

*the*  
**RancheHouse**  
**ACCORD**

“Do not go where the path may lead; go instead  
where there is no path and leave a trail.”  
- Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Acknowledgements & Thanks

Alberta Municipal Affairs  
Byron Consulting Group



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# What is an Accord?

*An Accord is...*

- an agreement: harmony of people's opinions or actions or characters;  
"the two parties were in agreement"
- a concurrence of opinion;  
"we are in accord with your proposal"
- harmonizing: go together
- a treaty: a written agreement between two states or sovereigns
- to "grant a privilege"
- sympathetic compatibility





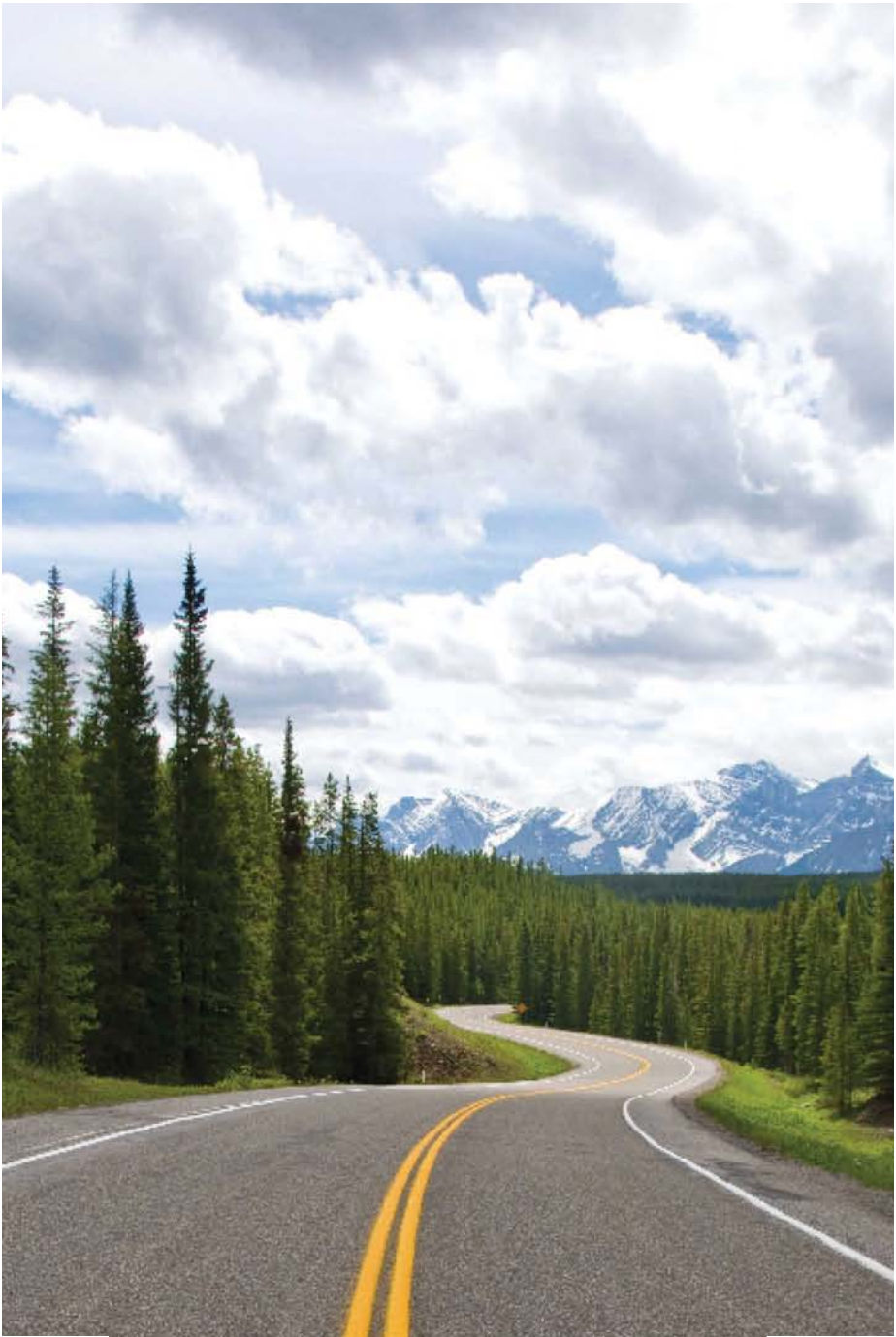
# Why are we doing this?

The Town of Cochrane and Rocky View County recognize the importance of working together to effectively fulfill their mandates of providing good government and effective, efficient service delivery to their constituents.

Over their long history, they have experienced the benefits of working cooperatively in many situations, on many levels. However, this cooperative interaction has most often been on a case-by-case, as needed basis.

These municipal neighbours realize that the ad hoc nature of their past cooperative experiences has left potential opportunities unexplored. Their decision to create an Accord is motivated by their mutual desire to improve their individual and collective effectiveness by expanding their current level of interaction and communication thereby increasing their awareness of inter-municipal opportunities.

The RancheHouse Accord formalizes this commitment and provides a framework with guidelines, processes and strategies to assist the County and Town sustain a cooperative, open, communicative relationship with each other.



# How did we get here?

The Town of Cochrane and Rocky View County have a long and rich history, as individual communities and as neighbours. Both are growing, vibrant and unique in how those characteristics unfold.

Growth and change are exciting opportunities for organizations and communities. The challenge is how to constructively and proactively manage the many different perspectives on how growth and change should take place while honouring the diversity that characterizes the region. Different perspectives are inevitable and have the potential to create exciting opportunities or escalating conflict.

Organizations and the people and communities they serve are enhanced by having in place a well-designed system for managing different perspectives and diversity and exploring the opportunities presented by them. Over the years, the Town and County have created many inter-municipal agreements that reflect their cooperative approach.

The RancheHouse Accord consolidates past agreements and formalizes the ongoing commitment to seek further opportunities to work together.





# Rocky View County's Strategic Documents

As part of Rocky View County's strategic planning, Council has implemented a number key policies and practices in recent years

The Strategic Plan (Governance) outlines Council's strategic agenda and sets out a common vision that guides all other planning programs and service delivery activities within the organization over the next five years. This document identifies a wide range of initiatives dedicated to advancing programs and services throughout Rocky View, and defines several pillar concepts including the County's corporate vision, mission, values, core strategies, and success measures.

The County's three-year budgeting process is a reflection of Council's commitment to fiscal responsibility and long-term planning. With the goal of providing a predictable financial framework, creating greater efficiencies, and allocating resources effectively, the process allows both Council and Administration the opportunity to more closely align with the County's goals and objectives as outlined in the Strategic Plan (Governance).

Rocky View County's Growth Management Strategy, Rocky View 2060, is a key policy document of Council that outlines a 50-year vision for managing anticipated growth in the County. While aligning with provincial legislation, the

Strategy calls for targeted development and focuses growth in specific areas, so the land base will still be predominantly rural and the diversity of Rocky View's communities will be enhanced. The Growth Management Strategy provides guidance to the County's new planning framework, which represents a cost-effective, clear, and flexible way for the County to secure its interests in managing growth pressures while meaningfully engaging the public and responding to regional and provincial policies.

The County's key success measures, as outlined in the Strategic Plan (Governance), fall into four categories - Constituent, Council, Financial, and

Operational - and assist in ensuring continual improvement as Council and Administration work towards achieving the County's future vision and creating greater efficiencies within the organization.





# The Town of Cochrane’s Strategic Documents

The Town of Cochrane’s Strategic Plan provides high-level direction and influences goals, priorities and accountability throughout the organization.

