the number of acres being included if additional funding can be found. Council is pleased with the outcome of the Program and sees it paying off through reduced road and drainage repair expenses resulting from flood damage, lower disaster assistance claims and environmental protection.

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For more information contact:

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information on
better municipal
business practices,
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Municipal Practices,
and the Tools for
Change program,
see the Association
of Manitoba
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website, at
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