



2019 AGM Season Wraps Up with AGM See inside

Upcoming

New North Bookkeeping
Sept 23 to 27

Northern Administrators
Conference
November 14 & 15

Mayor and Councillor Gathering
November 28

Saskatchewan Association of
Northern Communities

**NEW
NORTH**

This month ..

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**Monthly Newsletter
Summer 2019**

Announcement of Northern Water & Sewer Project Funding Gives Us Something to Put on Front Page

In an announcement that was as surprising as it was predictable, and confusing as it was enlightening, the federal and provincial governments have declared they are making funding available for a number of northern water and sewer projects, though what exactly is being announced is unclear and what it all means can only be guessed at, which of course is precisely the intent.

The press release said funding will be for “two water and wastewater projects serving nine communities in Northern Saskatchewan,” which might sound like a weird way of saying that, given that the number of communities identified could not ordinarily be served by just two projects, unless we have a fairly relaxed definition of projects, communities or the number 9.

In fact, what happened here is that the northern projects—landing in Creighton, Cumberland House, Denare Beach, Green Lake, Ile a la Crosse, Michel Village, Buffalo Narrows, Timber Bay and Weyakwin—were bundled as two regional projects to squeeze into the National and Regional Projects sub-program of the old New Canada Building Fund—not to be confused with the new infrastructure fund, the Investing in Canada Plan (ICIP). It was a really smart move that.

There have been some announcements related to the ICIP already, which may surprise anyone still waiting for the application phase to open. What’s interesting about these announcements is the diversity of the projects getting funding, given that for so long federal infrastructure plans

have focussed almost exclusively on water and sewer (and still mostly do in the north).

In recent ICIP announcements, Southend gets \$6 million for a new ice rink, with \$4.5 million coming from the feds, and Prince Albert will receive more than \$40 million from the feds and the province towards building a \$60 million aquatic centre and arena. As we all know from reporting, Regina’s Globe Theatre is getting a refurbishment, and Saskatoon’s Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan festival site will also see some improvements. Those happy few, those band of brothers.

Quite a number of communities have received funding to close their landfills, including the towns Of Churchbridge, Duck Lake and Outlook. Funding for solid waste facility decommissionings, closures and expansions in these announcements is coming out at more than \$2 million—approximately \$2 million more than anyone wants to spend on landfill decommissionings, closures and expansions, but there we are.

Northern municipalities on the west and east sides are still waiting to hear about funding to develop regional solid waste systems and to close and decommission landfills. It is proposed that the development of new regional systems will come in at about \$50 million total—including the \$12 million being put into the La Ronge one—which we estimate to be about \$50 million more than anyone, ideally, wants to spend on landfills, but, like we say, there we are. ■

NewNorth News & Updates

New North Bookkeeping Course to Focus Attention on Double-Letter Combinations

Prince Albert Coronet, September 23 to 27

Financial management was identified by northern administrators and clerks as an area they'd like more training in, so New North, along with SaskPoly, has put together a week-long basic bookkeeping course, aimed at beginners, as a precursor to putting together something even more useful later on.

Pre-Registration Essential; Register by September 13

Registrations are now open for the course, but there is a cap of 20 on the number of participants—and we are more than half-way there. If we have more registered than spaces available we will either require the overflow to sit in their cars and then text the course to them, or put on another session later in winter, either one.

The course is open to anyone working in a northern municipal office.

The Cost

New North is covering the course fees, but communities will need to cover travel, accommodation and meals. New North will likely cater lunch each day. Well not us; the Coronet.

The Location

The whole five days of the course will be at the Coronet Hotel, Prince Albert, starting at 9am on Monday September 23. Each day goes until about 4pm. ■

Northern Administrators Association Conference

November 14 & 15, Prince Albert Coronet

Early planning is underway for the first formal get together of the newly-formed Northern Administrators Association, which will probably be over two days in mid-November at the Coronet.

The Northern Administrators Association formed in April at the last New North Administrators Conference when we slipped out to see what the hold up with lunch was.

I'm joking, of course; there's never a hold up with lunch.

