



**Regional Cooperation in Southwest Saskatchewan:  
A Case Study of the Town of Eastend, RM of White Valley, and RM of Arlington**

## Context

- Small urban and rural municipalities face challenging issues
- They have limited tax bases but must provide important services
- Model: town of Eastend and adjacent RMs of White Valley and Arlington
- Eastend has small population but is important regional hub
  - provides essential services and infrastructure;
  - supports quality of life, such as recreational facilities, to the surrounding area
- Cross-boundary cooperation in firefighting, recreation, and health services
- Examples:
  - A fire hall based on inter-municipal agreements provides shared emergency response;
  - Upgrade to water treatment plant required municipal cooperation
  - Formation of the Southwest Regional Ambulance Group

## Considerations

- Rigid separation between Sask's rural and urban municipalities
- Established during settlement period to support agrarian society
- Despite economic shifts, historical institutional framework endures
- Status quo bias is a tendency to prefer the current situation
- Attempt at municipal amalgamation in the 1990s failed politically
- Change seen as risky or loss rather than an opportunity
- Multiple veto players—town and RM leaders—restrict policy change
- Regional cooperation should concentrate on essential shared-risk services such as fire protection and ambulance coverage
- For provincial policymakers, the focus should be on creating conditions that encourage cooperation

## Questions

- What are the key policy issues to be addressed?
- Is the current municipal system sustainable in the long term?
- Is municipal amalgamation a realistic objective?
- How can policymakers advance municipal cooperation?
- Are there policy incentives to be considered?
- What should be the process to advance greater cooperation?