The Strategic Plan is guided by the Cochrane Sustainability Plan which has a 50-year horizon; the Strategic Plan is developed with a three-year horizon and is reviewed every year by Town Council and the Senior Leadership team, along with a cross-section of Town staff.

The objective of the plan is to provide clarity on direction to allow for all other levels of plans, actions and activities of the Town to align with this strategic direction, and with one another. Building on the vital day-to-day services that the Town provides to the community, the Strategic Plan indicates where the organization should focus its efforts in order to meet the challenges of the current environment as effectively as possible. The plan contains four key elements: Vision, Mission, Guiding Themes and Strategic Directions.

The Strategic Directions in the Plan have four key areas of focus — Sustainable Community Building, Communications and Relationships, Organizational Excellence, and People and Potential — and explicit objectives to work with the community and other orders of government to appropriately fund and address community issues; work collaboratively, building positive relationships, and sharing information

and resources; build effective communications infrastructures, processes and messages to provide transparency, support dialogue and develop understanding with external partners; and to engage citizens, colleagues and external partners to continually build constructive and collaborative relationships.

These goals and objectives are part of what naturally led to the development of this accord.





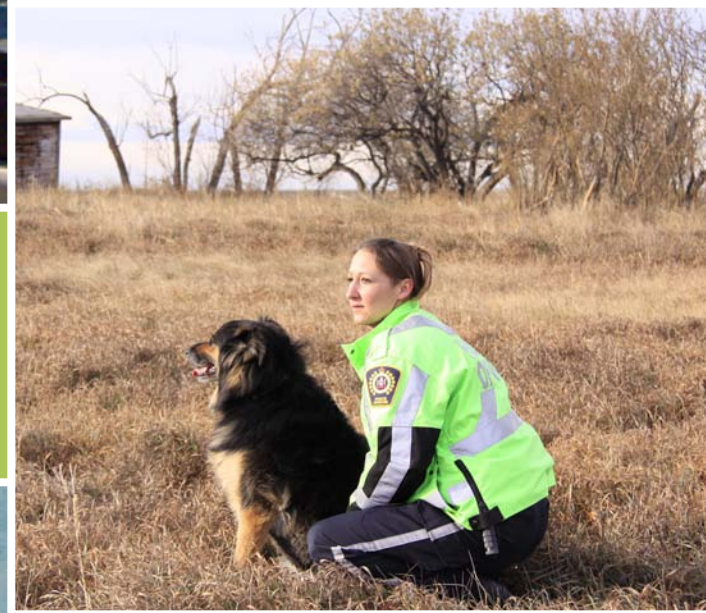
## What are our goals?

There are many ways to describe the goals of The Accord. Some of these are:

- to create and sustain an environment that encourages synergistic results.
- to explore ways to do more and do it better.
- to make time for exchanges in which there is an alertness, openness and curiosity about opportunities to work together.

In an effort to keep the goal simple and easily understood, these have been condensed as follows:

*“To enhance and perpetuate a productive, working relationship with each other.”*



## What's it about?

The essence of The RancheHouse Accord is threefold:

- it recognizes the existing relationship between Rocky View County and the Town of Cochrane;
- it formalizes the mutual commitment to ongoing inter-municipal cooperation; and
- it provides a framework to foster and support a corporate culture of openness, cooperation, and collaboration.

The Accord provides an overall framework for intergovernmental relations between Rocky View County and the Town of Cochrane that encourages cooperative measures in the provision of effective and efficient service delivery to their constituents. It sets out Principles, Protocols and systems to support the ongoing relationship between these

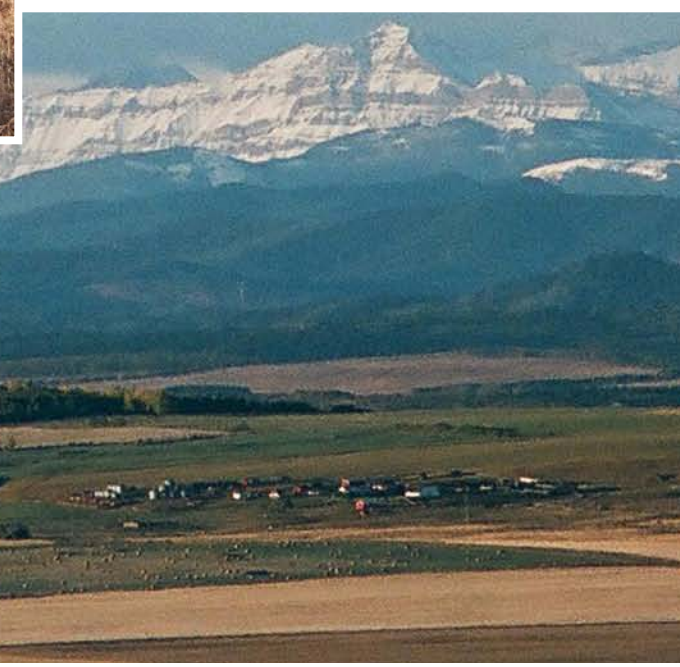
neighbouring municipalities, as well as guide the exploration and management of issues that have an inter-municipal aspect to them. The Accord establishes that this commitment, relationship, and management are based on the Principles of trust and mutual respect.

The Accord elaborates on the municipalities' shared commitment to work together to promote and realize the objectives of cooperation and collaborative decision-making on inter-municipal matters. It attempts to achieve these objectives by providing a foundation for open communication and interactions while fostering and promoting a culture of co-operation within each municipality's administration and Council.

The Accord promotes good order through effective leadership and management and by establishing, among other things, processes for addressing the wide range of issues that impact the area and its residents. Through regular, open and co-operative communication, the existing relationship will be strengthened so that when challenges present themselves, they will be resolved quickly through a spirit of cooperation, collaboration and consensus- building.

By signing this document, each municipality acknowledges their commitment to and agreement with the content and intent of *The RancheHouse Accord*; further, their signatures demonstrate such commitment and agreement, internally to their management and staff, and externally to the public, particularly their constituents, businesses and other governments.

The RancheHouse Accord entered into force on February 26, 2010.





# Who will keep us on task?

Rocky View County and the Town of Cochrane acknowledge that they are individually and collectively responsible for meeting the spirit and intent of The RancheHouse Accord; further, they are accountable to themselves, each other and their constituents for following the Principles and Protocols set out in The Accord and that not doing so constitutes a breach of The Accord.

## Role of the Chief Elected Official (CEO)

The Mayor of the Town of Cochrane and the Reeve of Rocky View County are responsible as elected leaders of their respective communities, to uphold The Accord and to ensure its spirit and intent are incorporated into their discussions with each other and within their own municipal administration.

## Role of Council

In a manner similar to that of the Mayor and Reeve, the members of each Council are responsible to uphold, promote and act in accordance with The Accord, its Principles, Protocols and intent in their interactions with each other, with their own administration and with the other municipality’s council members and administration.

## Role of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)

As administrative leaders, the Chief Administrative Officers of Rocky View County and the Town of Cochrane are responsible for upholding The Accord within their respective

administrations, at all levels and in all inter-municipal exchanges and interactions. This includes ensuring the ongoing promotion of and education about the spirit, intent and specifics of The Accord to employees and contractors in their municipality.