The new association and New North will be working hand-in-hand to deliver training, advocacy, networking and other opportunities, with the overall goal of strengthening administrative capacity, enhancing the professional identity of northern administrators and, as at this conference, create opportunities to eat an enormous

quantity of cheesecake—or at least to look at an enormous quantity of cheesecake.

Some of the early initiatives of the association include the creation of an online resource bank which, once it's fully operational, will be a platform for the sharing of documents, such as bylaws, the posting of how-to's and guides written by northern administrators, and lots and lots of links to other various resources. Administrators will get a special log-in, and the site will only be open to registered NSAA members—meaning that we will have to take their word for what they're spending all day looking at.

Anyone wanting something specific on the agenda for the Northern Administrators Conference can email info@northskadmin.ca, or contact us. ■

New North Mayor and Councillor Gathering: November 28

We have a leader's Gathering scheduled for late Fall, as always, so if anyone has ideas for the agenda, let us know ASAP.

We will, of course, be inviting the new Minister of Government Relations, Lori Carr, and will hopefully have someone along from Environment or Economy to talk

forest management. We hope to have an update on the roll-out of wildfire mitigation work in the north—the federal election will probably delay the program's slate of projects until early next year.

Also as always, we hope to have a session on governance and leadership—they seem to always go over well. ■

From the New North Chair

BY BRUCE FIDLER, MAYOR OF CREIGHTON

It wasn't much of a summer weather-wise, but I hope that everyone reading this at least got to spend some time away from the coal-face to catch up with family and get a little fishing in. The busy Fall period is already upon us, and I know that many of our members in the north will have a bit of a back-log of things to deal with at the council table at the resume of business.

One of the programs that I hope every northern municipality has had a chance to look at is the Targeted Sector Support (TSS) initiative that Government Relations, SUMA, SARM and New North are overseeing. You will recall that the TSS was created by taking \$1.5 million from municipal revenue sharing and putting it aside to create a special fund dedicated to building municipal capacity.

Right now until September 30, Expressions of interest (EOI) are being taken from municipalities wanting to explore regional collaboration or inter-municipal co-operation, and anything really that might help enhance your capacity, whether that's related to administrative capacity or governance. Things like training for elected officials to improve everyone's understanding of how to go about making decisions and just be better at what we do might be one of the kinds of projects the initiative is interested in promoting.

But the sky's the limit, really. We've never seen this type of initiative before, at least in my time, and I think it might take a little while before we really know how best a fund

like this can work. Initially, the program will work as a grant program to provide incentives or project development funding, geared mainly to facilitating the development of inter-governmental relationships.

We already see a lot of inter-municipal and inter-governmental collaboration, especially in the north where municipalities and First Nations have had agreements to share facilities and services for decades. Right now, communities around the north are working on developing regional solid waste systems that will require quite a bit of driving—no pun intended—to get them up and going. There are almost a dozen communities, including First Nations, engaged in the process on the west side alone.

But what are some of the other kinds of initiatives that communities could be collaborating on? At just about every New North Gathering leaders raise the issue of dog control. We think the solution can only be found if we think about it in regional terms. But who has the time or energy to devote to this? Very few of us. This is a task where we think some project management funding could help to get an initiative going, which could include a whole range of different courses of action, including the developing of a holding facility, the hiring of animal control educators as well as public information campaign to help spread the message of responsible dog ownership. We know what the issue is, and in some ways we even know what the solution is, but what we really need is to see is a collective strategy, and then some realistic steps toward implementation. ■

Métis Nation First Home Buyers Program Unveiled

SaskMétis Economic Development Corporation (SMEDCO) has launched a new housing program aimed at helping lower-income families get into home-ownership.

The First-Time Home Buyers Program (FTHBP) is open to eligible Métis citizens in Saskatchewan, and is designed to help Métis citizens overcome the challenge of trying to save money for a down payment to purchase their first home.

To be eligible, household income needs to be below \$92,000, and you will be required to stay in your new home for at least 10 years. Priority will be given to families living in social housing and those seeking to escape abuse or violence.

