

Background Information:

Josh lives in the small rural community of Smalltown in one of the Prairie provinces. For many years things remained much the same with slow and manageable growth, mainly as a result of retired farmers moving into town. In recent years, however, there has been some concern as more and more people from a nearby city have been coming to live in Smalltown while commuting to the city for work. The positive impact has been that a larger population has led to the development of more businesses and job opportunities. The concern, however, is that the town may not be able to keep up in providing all the services that its residents have come to expect now that the population has almost doubled.



The major problem is related to water and sewage services. The town gets its water from a nearby lake via a pipeline that was constructed a long time ago and is already showing its age. The water is not only used for domestic purposes in town, but also for agricultural purposes by market gardens and small farms at the edge of town. The sewage system has reached capacity, and indeed has spilled into the river on several occasions, and town council is worried about the potential negative impact of a growing population.

Josh lives on a farm right next to town and his family has experienced difficult times as a result of various problems in the agricultural industry and they have had trouble paying their bills of late. Now there is talk that a construction company wants to buy up some nearby farmland and develop a subdivision of forty homes to attract more residents from the city. Josh's family has already had a good offer for their farm from the developer and is seriously thinking of selling their land.

The Decision: Should the new development be allowed to proceed?

The town council is meeting next week for a vote on whether the development should be allowed to proceed. Those in favour argue that the new development will create new growth, bring new business, create jobs, and bring in more tax revenue. Those opposed to the plan feel that the water and sewer system cannot handle the expansion and that the tax base simply cannot handle the cost of the required upgrades. Furthermore, additional services such as schools, hospitals and emergency services will be required and they are not sure the town has the resources to pay for them. Some people also fear that city residents will bring city problems and that their quiet, safe rural life will be threatened. Those concerned about the environment fear that the loss of farmland will further reduce badly needed food production areas, and that the additional pressure on the sewer system may pollute the local river and bring harm to aquatic life, if not to humans.

What should the citizens and council of Smalltown do?