

PROGRAM SUMMARY REPORT

Title: Property Tax Notice Newsletter

Category: Best Practices

Definition: The Best Practices category recognizes local governments in BC that have improved or revised an existing program or service in their municipality or regional district.

The District of 100 Mile House believes this submission meets the UBCM Community Excellence Awards General Criteria with respect to:

- improving an existing service
- applicable and transferrable to other UBCM members
- improving public accountability and awareness of local government

The District of 100 Mile House has a taxpayer base of 1,046 properties. Tax notices mailed out include Home Owner Grant information as well as Change of Address forms. Prior to 2007 the District of 100 Mile House found during each tax season staff was typically spending a lot of time explaining each of the levies charged on the property tax notices.

In the 2007 taxation year the District implemented the Tax Installment Prepayment Service, a goal identified in the 2006 Annual Report for the 2007 taxation year.

To accomplish getting the information out to the taxpayers of the new Tax Installment Prepayment Service, and to answer the questions routinely asked during each tax season, the District created the Property Tax Notice Newsletter. The Notice informs the property owner of each levy, what the levy is for, how the taxes are determined and where the taxes go after they have been collected.

The response to the program has been positive, improving efficiency, productivity and cost-effectiveness:

- (i) The District has found that there are fewer questions now so less time is taken with the property owner when they are paying their taxes, which frees up more time for staff to do other work.
- (ii) The Tax Installment Prepayment Service this year has resulted in an increase of taxpayers using the service which will increase the cash flow throughout the year instead of at tax time. The authorization form is usually completed when the homeowner comes to pay for their property taxes. The District has

had had a very positive feedback from the homeowners who enrolled in the program in 2007.

- (iii) More homeowners that have the mortgage company pay for their taxes are claiming their Home Owner Grant on time, as the newsletter provides them with another reminder to do so.
- (iv) Change of addresses are being completed before they come to pay for their taxes which keeps the District's records up to date.

The idea for the Newsletter came from our Director of Financial Administration, Flori Vincenzi. She created the Newsletter using Microsoft Publisher 2002, a Publication Wizard that makes it easy to create just about any kind of document including flyers, brochures, newsletters, Web Sites, catalogs, signs, postcards, greeting cards, business cards, resumes, letterhead, envelopes, business forms, banners, calendars, ads, award certificates, gift certificates, labels, menus, programs, paper airplanes and origami designs!

The District of 100 Mile House uses Microsoft Office XP. The instructions for Microsoft Publisher are easy to follow in the XP publication, Step by Step.