The program will provide 5% of the home purchase price up to maximum of \$15,000 towards the down payment, and up to a maximum of \$2,500 towards closing costs (which can include legal, land transfer, home inspection costs, etc.).

The innovative program will hopefully see an increase in the number of northern residents getting a leg-up into owning their own home.

The program potentially fits nicely with the home-ownership program launched by SaskHousing a few years ago which opened up social housing units for sale to tenants. Fifty units in non-market northern communities have been earmarked for sale in the north, but so far the uptake has been relatively slow. Although interest is high, tenants have often struggled to put the financing together.

The SMEDCO program could very well provide the missing piece. Go to www.metisnationsk.com to find out more. ■

Targeted Sector Support Initiative Taking Expressions of Interest

Almost everyone agrees that efficiencies can be achieved when you eliminate duplication in the delivery of client services, short of eliminating client services altogether. In the municipal field, imagining how that might look given the entrenched nature of the existing geometric platforms is extremely problematic. Just about every jurisdiction where they have local or municipal government has, at some point, tried to find ways of having fewer of them, even here. That Saskatchewan has *grown* the number of municipalities, rather than reduced it, over the last 100 years, speaks to the value that residents place in having decisions about snow clearing, solid waste, water and sewer, libraries and so on made by the same five or six people belonging to a small clutch of closely-related family groups, and the willingness of the provincial government to indulge them in that.

We're joking, course.

Even so, the last efforts at that thing that we cannot name in the early 2000s went as well as could be expected, as long as your expectations were incredibly low. The SaskParty, knowing a dead and likely explodable duck when it sees it, has expunged municipal reform from its platform altogether—except to say that any municipalities that want to play around with identity-fluidity and related concepts are free to do so, which is the equivalent of saying nothing at all.

In our fairly obvious view, the problem with government taking this position is that it sets up for failure the vast majority of local governments in this province. Another completely useless observation is that, given the political realities, the trick for any government in Saskatchewan will be to position a reform agenda so as to meet the least-heaviest amount of resistance, which is either never, or, our preference, timing its implementation between 3 and 4 pm on a Sunday, following a really hearty lunch.

In the meantime, we have the Targeted Sector Support Initiative (TSS). We don't know or can't specifically remember if the TSS was ever about soft-peddalling geometric re-imagining—it probably wasn't—but over time it could very well evolve into that, if handled right.

Right now, the TSS—which is essentially a fund created by shaving off \$1.5 million from municipal revenue sharing—is taking “Expressions of Interest” for a grant program from municipal governments interested in collaborating on something or other with their neighbours and other nearby government entities, including First Nations and Metis governments. The purpose of the EOI process is for the TSS steering committee—of which New North is part, along with SUMA, SARM and Government Relations—to find out “what's out there” in terms of any ideas municipalities might have with respect inter-municipal co-operation and and and and municipal capacity development. Municipalities that are amalgamation-curious are certainly encouraged to explore that and the TSS would, I think, be very much open to going on that journey with anyone wanting to initiate it.

Like everywhere else, the municipal sector in the north is challenged by capacity issues. Eliminating any of them would solve most of the problems in the same way that eliminating lunch would solve the problem of what to have for it, but that really just kicks the can down the road, insofar as the decision around what to have for supper would still remain, which I haven't a clue about either.

Leaving that confusing analogy behind, we think that northern municipalities could take a stab at solving some of their capacity issues by thinking regionally, looking into sharing administrative services (like planning, bookkeeping, dog catching and by-law enforcement, etc), not to mention sharing recreational infrastructure, fire equipment and office space and where possible, staplers.

To find out more about the TSS you can Google “Targeted Sector Support Saskatchewan” and proceed via the first link shown to the TSS page, which has an overview of the program and its origins and probably an explanation as to how to submit your EOI containing the brilliant idea that's been bouncing around in the ol' noggin just waiting for such an occasion as this.

For the record we are also open to extremely clever and innovative ideas and anything—literally, anything—that we can pass off as our own. ■

New Ministers for Government Relations, Rural & Remote Health and Highways

The Ministry of Government Relations gets its fifth minister since 2016 in the latest cabinet shuffle.