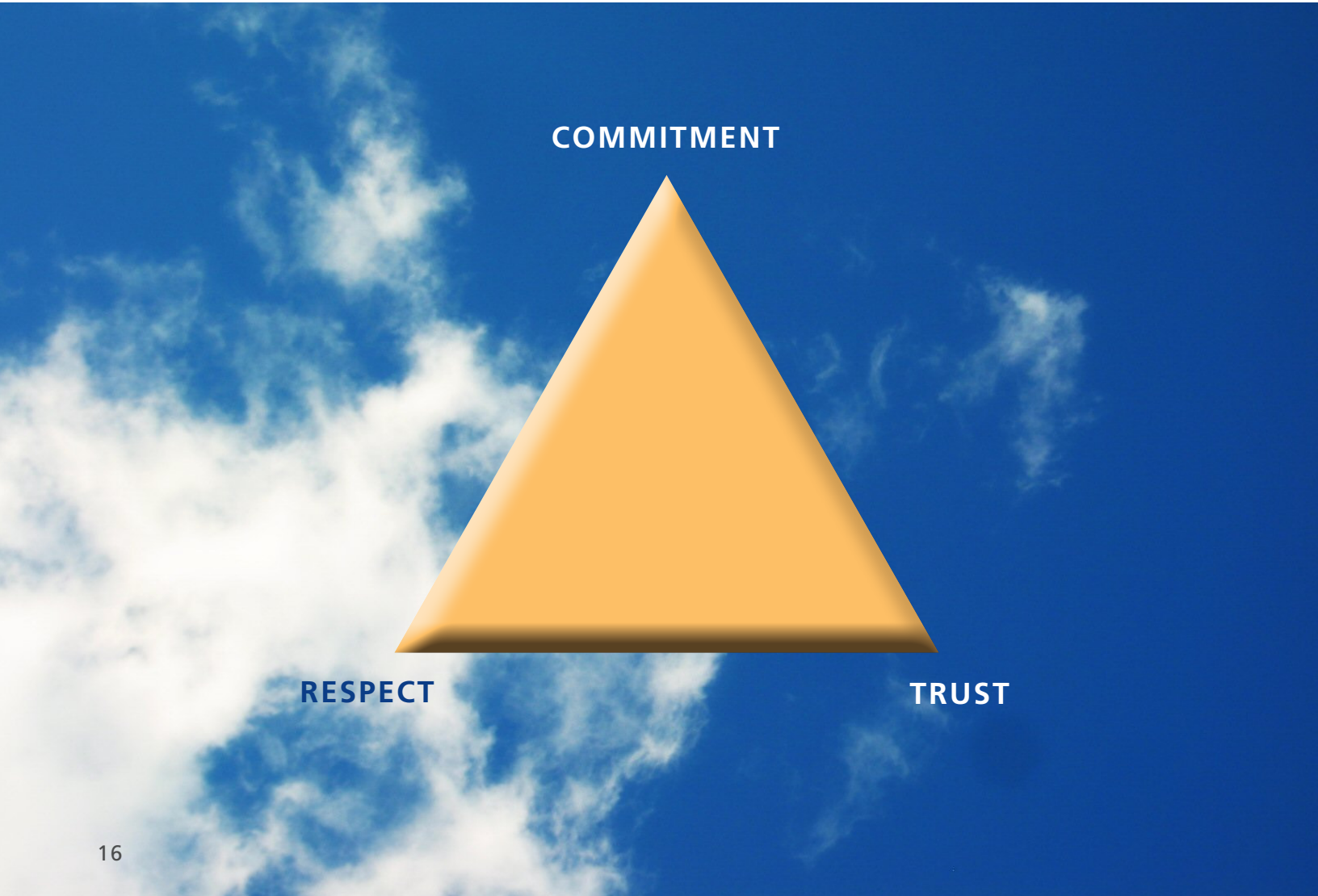
# What are the rules of engagement?

The Accord is based on three fundamental Principles: Commitment, Respect and Trust.

Although the interpretation of these words may have subtle differences from one person to another, the essence of their meaning is well understood by everyone. Likewise, there is a generally shared understanding that in a relationship, if any one of these three Principles is taken away or diminished in some way, the continued existence of either or both of the other two is put into jeopardy.

Conversely, when any one of the three Principles is enhanced, the other two are strengthened.

It is the intention of both Rocky View County and the Town of Cochrane to maintain, strengthen and expand their relationship and the Principles of commitment, respect and trust through their ongoing efforts to follow the framework set out in The Accord and its Protocols.



# How do we realize the principles?

The need for ongoing communication is paramount. This high level of communication throughout both organizations is considered the only way to build upon the three Principles of commitment, respect and trust; the only way to achieve the desired outcome of a strong, co-operative relationship and realize its benefits in improved performance.

A relationship built on these fundamental Principles is strong, stable and fosters the supporting qualities and characteristics of cooperation, resiliency, open communication, efficiency and mutual benefit. This in turn leads to an enhancement of the relationship and a willingness to explore and share opportunities.

As individuals within each organization model and demonstrate these qualities and characteristics in their interactions with each other, trust, respect and commitment increase, perpetuating the growth and expansion of the relationship and the attendant opportunities and, at the same time, diminishing the possibility and frequency of misunderstanding, reactivity and conflict.

Many of the Protocols set out in The Accord relate to open, frequent, ongoing communication, sometimes casual and sometimes scheduled and deliberate. Through this high level of communication, both municipalities are confident that they will increase their awareness of potential opportunities for themselves and each other and the desired outcomes of good government and quality services will be realized.





## What are Protocols?

- The official procedure or system of rules governing affairs of state or diplomatic occasions.
- The accepted or established code of procedure or behavior in any group, organization, or situation.
- The original draft of a diplomatic document, especially the terms of a treaty agreed to in conference and signed by the parties.

In The Accord, the Protocols are a series of steps that often answer the questions:

*“What happens now?”*

*“What’s the opportunity?”*

*“How do we make this happen?”*



## What do the Protocols look like?

The Protocols in The RanchoHouse Accord set out a sequence of steps or activities to guide the relationship between Rocky View County and the Town of Cochrane.

These Protocols reflect a co-operative approach to managing, at the most basic level, and capitalizing on or optimizing at a higher level, the issues that arise and have some degree of impact on the respective communities.

Many of the concepts and processes set out in the Protocols are already in place and are part of the existing municipal structures, as individual organizations and in their relationship with each other and are currently being used in their interactions and exchanges.

Including them in The Accord consolidates and formalizes their existence and each municipality’s commitment to them. This in turn acts as a reminder to both municipalities and poses the questions, “What are the steps?” and “Did we miss any steps?”

The Protocols in The Accord may take the form of a checklist, a flow chart with an accompanying written explanation, a series of directives or questions, or a step-by-step procedure. Every attempt has been made to capture the Protocols in an easy-to-use and understandable format using graphics, visuals and lists.

It can be expected that, over time, the Protocols contained in The Accord will be expanded, added to and revised to accommodate the issues of the day.

The Protocols are meant to be flexible and serve as a guide for users. In every circumstance, the individuals who encounter the potential inter-municipal matter must use their discretion in determining the next step.



# What are the steps?

Rocky View County and the Town of Cochrane encounter many situations in the day-to-day course of business that have inter-municipal opportunities or implications. This inter-municipal quality may not be readily apparent.

The Opportunity/Issue Protocol was developed by Rocky View County and the Town of Cochrane to assist them in becoming aware of and managing emergent issues and becoming alert to opportunities for improved performance and becoming aware of and managing issues through consultation, co-operation, collaboration.

It addresses from an overview or macro level, how to identify and appropriately respond to those situations and issues that do have an inter-municipal quality. The accompanying flow chart sets out the steps that are anticipated and recommended. Subsequent flow charts and protocols describe in greater detail the individual parts of this process.

Currently, The RancheHouse Accord consists of four protocols and relevant, supporting, information.

