

September 29, 2011

Synthetic ice rink shines with Award of Excellence

Municipal awards celebrate 10th anniversary

Calgary... The first synthetic ice rink in Canada, and the first NHL-sized synthetic ice arena in North America, earned the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo the Outstanding Achievement Award in the 2011 Minister of Municipal Affairs' Awards of Excellence.

The awards acknowledge the efforts of local governments in Alberta. Municipalities are encouraged to share their leading practices with their peers as a way to learn from each other as they improve services for residents.

"I am very proud that we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of this wonderful recognition program," said Municipal Affairs Minister Hector Goudreau. During the past decade the Municipal Excellence Network resource library has accumulated more than 600 municipal best practices, bylaws and policies as a result of the program.

"This kind of co-operation and collaboration is essential to the continued success and future sustainability of all communities," said Goudreau. "While we are focused on providing Albertans with reliable and responsive municipal services, we also need to stand back and celebrate our successes. That's what this is about. These awards celebrate the excellent work being done in Alberta municipalities."

Located in the Wood Buffalo hamlet of Fort Chipewyan, the Archie Simpson Arena is made with a specially engineered polymer coated with a lubricant on a regular basis to keep it slippery during summer months. It is converted faster and easier to a natural frozen ice surface during the winter months as less water and time are required to achieve the necessary thickness.

In addition to the Outstanding Achievement Award, other awards were presented for Innovation, Partnership, Safe Communities and for Smaller Municipalities.

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Backgrounder: Minister's Awards of Excellence recipients

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Minister's Awards of Excellence recipients

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Innovation Awards

Award recipient: **Camrose County**

The double life of trees - from treating sewage to providing heat

The county developed a plantation of engineered willow trees as part of its Wood Biomass Heat/Wood Energy project. The trees will be fed sewage effluent from a municipal lagoon. The trees will cleanse the soil and effluent by taking out pollutants, heavy metals and mitigate risks associated with sewage lagoon discharges. A wood biomass boiler has also been installed in the Camrose County municipal office building that will provide a heating source fuelled by wood chips from the plantation.

Honourable Mention: **Strathcona County**

Double-decker bus equals high capacity commute

Strathcona County has embarked on a one-year, on-road trial of a double-decker bus, which had never before been used for public transportation in the province. The double-decker bus demonstration project provides valuable first-hand information to aid in a final decision on whether to permanently purchase these buses.

Partnership Award

Award Recipient: **Municipal District of Foothills and Town of High River**

Partnership leads to increased access to health care

The Municipal District of Foothills, Town of High River, High River Rotary Club, High River Hospital Foundation, High River Chamber of Commerce and local physicians worked together to construct a new medical centre to provide improved services to the communities without additional tax burden to residents. The Improvement of Medical Services/Charles Clark Medical Centre project has resulted in a new medical walk-in clinic with space for newly attracted physicians; a newly acquired diagnostics imaging clinic, including a mammography machine (fundraised); and community space. The centre provides the new doctors with office space at reduced rents and the new doctors also benefit from the mentorship of experienced local physicians in the clinic.

Honourable Mention: **City of Lethbridge** on behalf of P4 Enhanced Public Partnership

Lethbridge collaboration results in new multi-use facility for community

The West Lethbridge Centre Project is the result of the partnership of the City of Lethbridge, the Lethbridge Public Library, Lethbridge School District No. 51 and Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Separate Regional School Division No.4. This partnership spanned 10 years and resulted in the construction of a new multi-use site that includes a public library, two high schools, sports fields and parkland. The partners developed a charter for the project that fostered open communication, respect and a shared vision.

Safe Communities Award

Award Recipients: **City of Lethbridge, Cardston County, Towns of Cardston, Coaldale, Fort Macleod, Magrath, Pincher Creek and Raymond** and other community and government organizations

Pedaling bike safety and promoting seat belt use

This Southern Alberta coalition is addressing road safety by promoting seatbelt safety and the use of bicycle helmets. More than 5,000 people took part in Community Road Safety and Bike Rodeo events in nine municipalities in 2011 that resulted in hundreds of bike helmets being distributed to children in need; safety inspections on hundreds of bikes; and road safety demonstrations.

Smaller Municipalities Award

Award Recipients: Villages of Marwayne, Kitscoty, Dewberry, Paradise Valley and Mannville Pooling resources allows communities to recruit skilled workers and better manage water system

Villages in the Vermilion River region began discussions on a regional water/wastewater operations approach to address the common challenge of hiring and keeping skilled water/wastewater operators. By pooling resources, the villages recruited a qualified water/wastewater operator and purchased a computer system that further integrates the individual water/wastewater utility systems. There is capacity to expand the system to include other neighbouring municipalities as they work towards a regional water system.

About the awards

The Minister's Awards have been presented since 2002 at the annual fall conventions of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC) and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA). The Minister's Awards for Municipal Excellence are associated with the Municipal Excellence Network (MEnet), which shares knowledge and the recognition of the good work being done in Alberta municipalities in sustainability, urban and environmental planning, community safety, public education and municipal cooperation.

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