Lori Carr, formally Minister of Highways, is now Minister of Government Relations, Minister Responsible for First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs—usually shortened to Ministry of Government Relations—while the former minister Warren Kaeding has become Minister of Rural and Remote Health, generally abbreviated to Ministry for Alliteration, while the minister who had that job, Greg Ottenbreit, is now with the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure, otherwise known in its abbreviated form as the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure and when Not Busy, Highways.

Government Relations has had as minister, at separate times, Jim Reiter, Larry Doke, Donna Harpauer, Warren Kaeding and now Lori Carr since the last provincial election. This makes Government Relations the ministry with the

highest rate of turn-over of all ministries during that period, with solid competition coming from Education, Advanced Education, Highways and Social Services.

The Minister of Government Relations has some challenging months ahead. One such challenge will be the collapsing of EMFS and Wildfire Management into the new public safety crown corporation, which looks like a great idea on paper but comes with a big pile of labour-related headaches—always the best kind.

Lori Carr has a hard act to follow in our view. The relationship between the ministry and municipalities improved immeasurably under Kaeding after a couple of rough years. Kaeding also made serious efforts to get up north—certainly appreciated by the northern leaders—and seemed receptive to some fairly hair-brained ideas, certainly appreciated by us at New North. ■

Save the Date

14th Annual

Northern Justice Symposium

March 3-5, 2020
Saskatoon Inn

Featuring...

Northern Excellence
Awards Gala

March 4th



New North Annual General Meeting 2019

Forest Management, Property Tax and Leadership Focus of Mayor & Councillor Gathering & New North AGM

The New North Annual General Meeting in late June was the latest we've ever held it—except when held in an election year. Considering that the affair was competing with graduations, community-wide events, graduations that are effectively community-wide events, Christmas in June type things, other AGMs, and whatever was on TV, the turn-out was still pretty good, and the northern leaders were in typically fine fettle as the lively and pointed discussion illustrated.

After the formalities of the CEO's report (boring) and the presentation of the financial statements (incomprehensible), the meat of the meeting was finally gotten at and chewed over as leaders gathered at the mics to bring forth some of their concerns. This is the part we at New North value most, as the issues raised at Gatherings effectively determines our strategic direction.

Issues continuing to rise to the top include drugs and addictions and high crime rates, dog control, climate change and fish management as well as forest management.

The latter issue is becoming increasingly prominent. The success of the forestry industry in northern Saskatchewan has always been patchy, to say the least, but it is the growing and highly visible bald patches hacked out of the boreal forest along roadways across the north and barely concealed by a thin veneer of snags that has northern leaders and residents wondering where it's all going to end, and what will left when it does.

While recent media attention has once again highlighted northern concerns, leaders at Gatherings have been raising the alarm for the last couple of years, particularly in the context of the damage that logging trucks are doing to already chopped-up roads, and the few economic and other benefits seemingly coming back to northern communities from forestry activity. Overall, we think it's about time government came along to explain what's going on here, and hopefully the occasion for that will be our next Gathering.

Moving on from the discussion, Malcolm Eaton delivered an extremely well-received dissertation on leadership. He made a number of key points about leadership that are worth thinking about. For starters, when we think of leadership, we tend to think it means getting out in front of the pack and ... leading. Actually, Malcolm observed that, in practice, leadership can mean a lot more than that. Sometimes the best leaders "lead from behind"—that is, they step aside to let others take over. He made the same point about the role of council in the community. Sometimes a council's job is simply to be a cheerleader for another group. He illustrated this point with an anecdote about a local resident who wanted to see council do something about the state of a kids' playground. Council's response was to "empower" the resident to do something about it herself—and she did. Empowering residents to take some responsibility for a community project is a brilliant way to build a sense of ownership. Perhaps the foremost principle of community

development is that the development has to be done *by* the community—the process is as important as the outcome. Council can facilitate community development by making "space" for others to step into, and then go nuts in.