- Protocol 1** - Relationship Protocol
- Protocol 2** - Opportunity/Issue Protocol
- Protocol 3** - Breach Protocol
- Protocol 4** - Amendment Protocol



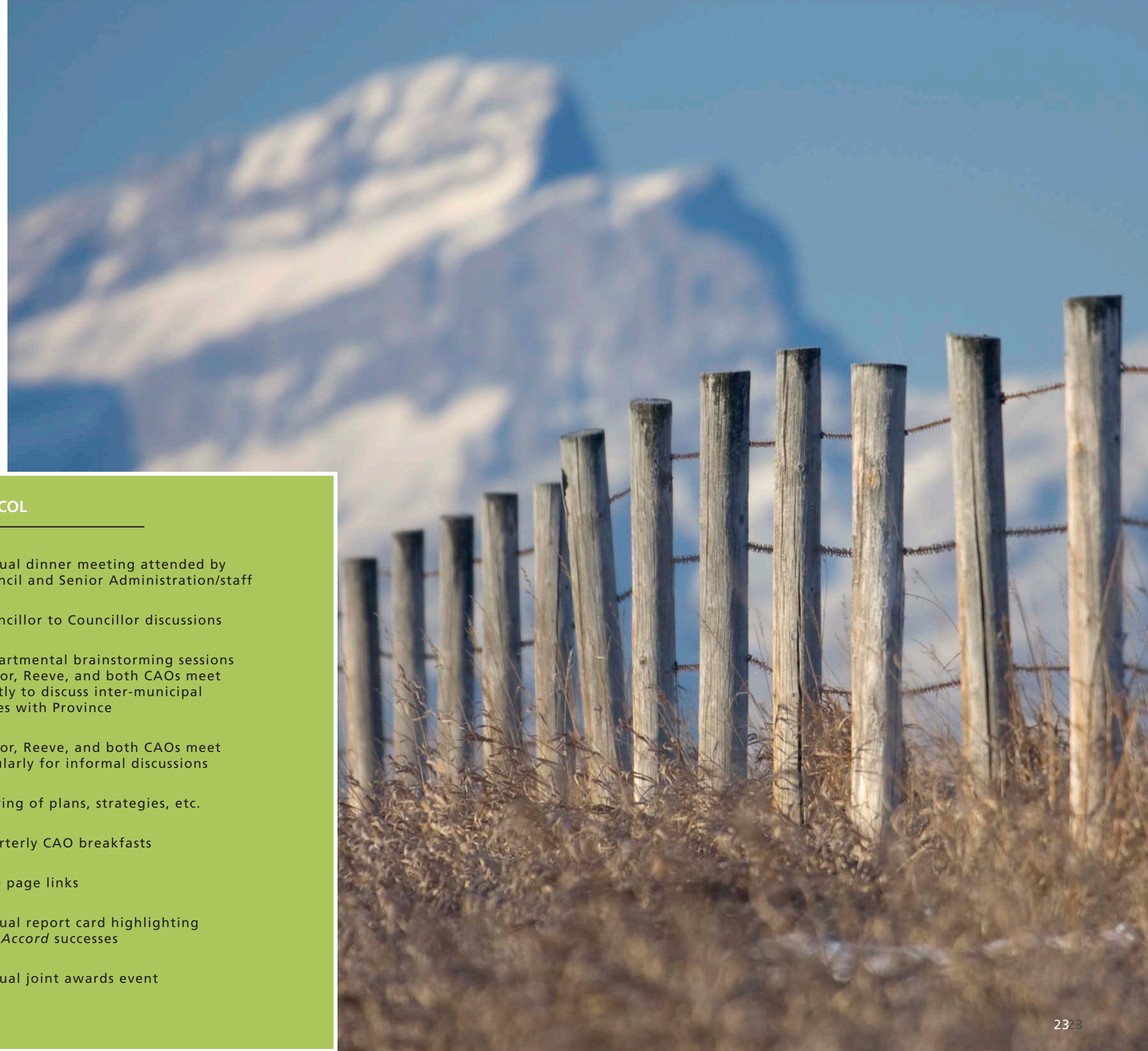


## How will we keep each other informed?

The following activities are part of a performance management system to ensure effective implementation of The Accord. The purpose is provide opportunities for face-to-face contact and open discussion, thereby creating an awareness of potential opportunities and proactively addressing issues. It also serves to build and strengthen relationships, develop trust and respect and provide individuals with “human” connections to their neighbouring municipality.

### RELATIONSHIP PROTOCOL

- Council/staff orientation to include purpose and history of *The Accord* and Protocols
- Regular and as-needed, in person meetings of CAOs, managers and senior staff
- Circulation of required documents followed by in person discussions to encourage and explore opportunities
- Inclusion on Council reports of a statement describing any inter-municipal impacts
- Quarterly reports to each Council updating intergovernmental activities
- Confirmation of information for press releases
- Inter-municipal Committee meetings to include an update of *The Accord* quarterly
- Annual dinner meeting attended by Council and Senior Administration/staff
- Councillor to Councillor discussions
- Departmental brainstorming sessions Mayor, Reeve, and both CAOs meet jointly to discuss inter-municipal issues with Province
- Mayor, Reeve, and both CAOs meet regularly for informal discussions
- Sharing of plans, strategies, etc.
- Quarterly CAO breakfasts
- Web page links
- Annual report card highlighting *The Accord* successes
- Annual joint awards event





## What starts the process?

Rocky View County and the Town of Cochrane encounter many situations in the day-to-day course of municipal business. Many of these situations have intermunicipal opportunities or implications, although this may not be readily apparent.

The question this protocol addresses is how to identify and appropriately respond to those situations and issues that do have intermunicipal quality. The following flow charts lead the user through the Protocol, or steps, that are recommended.

**Flow Chart 1** is an overview of the steps involved in:

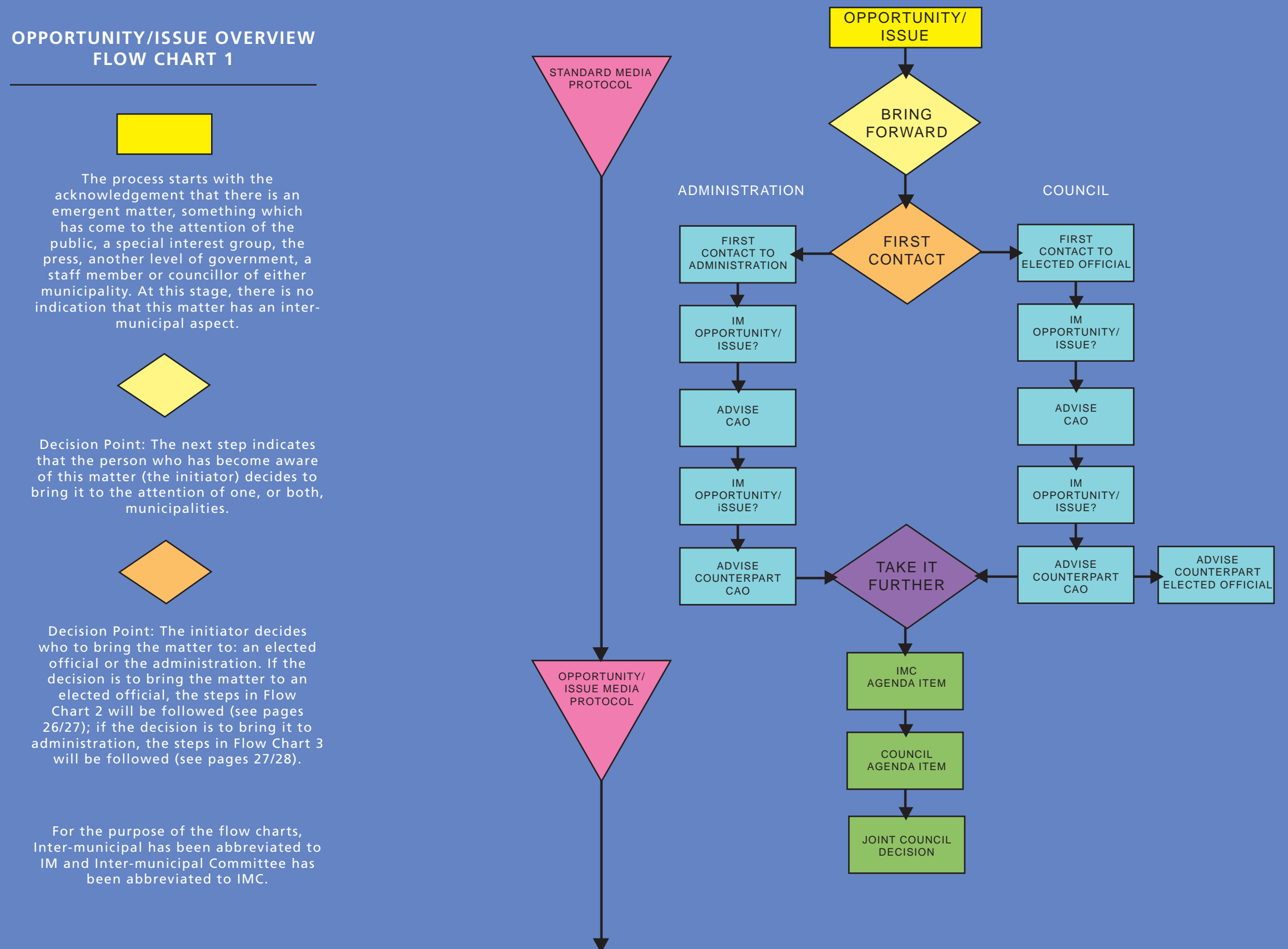
- identifying those situation that do have an intermunicipal quality; and
- appropriately responding to those situations.

