



We look at the fashions that rocked our world at New North Waterworks 2018

See inside for more

### Upcoming

May 15-17

- New North Northern Justice Symposium

June 13

- New North AGM

Saskatchewan Association of Northern Communities

# NEW NORTH

This month ..

- Provincial Budget
- Housing Supplement
- Events Recap
- Revenue Sharing gets a look

## Monthly Newsletter April 2018

# Province Delivers Quo Vadis Budget

The delivery of the 2018-19 provincial budget was done with a heavy heart, with Finance Minister Donna Harpauer, MLA for Humboldt-Watrous, putting on a brave face to lead those gathered in the legislative assembly on April 10 in a minute's silence to honour the 16 people from the Bronco's hockey team who had died, tragically, a mere four days earlier.

In the moments prior to her address, the opposition, who'd lingered, hands in pockets, on the periphery of the chamber as one by one members of her own party came to embrace her, filed over, shook the Finance minister's hand, and with that seemed to seal a silent bond that said today would be different.

Not that there was much for the opposition to rail against this year, anyway, at least not compared to last year. As Minister Harpauer read the budget, handing the spent pages to Don Morgan as she went, it was clear this was no 2017-18 debacle. In fact, quite the opposite, as government didn't just reverse some of the decisions

from last year that had caused such a storm—returning some of lost revenue to municipalities, increasing the number of classroom support staff, and staying solid on library funding—but made a point of saying they were doing it.

The minister also made a point of declaring that there would be no carbon tax, enunciating each word with an emphasis that suggested this was a statement of gravity. It was statement that dabbled in redundancy the way Saskatchewan dabbles in freezing, inhospitable winters, but it drew the biggest applause from the gallery on the day.

Harpauer announced a deficit of \$365 million, which was about what we were estimating it would be, and said they'd be \$6 million in the black next year and holidaying in Puerto Vallarta the one after.

The removal of the PST exemption on used cars, to take effect on the very next day, April 11, caught everyone by surprise, although perhaps added some needed purpose and urgency to

anyone who'd been getting through the address browsing Kijiji.

In response, Cathy Sproule, the NDP's finance critic, said that what they'd been "looking for in this budget ... was four things: a plan, hope, inspiration and leadership." While government MLAs rolled their eyes and wore expressions of ineffable smugness that would be infuriating if it wasn't all part of the pantomime, Sproule said, to the surprise of no one, that the government, "sadly," had not delivered. Whatever else the finance critic might have been right about, she was right about one thing: this was an election budget by any other name.

If on budget day the politicians took time out to acknowledge that some things are above politics, it's the business of politics that ultimately brings them there. Take that out, and you take out what makes the legislative assembly such an interesting place to visit on budget day. If only that was the worst that could be said. ■

# NewNorth News & Updates

## Revenue Sharing Consultations Underway Right Away

The Ministry of Government Relations is wasting no time getting the major review into revenue sharing going, with consultations with stakeholders set to begin directly. Ministry staff will meet with municipal officials, as well as New North, as soon as this week, to lay the foundations for the first fullsome review of revenue sharing since the last one back in 2011-12.

Government has said that it wants “to ensure any changes [to MRS] are thoughtful, evidence-based and logically sound,” which of course is already completely at odds with our position, which is for revenue sharing to be irrational, gut-level, and tiresome.

We’re kidding, of course. In fact, we think the system works OK, and can’t think of much to say about the current method of addressing the northern municipal fiscal gap that hasn’t already been said countless times. Challenges for the northern pool in the coming years, as in any

other years, will include, among other things, whether:

- It is adequate to address the higher costs of solid waste management, especially if communities move to regional systems;
- It is sufficient to help municipalities cover their share of mounting infrastructure costs, especially around wastewater treatment;
- It should be a tool to address administrative capacity problems;
- It needs to expand to enable northern municipalities to address a wider range of priorities, including dog control, bylaw enforcement and a broader range of social development objectives.

