

A TRANSITION PATH FORWARD

In response to the changes in the region's economic makeup, local governments have created the Battle River Economic Opportunities Committee (BREOC). BREOC is a collaborative partnership representing the County of Paintearth No. 18 as the managing partner, Flagstaff County, the Towns of Castor and Coronation, the Villages of Forestburg, Halkirk, and Heisler, and the greater region that surrounds them (the "Region"). Working together, the Battle River Economic Opportunities Committees have created a five-year plan to strengthen the region's socio-economic make-up.

BREOC is working with all levels of government, social agencies, and private industry (Westmoreland Mine Company and the ATCO Battle River Generating Station) on the plans to be implemented. A significant amount of the first two years of the implementation of the plan has been funded by the Government of Alberta's Coal Community Transition Fund (CCTF).

The strategies and tactics have been designed to not only emphasize economic diversification but just as importantly, to facilitate positive social change and adjustment. The efforts also include working closely with both the Westmoreland Mine Company and the ATCO Battle River Generating Station to assist and support both enterprises in their desires to continue operating in the region. Therefore, regional participation and efforts will be key towards the continuation of this positive momentum. The plan broadly categorized three elements:

CAPACITY BUILDING

Building Capacity for Successful Transition

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PROJECTS

- 1.1 Planning for Success
- 1.2 Communication & Engagement
- 1.3 Engage Key Leaders
- 1.4 Change Management
- 1.5 Economic Transition Staffing
- 1.6 Knowledge Building

IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES

- Improved capacities to develop strategic transition plan and focussed actions reflecting regional vision & inter-municipal cooperation.
- Improved capacities to effect local and regional economic development as a cornerstone of transition success.
- Strengthened capacities to engage key stakeholders and to develop and apply open, democratic governance approaches.

ULTIMATE OUTCOME

Strengthened capacities of **local agencies, authorities & governments** to achieve local economic development and transition success

IMPACT MITIGATION

Introduce & Pursue Key Mitigation Issues

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PROJECTS

- 2.1 Readiness Assessment
- 2.2 Worker Transition Support
- 2.3 Enhance Micro, Small & Medium Enterprise Ecosystem
- 2.4 Enhance Social Resilience
- 2.5 Business Retention & Expansion
- 2.6 Economic Transition Centres
- 2.7 Entrepreneurial Development
- 2.8 Enhance Existing Economic Development Efforts

IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES

- Enhanced ability to understand and support the interests of workers and build social resilience within BREOC communities and the BREOC region.
- Strengthened ability to understand the needs of and support the interests of business and private sector resilience.
- Increased ability of the regional/local governments and authorities to dialogue and integrate economic development planning and efforts within the region.

ULTIMATE OUTCOME

Strengthened effectiveness of **local agencies, authorities, & governments** to mitigate the impacts of closure.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES REALIZATION

Capitalize on Key Development Opportunities

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PROJECTS

- 3.1 Investment Readiness Strategy
- 3.2 Branding & Marketing
- 3.3 Land & Building Inventory
- 3.4 Shovel-Ready Business Plans
- 3.5 Investment Opportunity Co-op
- 3.6 Asset Mapping/Tourism Development
- 3.7 Citizen Attraction
- 3.8 Enhance Existing Economic Development Efforts

IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES

- Improved capacity to create a favourable climate for the realization of regional and community opportunities.
- Greater depth & breadth of existing and new economic development efforts to more effectively realize on regional and local opportunities.
- Enhanced capacity to pursue innovative transition development opportunities.

ULTIMATE OUTCOME

Strengthened effectiveness of **local agencies, authorities, & governments** to effect the key regional & local development opportunities for transition success

SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION = SUSTAINABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROSPERITY & OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK FOR THE BREOC REGION

Since receiving the Government of Alberta's support, BREOC has worked hard at getting a detailed plan in place, as well as starting key activities such as working with both the Westmoreland Mine and ATCO's Battle River Generation Station in pursuing future plans, and are developing two physical Centres that will offer both employment and business support programs for all citizens in the region.

The two Transition Centres will be located in Castor and Forestburg. These Centres will be staffed with professionals who can assist with the BREOC transitional plan efforts mentioned above. Additionally, these Transition Centres will be the focal point for all those individuals, families, and businesses throughout the region to seek a variety of business and employment supports.

While the efforts at the beginning have been targeted towards making sure the region and its partners not only plan on how to successfully mitigate the current impacts of the uncertainty but also how to best put in place the pillars for long-term regional socio-economic strength. The efforts have been to ensure we have the capacity to implement a long-term plan.

OTHER INITIATIVES IN THE PLAN OF NOTE (BUT NOT LIMITED TO) ARE:

- ▶ **WORKER TRANSITION SUPPORT** – Working with the Government of Alberta and other agencies/authorities to support the transition of workers engaged in the mine/generating plant AND other affected businesses. A central piece of any transition effort is a focus on displaced workers and supporting them to transition to new jobs and careers by tailoring solutions based on individual skills and needs. Retaining a skilled workforce is critical to future economic prosperity.
- ▶ **BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION** – In its most basic form, a Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program seeks to foster local economic development by building relationships between local governments and existing local enterprises in order to: (1) help local enterprises grow and become more competitive; and, (2) help local enterprises who are at risk to overcome difficulties.
- ▶ **ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT** – Introduce and implement a multi-dimensional Entrepreneurial Development program that is readily accessible to all Regional residents, including technical and financial support, mentoring, training and workshops, self-help guides, and other aspects of support. Will also be looking at adding specific initiatives to target displaced workers (men and women) and to target the special needs of youth.
- ▶ **SHOVEL-READY BUSINESS PLANS** – Prepare for distribution to interested investors, a variety of business prospectuses that will ensure a high probability of investment opportunities within the Region.
- ▶ **ENHANCE SOCIAL RESILIENCE** – A notable concern of the regions is that the impacts being experienced have broader effects beyond economic but rather social impacts. As such, it is important to pursue a plan of support to enhance social resilience, such as the organization of a Social Service Providers Task Force to map out service offerings, identify gaps, issues, and concerns in respect to these service offerings.