**Flow Charts 2 and 3** set out the steps that an Elected Official or member of the Administration would take when they become aware of an Opportunity/Issue.

**Flow Chart 4** sets out the steps involved in communicating with the media as part of the daily course of business and in those situations where an Opportunity/Issue has particular importance or impact.

**Flow Chart 5** is a detailed continuation of the Opportunity/Issue Protocol including items to be considered to determine the level of impact the matter has and the forum in which it will be discussed.

### OPPORTUNITY/ISSUE OVERVIEW FLOW CHART 1





## WHAT IS COUNCIL'S ROLE? - FLOW CHART 2

When an issue is brought to the attention of an Elected Official, there are several steps for the Elected Official to follow:

First contact with the municipality is with an Elected Official. Be curious – gather as much information as possible.

The Elected Official determines that there is an inter-municipal opportunity. The Elected Official should consider:

- Does this situation impact our neighbour in ANY way?
- Is there an opportunity to work together in some way?

Some of the topics that have intermunicipal implications include:

- Land Use Issues
- Political implications
- Sharing or reduction of costs
- Specific inter-municipal issues
- Land ownership
- Service delivery
- Strategic documents including long range plans, growth studies, strategic planning documents, etc.

The **Elected Official** advises the **Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)** of the matter.

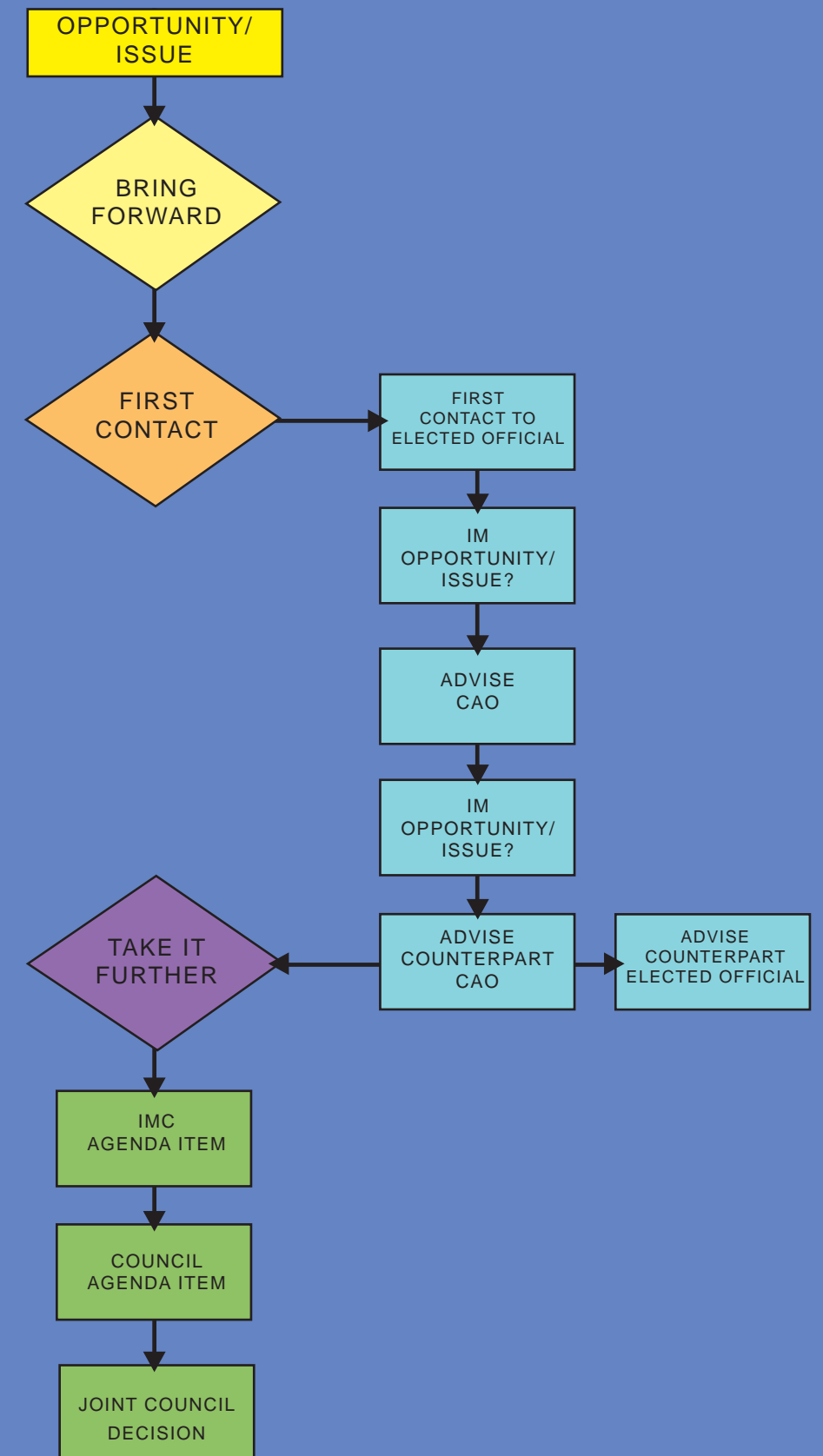
The **CAO** reviews the matter and in consultation with the **Elected Official**, confirms if the matter is intermunicipal in nature (IM).

If it is determined that the matter is inter-municipal in nature, the CAO advises the counterpart CAO of the matter and, as agreed to, all or some of the Elected Officials of both municipalities.

In consultation, the municipalities decide whether or not to take the matter further. This may involve determining the level of:

- Volatility
- External involvement, including other levels of government

If it is decided to take the matter further, the CAOs decide which of the three Council forums is the most appropriate starting point for further discussion: the Inter-Municipal Committee (IMC), the respective Councils, or a Joint Council Meeting. It is possible that the decision could engage one, two or all three of these forums in the sequence set out in the Flow Chart.





### WHAT IS ADMINISTRATION'S ROLE? - FLOW CHART 3

When an issue is brought to the attention to a member of Administration, there are several steps to follow:

First contact with the municipality is with a member of Administration.

The member of Administration determines that there is an inter-municipal opportunity. The member of Administration should consider:

- Does this situation impact our neighbour in ANY way?
- Is there an opportunity to work together in some way?