After a lunch of ham probably, northern leaders were greeted with a phalanx of folk from Government Relations and Finance to present on the Education Property Tax system (EPT). This was a presentation we had requested—and government was good enough to follow through on—and we think it served its purpose. One of the issues with EPT is that "being in good standing" with it will be an eligibility requirement of municipal revenue sharing come next year. Not only are the elected now aware of this fact, they are also now aware of



what "good standing" is, and how to be in it. At least we hope so.

Then followed a quick update on the Northern Alcohol Strategy with Joan Johnson and Andrea Cowan from Community Safety and Well-Being, who spoke about Hubs. If you're interested in getting a hub going, let us know and we will pass your information along.

The final session was an hour with the RCMP, and you know what that means: jargon incomprehensible to most civies (normal people) and more acronyms than an emergency room scene in a medical drama. Actually it was pretty fascinating stuff, and centred on the role of the CRT (Crime Reduction Team) as delivered by a SME (subject matter expert) who mentioned that in one bust they discovered some SKS rounds (same bullets used in an AK-47) which suggests that there were SPNW (some pretty nasty weapons) out on the street which could RMOU (really mess someone up). Turns out some gangs use acronyms quite a bit too, which kind of figures, given the business they're in. For instance, we didn't realize that the tag that Terror Squad uses—TMHS—means "Till My Heart Stops," which actually sounds pretty poetic when preceded by "I will Love You ...". The other one they use, TMCS, makes no sense. It means Till My Casket Stops. Till My Caskets Stops what? Rolling down a hill?

Lacking closure on this point we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past. ■

A Job Description of Elected Officials



Position: Mayor

mayor@sasktel.net

BY Laurent Mougeot *

Your municipality is unlike any other corporation or business. By law, it must provide an extensive list of services, many of which are regulated by the provincial or federal governments. Most of these services are delivered without any direct revenue source. Your oversight will extend to processing and delivering drinking water systems, collecting sewage and treating it for safe release in the environment, offering

fire prevention and suppression services, building and maintaining streets, operating arenas and maintaining parks, keeping the pool going (if you can afford one!), offering leisure services, managing zoning and development controls, providing building inspections, and the list goes on.

Few private sector companies provide such an array of diverse services. Most companies will focus their production, marketing and sales efforts on a particular product or sector (e.g., cell phone service) where a solid revenue stream can be secured to realize profits. Most will not operate 24/7 as a municipality does.

Let's make one thing very clear: your community is not a business and you cannot be expected to run it as such. The business knowledge and life experience you bring into the Council Chamber will of course be valuable, however they may not truly reflect the expectations of your role and responsibilities.

As a member of Council, you will be expected to:

BE KNOWLEDGEABLE: being familiar with services provided by your municipality, including the standards and levels of service to be delivered (e.g., road maintenance, fire suppression);

BE A TEAM PLAYER: working as a team member on your council, understanding that no one individual councillor has any decision-making power and the need to respect and support the decision of Council;

BE ACCOUNTABLE: being answerable for the actions of Council and the operations of your municipality;

BE ABOVE-BOARD: respecting the rules of law, and supporting your municipal administrator with requests from taxpayers to disclose information as provided for under the Freedom of Information legislation;

BE FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE: through the adoption of the annual operating budget, aiming to secure enough revenues to maintain service levels;

BE ABLE TO SET PRIORITIES: through the adoption of the capital budget, identify funding strategies to replace or expand municipal infrastructure (e.g. water lines, construction equipment);

SEE THE BIG PICTURE: maintaining a focus on the overall direction of municipal operations and refraining from mi-

cro-managing the operations of your administrative staff or of the front-line employees (remember that this is the job of your administrator!);

CARE FOR THE WELLBEING OF YOUR TEAM: always being mindful of providing a safe workplace for all, including a respectful and harassment-free environment, and ensuring that work sites are operating in accordance with the provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety legislation;

BE COMMUNITY MINDED: understanding that public safety comes first and that personal interests must not influence decision making.