We also wonder whether northern revenue sharing should finally be acknowledged as having quietly back-filled the space left by the withdrawal of other government funding programs, particularly those related to housing. ■

## Sen. Lillian Dyck to Speak on Hot Topic at Symposium

Special keynote speaker, Senator Lillian Dyke, will be tapping into the zeitgeist in her presentation at this year’s Northern Justice Symposium, with a presentation entitled “Systemic Racism in the Criminal Justice System.” Not one to shy away from topics some consider controversial, the outspoken Senator Dyck’s speech is expected to lay down a fairly feisty tone at this year’s event, with her address set to open the show at 9am on May 15, at the Plaza 88 in Prince Albert.

Other presentations we’re very much looking forward to hearing include Angie Merasty’s update on the work being done by the North East Youth Violence Reduction team, based in Pelican Narrows, which is apparently having quite some success.

We’re also rapt that we were able to get Steve Dribnenki, SUMA’s legal advisor, to replay his presentation from the New North Gathering a while back, who along with Dr. Moliehi Khaketla from the Population Health Unit, will be talking about different aspects of cannabis legalization, including the potential impact on our youth.

Speaking of youth, we are especially pleased that the planning committee has pulled together a separate youth agenda for this year’s event, which will see youth from across the north partaking in a

range of activities, including a special engagement session with Elders, which if the last time this happened is anything to go by, should be one of the highlights of the entire event. ■

*See inside for the symposium agenda.*

### MAY

May 3: NMTA Management Board

May 7-9: SUMA Executive Visits North

May 15-17: **Northern Justice Symposium**

May 16: New North Executive Meeting

### JUNE

June 4-8: New North Executive Community Visits (westside)

June 11-15 New North Executive Community Visits (Eastside)

June 13: **New North AGM**

## From the New North Chair

BY BRUCE FIDLER, MAYOR OF CREIGHTON

Some people say they want a fast melt, others say they want a slow one. Either way, it's hard to believe that in a matter of days virtually all the snow from what was a heavy snow year is gone, and quickly forgotten about.

And so the wheel turns and we move on, putting aside, at least for a few months, the snow shovels and augurs and heavy coats, and start thinking about if we're going to get any rain in June, or what Vegas is like this time of year!

At New North, we don't have much time to think about anything right now, with such a heavy agenda in front of us and so many issues to deal with.

Next week, I am very pleased to be hosting the President of SUMA, Gordon Barnhart, CEO Jean-Marc Nadeau, Northern Regional Director Bobby Woods and the Vice President for Villages, Resort Villages and Northern Municipalities, Mike Strachan, who will be coming north to visit with us at the New North office in La Ronge. We think this will be a great opportunity for the SUMA team

to sit down with us and get a better understanding of some of our challenges. It'd be great if the lake is open, but unfortunately we don't think the melt was quite fast enough for that.

Following the SUMA visit, we have the Northern Justice Symposium, which is already shaping up to be the best ever. The New North office is telling me registrations numbers are very strong already, so if you're sitting on the fence wondering if you should come, you better get your form in fast, because it could sell out.

And then we have the community visits planned in late May, early June. We're going to try to get ourselves invited to your council meetings, if you'll have us. Otherwise, look out for the dustiest Dodge Journey in northern Saskatchewan. That'll be New North!

Finally, the last activity before summer really hits us will be the AGM. We've got some big names lined up for that, but we can't say anything more about that right now. Stay tuned! ■

## New North Takes Housing Concerns to Minister Merriman

New North Chair Bruce Fidler and CEO Matt Heley met with new Minister of Social Services, Hon. Paul Merriman, following the budget this month to express our thoughts about the phase out of the rental housing supplement.

While government appears committed to its determined course of action, they at least seemed to consider some of the points we raised, and will hopefully not follow-through on their decision to end the supplement for new applicants on June 30.