Some of the topics that have intermunicipal implications include:

- Land Use Issues
- Political implications
- Sharing or reduction of costs
- Specific inter-municipal issues
- Land ownership
- Service delivery
- Strategic documents including long range plans, growth studies, strategic planning documents, etc.

The member of Administration advises the **Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)** of the matter.

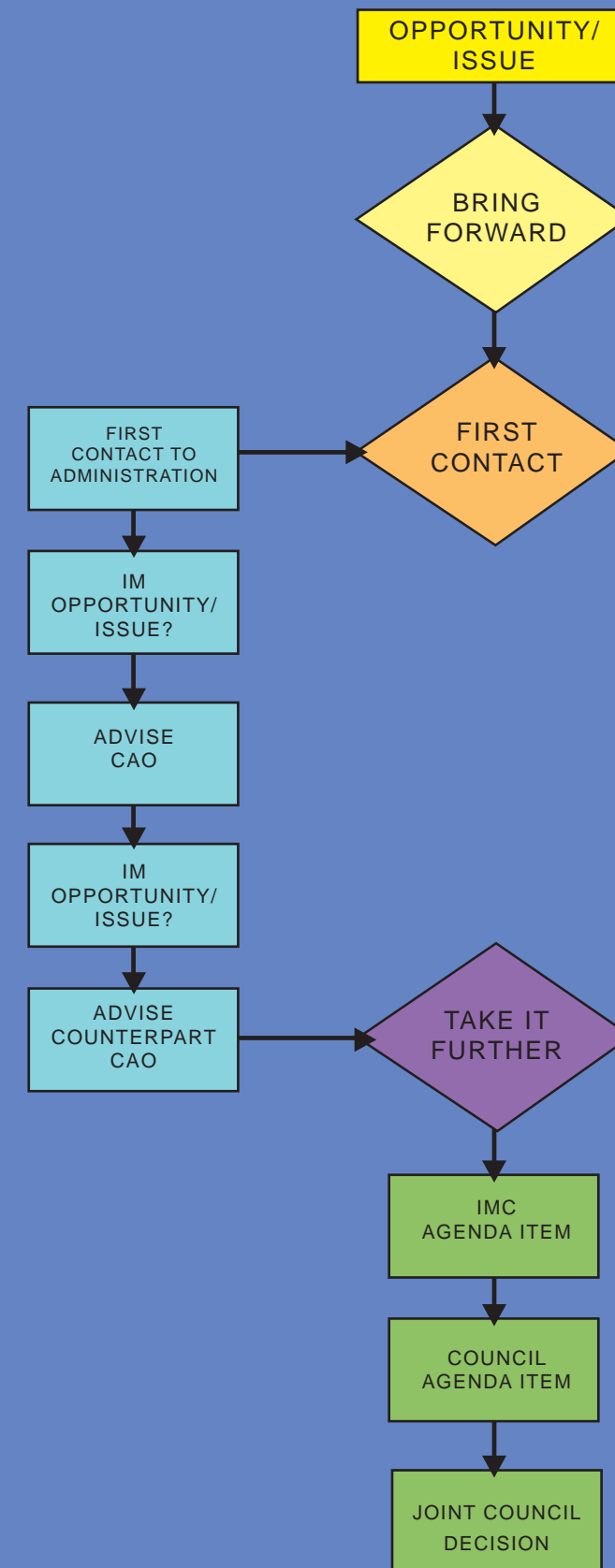
The **CAO reviews the matter and confirms that it is inter-municipal in nature.**

If the CAO determines that the matter is inter-municipal (IM) in nature, the CAO advises the counterpart CAO of the matter and, as agreed to, all or some of the Elected Officials of both municipalities.

In consultation, the municipalities decide whether or not to take the matter further. This may involve determining the level of:

- Volatility
- External involvement, including other levels of government

If it is decided to take the matter further, the CAOs decide which of the three Council forums is the most appropriate starting point for further discussion: the Inter-Municipal Committee (IMC), the respective Councils, or a Joint Council Meeting. It is possible that the decision could engage one, two or all three of these forums in the sequence set out in the Flow Chart.



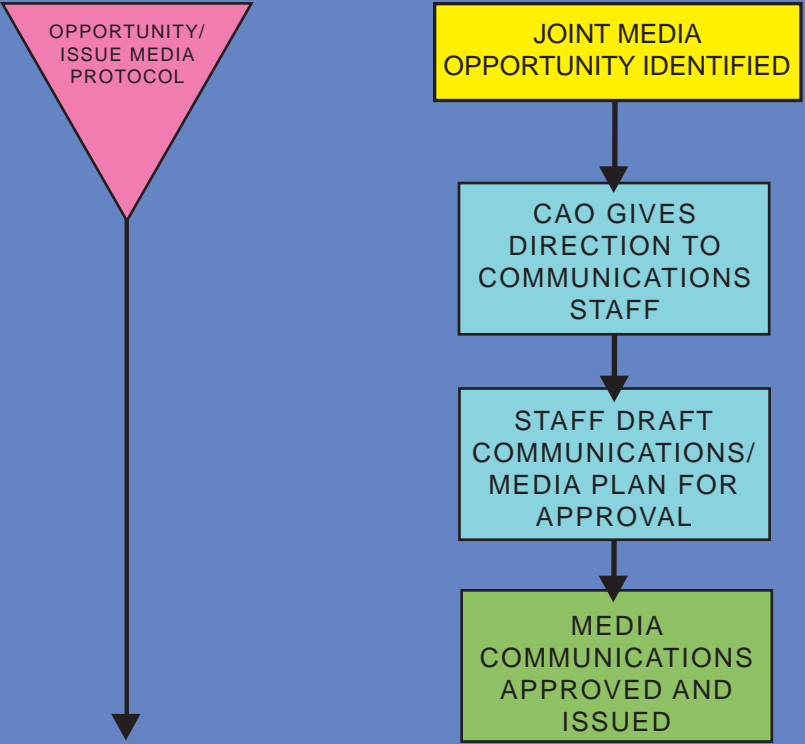


MEDIA RELATIONS - FLOW CHART 4

Periodically, opportunities to promote a joint initiative will arise that require an exchange of information and coordination of media for events in which both municipalities are involved. By combining efforts, we create efficiencies, enhance the effectiveness of public outreach, and avoid conflicting messages that may create public confusion.

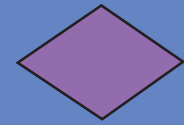
This protocol applies to information sharing for the purpose of developing a communications/media plan including, but not limited to, timely key messaging, news releases for the media, and talking points for media interviews, as deemed necessary by either municipality's CAO.

- Once there is a Council decision in place to promote a joint initiative, CAOs will consult their respective communications/media relations staff.
- Staff will work together to draft a communications/media plan and take it to their respective CAOs for approval.
- All communications/media relations activities will be approved and issued jointly by the two organizations.





### WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP? - FLOW CHART 5



Both municipalities make a coordinated decision regarding the level of impact the matter has. Things that will be considered include:

- Volatility
- Media awareness and interest
- Public awareness and interest
- External involvement, including other levels of government



If there is low or little impact:



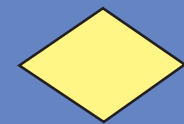
The CAOs will provide a response to the initiator of the matter explaining what has taken place and what, if anything, will be done.



If there is a sufficient level of inter-municipal (IM) impact:



The municipalities will engage the Opportunity/Issue Protocol.