Important qualities for Council Members include:

CRITICAL THINKING: being a good listener and not rushing into decision making without understanding and considering all "sides" of a problem;

CONSENSUS BUILDING: appreciating the value of consensus building and the strength of team engagement;

COLLABORATION: understanding the value of sharing knowledge with others and recognizing that others also have positive contributions to finding the best solution and making the best decision;

READINESS: reading council meeting packages in advance of meetings and being ready to participate in council deliberations (discussions) in an informed and constructive fashion;

OPEN MINDEDNESS: seeking advice and recognizing the value of your administrative team on financial and operational matters;

OBJECTIVITY: recognizing that the appearance of a conflict of interest deserves as much consideration as a real conflict of interest;

APPROACHABILITY: seeking opportunities to listen to residents and business operators and knowing when to refer their inquiries or concerns to the municipal administrators;

BEING AN AMBASSADOR: understanding that an elected official is the "face" of the community. What you do and say will echo louder than before you were elected to council.

I have been invited by SANC (New North) to provide a regular column in your newsletter to share experience and advice on how to best manage your community. I invite you to share your suggestions for future topics to Matt Heley by emailing him at matt.newnorth@sasktel.net. In the meantime, good governance!

*** Laurent Mougeot is the former CEO of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association and is currently a governance advisor with www.meliusgov.com. Laurent has over 40 years of experience in the municipal sector.**

From the CEO
MATT HELEY

You might recall that back in about 2012 the

SaskParty unveiled their “war plan” for the economy called the Saskatchewan Plan for Growth. Following in 2013 was a summary of the plan’s accomplishments after the first year, and for a while everything was “planning for growth this, and planning for growth that.” Community planning became an important discipline. You can see why: the economy was booming. The challenges were all about “managing the growth”—new housing subdivisions to cater for the rapidly growing population, new transport infrastructure, new stadiums ... Even the north was able to get on this a little bit as mining expanded. I can’t recall what we got, but I have a terrible memory.

As we all know, it was only a few short years before everything fell apart. It’s easy to look back at the Plan for Growth and say that it was a victim of its time; it was a plan put together in good times for good times. The heritage fund? Yeah, didn’t happen. Eliminating the deficit? Yup.

In point of fact, the Plan for Growth was very much about how to keep things going when the main economic drivers of the Saskatchewan economy—non-renewable resource revenues—dried up. The underlying theme of the plan is how do we get out of the vicious “boom and bust” cycles that have so beset Saskatchewan for 100 years?

The SaskParty felt it had the answer. Part of it was economic diversification—but it was a kind of soft diversification. Resource extraction and agriculture still dominated the SaskParty mindset. Oddly lacking was any substantive mention or focus on growing the service, technology and cultural sectors—probably the fastest growing sectors in any developed economy.

Another key part of the plan was growing the population—which it succeeded at spectacularly. The last decade has seen a massive increase in the number of people from overseas calling Saskatchewan home; three Australians of my close acquaintance, and me, are among them.

All of this is background to a fairly downplayed announcement that government is working of a new plan for growth. The reason, they are saying, is because the old one is coming up to its expiry date of 2020.

Actually, that’s not quite true—the subtitle of the 2012 Plan for Growth was “Vision 2020 *and Beyond*”—but whatever; it’s their plan.

So what could a new plan look like? What would the province do differently if it could? We’re not really sure. The problem with a small government mentality is that you are really quite limited in what you can do. This is particularly the case in the north, where what is really needed is massive amounts of capital to drive economic development, and greater investments in the “soft” infrastructure (education, housing, healthcare, etc) to facilitate social development. The old plan for growth didn’t mention the north at all—well, once. Will anyone here care about what the new one says? We’ll see. ■

About New North ...

Since 1996 New North has been the voice of the municipalities of Northern Saskatchewan. Our goal, as defined by our mission statement, is to advocate, negotiate and initiate improvements in well-being of the residents of the Northern Saskatchewan Administration District. Organized on the basis of strength through unity, New North partners with all northern stakeholders, from government and non-government agencies, associations and First Nations, to enhance the quality of life, create opportunities and build better futures for the people of the north.

New North Executive

Mayor Bruce Fidler (Chair)
Mayor Robert St.Pierre (Deputy Chair)
Mayor Gord Stomp (Treasurer)
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