Continuing on the housing theme, New North also sought to get the minister's thoughts on one or two other housing issues that we believe need attention, including SaskHousing's installation of electric furnaces in units in some northern locations in place of cheaper alternatives, which has had a horrific impact on residents' ability to cope with ever higher power bills. With SaskPower's rate hikes set to continue, SaskHousing's decision to cost-shift one of the most fundamental amenities on to tenants, many of whom are on limited incomes, is



**New North Chair, Bruce Fidler (left), and Hon. Paul Merriman, Minister of Social Services.**

a travesty we feel needs to be immediately addressed.

Minister Merriman assumed his role in the last cabinet shuffle in late January. The minister made a commitment to come north to visit our communities and see first hand the issues northern people are coping with, and we certainly look forward to hosting him. ■

# 13<sup>th</sup> Annual New North

# Northern Justice Symposium

May 15-17, Plaza 88 (888 Central Avenue), Prince Albert

## Tuesday May 15<sup>th</sup>

9.00 - 9.45	<b>Opening Prayer &amp; Opening Ceremonies</b> <i>Master of Ceremonies</i> Simon Bird & Larry Ahenakew <i>Elder</i> Ms Julie Pitzel <b>Opening Ceremonial Song</b> Dave Laroque, CSC <i>Dignitaries</i> Greg Dionne, <b>Mayor of Prince Albert</b> A/C Curtis Zablocki, <b>Commanding Officer, F Division</b>  Bruce Fidler, <b>Chair, New North</b>
9.45 - 10.30	<b>Guest Speaker</b> Senator Lillian Dyck
10.30 - 11.00	<b>Nutrition Break</b>
11.00 - 11.30	<b>Rural Crime Protection and Response Team</b> Rob Cameron
11.30 - 12.00	<b>"Finding Lost"</b> Nancy Lafleur
12.00 - 1.00	<b>Lunch &amp; Entertainment</b>
1.00 - 1.25	<b>Community Safety Officer / Peacekeeper Program</b> Gord Stewart <b>Combined Traffic Services Sask</b> Gavin Nash
1.30 - 1.50	<b>La Loche Community Safety Initiatives</b> La Loche CSB
1.50 - 2.20	<b>Aboriginal Shield</b> Sgt. George Riffel, RCMP
2.20 - 2.50	<b>Crimestoppers</b> Sgt. Rob Cozine, RCMP
2.50 - 3.15	<b>Nutrition Break / Draws</b>
3.15 - 3.45	<b>Onion Lake Gang Presentation</b> Janet Trottier
3.45 - 4.15	<b>Community Safety &amp; Well-Being</b> Gina Alexander, Executive Director, Ministry of Justice
4.15 - 4.30	<b>Day 1 Closing Remarks / Closing Prayer</b>

All lunches are provided

To Register, go to [www.newnorthsask.org](http://www.newnorthsask.org)

Or call the New North North Office at 306 425 5505

## Wednesday May 16<sup>th</sup>

8.30 - 8.50	<b>Prayer &amp; Opening Comments</b>
8.50 - 9.45	<b>Cannabis Legalization</b> SUMA Legal Advisor, Steven Dribnenki <b>Dr. Molihi Khaketla</b> MHO, Northern Population Health Unit
9.45 - 10.15	<b>English River Justice Initiatives</b> Janine Dawatsare
10.15 - 10.45	<b>Standing Buffalo's Gang Awareness Walk</b> Minnie Ryder & Rick Whitecloud
10.45 - 11.15	<b>Nutrition Break / Draws</b>
11.15 - 12.00	<b>Northeast Youth Violence Reduction Partnership</b> Angie Merasty & Shawna Bear
12.00 - 1.00	<b>Northern Excellence Awards Luncheon &amp; Entertainment</b> <i>Masters of Ceremonies</i> Modeste McKenzie & Shaylynn McAuley
1.00 - 1.25	<b>Big Island Lake's Soup and Bannock Initiatives</b> Donna Partridge
1.25 - 1.45	<b>Cumberland House Community Safety Initiatives</b> Karen Carriere & Veronica Favel
1.45 - 2.15	<b>Gang Presentation</b> Cst. Jason Roberts, RCMP
2.15 - 2.45	<b>Northern Bootlegging Strategy</b> Sgt. Conrad Logan, RCMP
2.45 - 3.00	<b>Nutrition Break / Draws</b>
3.00 - 5.00	<b>Blanket Exercise</b> Leda Corrigan & Bonnie Werner, Northern Lights School Division & PAIMFC