After jointly reviewing the matter, the decision is made to take the Opportunity/Issue forward to any one, two, or all three of the available forums:



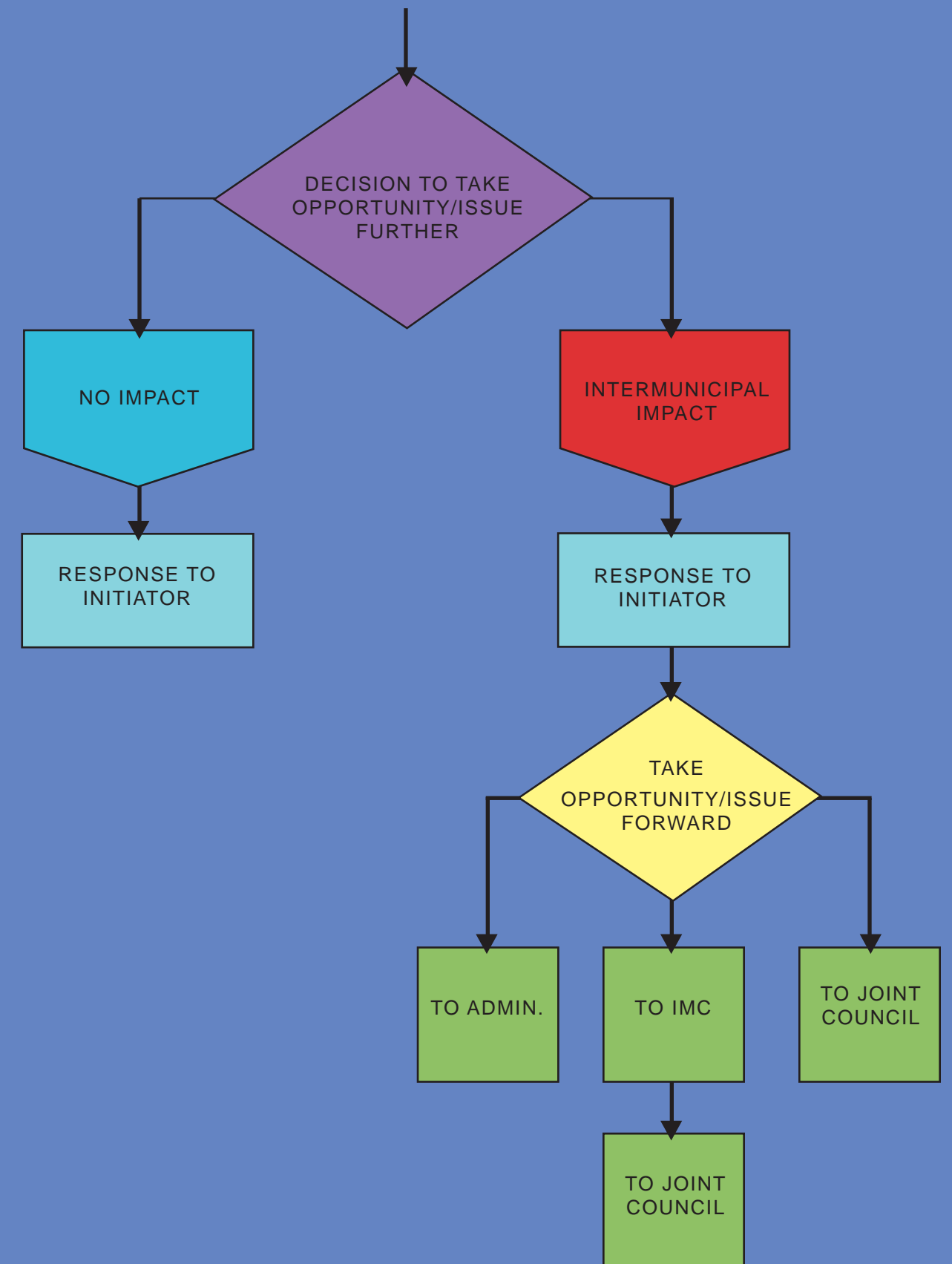
To Administration for further handling;



To an Inter-municipal Committee (IMC) Meeting, possibly followed by a joint Council meeting; or

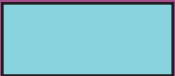


Directly to a joint Council meeting.

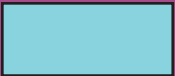




BREACH - PROTOCOL 3



Person who first realizes that a breach of the protocaol has happened advises Administration, who in turn, advises the CAO. At any point in the process, either Administration or the CAO may be carrying out the steps of this protocol.



Administration gathers information about what happened - be specific about the circumstances, personalities, context, all the relevant events.

- Why did the individual make that choice?
- What was their reasoning or rationale?
- Did they understand the protocols and their intent?
- What other options were available?



Administration reviews The Accord, its principles and intent with the individual who is responsible for the breach.



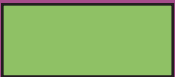
Administration determines: Is the situation concluded? Is an apology is required before concluding? Or in the case of an intentional breach, are further steps needed?

Some of the considerations in making this determination are:

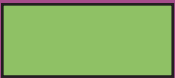
- Volatility
- Media awareness and interest
- Public awareness and interest
- External involvement, including other levels of government



Administration determines if the situation is concluded and mo further action is needed.

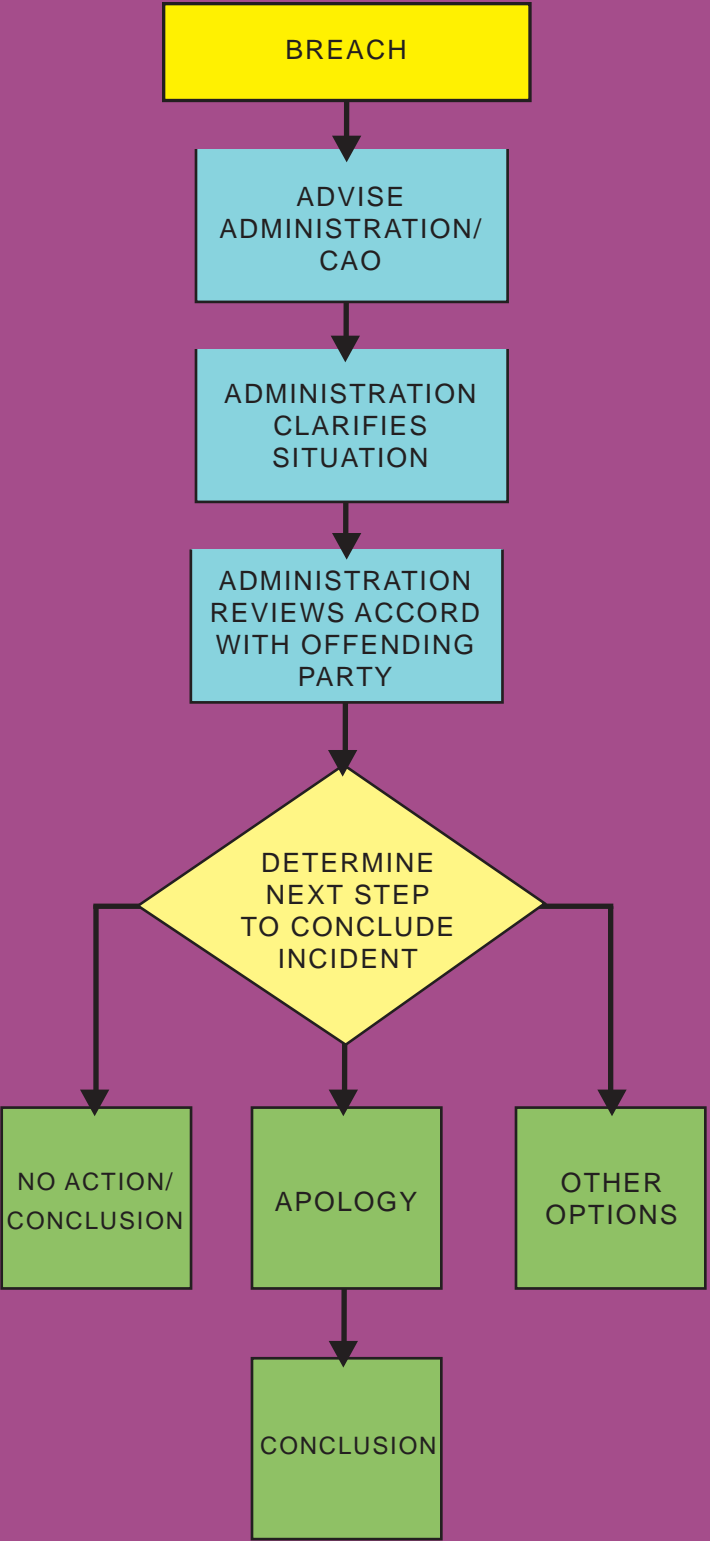


If it is determined that an acknowledgement of the breach and an apology is needed: Who should make to apology? To whom should it made? Should it be a public or private apology?



If it is determined that the breach was deliberate and negatively impacted the relationship, the CAO may determine the next steps.

- *What steps do Council and Administration need to take to address the non-compliance?*

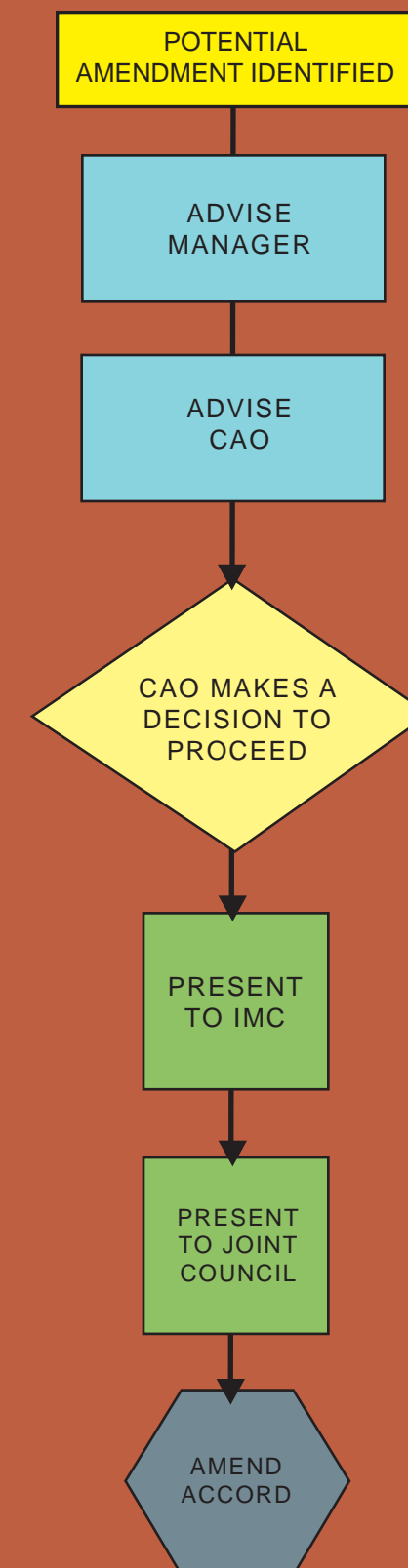
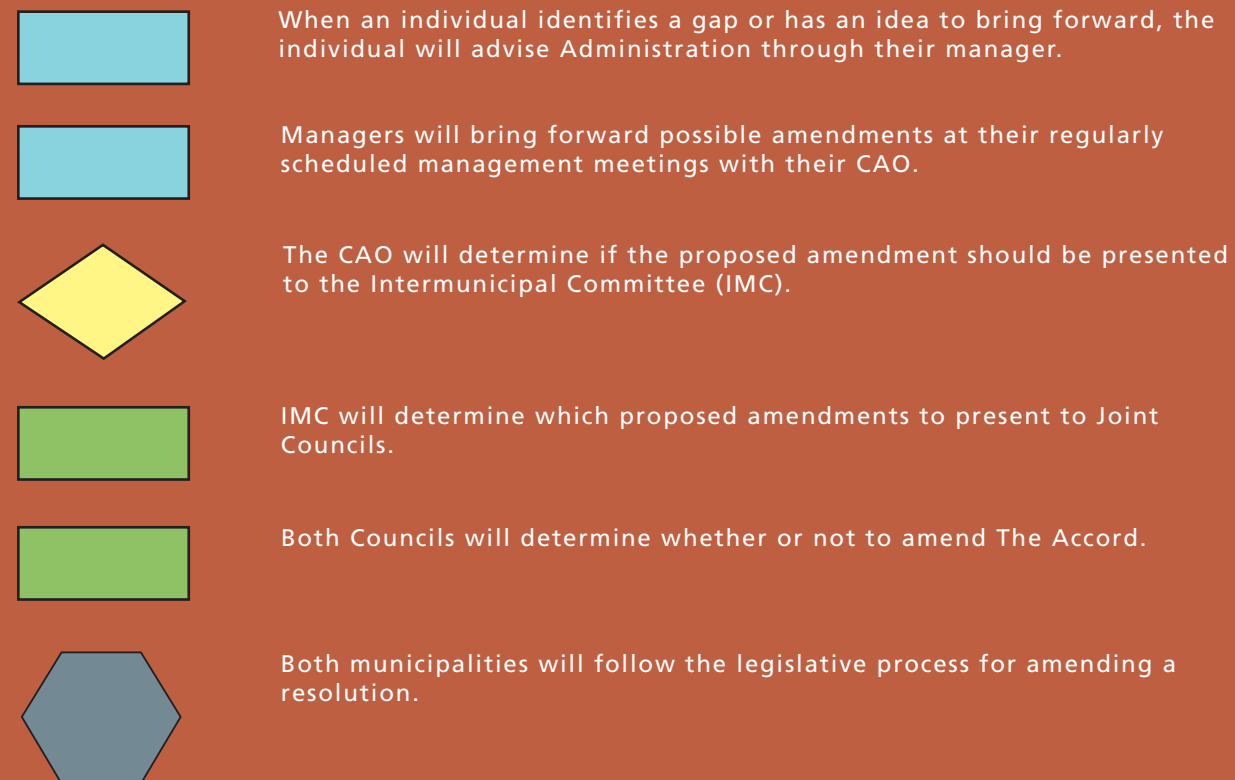




### AMENDING THE ACCORD - PROTOCOL 4

The Accord is a living document and it is anticipated that the content will be amended as gaps, new ideas, and approaches are identified. Protocol 4 sets out a process for bringing forward proposed changes and including them in the original document.

There are many ways that these changes may come forward. As set out in Protocol 1, both municipalities will jointly review and update The Accord on a regular basis and produce an annual report card that highlights The Accord successes. As part of their ongoing processes, managers will be alert to new ideas and potential changes in their departments and teams that may impact the content of The Accord. Intermunicipal Committee meetings will be another source of potential amendments to The Accord.





Acknowledgement & Agreement

Conduct

By signing this document, each municipality acknowledges their commitment to and agreement with the spirit, intent, and content of *The RancheHouse Accord*.

Further, their signatures demonstrate such commitment and agreement, internally to their management and staff, and externally to the public, particularly their constituents, both residential and business, and other governments.

The intent of the Protocols in The Accord is to foster a corporate culture of cooperation. The implementation of the protocols will be developed over time and captured in various supporting documents.

Signed this 26th day of February, 2010, in Cochrane, Alberta, Canada.

Rocky View County

Lois Habberfield,  
Reeve

Rob Coon,  
Chief Administrative Officer

Witnessed by:

Honourable Hector Goudreau,  
Minister of Municipal Affairs

The Town of Cochrane

Truper McBride,  
Mayor

Julian deCocq,  
Chief Administrative Officer







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