## Thursday May 17<sup>th</sup>

8.30 - 8.45	<b>Prayer &amp; Opening Comments</b>
8.45 - 9.30	<b>Northern Alcohol Strategy</b> Harold Johnson, Joan Johnson & Carla Frohaug
9.30 - 10.15	<b>Montreal Lake Camp Hope</b> Jarrett Nelson & Joyce Night
10.15 - 10.30	<b>Nutrition Break / Draws</b>
10.30 - 11.15	<b>Youth Panel</b>
11.15 - 11.45	Chief Cadmus Delorme <b>Cowessess First Nation</b>
11.45 - 12.00	<b>Closing Remarks / Ceremonial Song</b>
12.00 - 1.00	<b>Lunch (Provided) – Safe Travels</b>

## Chelsea Laskowski checks in on what's going on in your neck of the woods ...

# AROUND THE TRAPS

### Turnor Lake

For Rene Desjarlais, playing catch-up with past matters has been a big part of being a new mayor for Turnor Lake. The greatest task has been compiling financial records dating back years in order to do

an audit of the hamlet's financials.

"I want to get this done so bad," he said.

Desjarlais said the idea for how to approach the audit came when he was at a New North meeting, speaking with leaders from Patuanak who are doing something similar. Coming into the mayor's office doesn't come with a guidebook, and to keep from just treading water Desjarlais relies on guidance and advice from others, like northern municipal advisor Bruce Leier. At the same time, Desjarlais said the costs of gathering and sharing ideas with his fellow northern mayors prohibit him from getting that crucial communication.

He is depending on the audit to get Turnor Lake access to grants in the future.

"We're missing out on how to find lots of funds... our audit's not done so they won't be able to give us money anyways," he said.

"Once we get the audit done we'll be fine... it's not like we're totally down but it's just the audit has taken a lot of money."

Beyond that, Turnor Lake has been working with the Birch Narrows band to get a new lagoon and space for big bins that will hold the community's garbage before it gets hauled south, paying about 25 per cent to reflect their population split. Previously, the Hamlet of Turnor Lake had been fined \$7,000 because someone started a fire after hours at the landfill and was threatened with a \$25,000 fine if it happens again.

"You can't watch it 24/7," Desjarlais said he told the court, but the fine was stilled enforced.

### Ile-a-la-Crosse

The northern village of Ile-la-Crosse is cautiously eyeing Cameco's future in the north after the company laid off 800 people earlier this year. With no work coming from the mines, Mayor Duane Favel has concerns about the social challenges that come with it.

"When it comes to mental health and addictions, you know, we never had that support when things were good so what are we going to do now when things are difficult?"

The uncertainty in the mining industry is paired with the province cutting \$40,000 in operational grants that Ile-a-la-Crosse relies on with its park ranger program, winter

works, and other things. The village was left scrambling to find money to pay for continuing those employment opportunities. Advocacy and a strong voice is needed in light of these challenges, Favel said.

Ile-a-la-Crosse has entered a partnership agreement with the Northern Store to ban plastic bags in the store. Now when people go to the store they have to buy a permanent reusable bag for \$5. Councillor Gerald Roy has been meeting with the Sask. Waste Reduction Council, hearing interesting discussion about the viability of single-use items and about waste diversion. This is particularly important in Ile-a-la-Crosse as it is seeking to extend the lifespan of its landfill. Roy estimates that there are 75,000 scrap tires in the north that Tire Stewardship Saskatchewan could collect and divert from landfills in the north.

The northern village recently lost its bylaw officer, but said it's dedicated to rehiring a new officer. That role has forced pet owners to be accountable, but five to 10 per cent of owners are still problematic in the community, Roy said.

### Sandy Bay

It's the month of community meetings in Sandy Bay. Mayor Paul Morin says a public meeting coming up in May will touch on topics from housing to the municipality's relationship with neighbouring Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation.

The Sandy Bay Aboriginal Committee will also hold an upcoming meeting to pose the question of whether to go to court or submit a claim to SaskPower over the hydroelectric dam. The committee was created to negotiate with SaskPower for historical impacts on the community, which was forced to relocate due to flooding by Island Falls operations.

Morin said the municipality's public meeting comes in response to questions about operations and financial accountability of the village, which his office has found answers to. He said there has been a lot of work behind the scenes to get caught up on administrative tasks, get an audit done, and clear up behind the scenes with an aim of being on the right track by 2019, and this is a chance to explain the path his office is on.

Morin said he also wants to inform residents about how operating dollars from the province have gone down, meaning mayor and council "won't be able to provide some of the stuff that had been provided for many years" because it's not a charitable organization. Examples he used were organizations that need help with travel expenses, personal bereavement funds, helping out with people's utilities or medical expenses.

Also on the table is a SaskHousing offer to sell 41 of its units to PBCN. Morin said he wants a public discussion around that before it goes ahead in order for people to understand what kind of changes that would entail. He estimates there are about 121 units in the community. ■

# Rental Supplement Gets Phase-Out Treatment in Budget

**Chelsea Laskowski** asks the Ministry of Social Services the tough questions about the budget decision to wind down the rental housing supplement.

This summer, the province will stop taking in new applications for a rental housing supplement that has provided a rent top-up to families and the disabled since 2005.

In the north, the Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplement (SRHS) provides between \$84 and \$310 per month for an average of 200 families. The SRHS is for low to middle-income families who either have children or a disability, and have a housing need related to that. The bulk of those on SRHS are in cities; Regina alone holds 32 per cent of the province's SRHS recipients while Saskatoon holds 36 per cent, meaning rural and northern communities are a small portion.

The announcement of the June 30 suspension of the SRHS came in the provincial budget and is expected to save the province \$5 million this budget year as program use goes down. The ministry takes in about 850 applications a month, and, of those, 500 meet eligibility criteria and lead to people receiving the supplement, said Elissa Aitken, Executive Director of program and service design with Social Services.

Part of the rationale for doing away with new applications after June 30 is that the feds are introducing a new Canada Housing Benefit in 2020, and the province has signed an agreement that will see it cost-match the benefit once it's in place. However, as Social Services says it is reviewing the SRHS in light of this upcoming benefit, very little has been set in stone. The province is meeting with the feds over the next year to work out the details, but Tim Gross, Executive Director of Housing Development with social services, said he is not sure if the value the rental supplement held for people will be maintained once the agreement is in place.

"It's too soon to tell you know, the federal government will be laying out its vision and we'll be working with them to have them consider some of the needs within our province so we're at the early stages of developing that program," Gross said.

When asked why the province didn't maintain the SRHS as is until the new Canada Housing Benefit comes into play, Aitken said other income assistance programs like the Saskatchewan Assistance Program, the Saskatchewan Assured Income Disability, and the Transitional

Employment Allowance "continue to be available to support the most vulnerable families." The rental allowance for all three of those programs has not increased in five years, and many critics and SRHS users have stated that the rental allowance does not cover the cost of rent. Looking back to 2005, when the supplement was announced, the maximum supplement was \$151. Today that maximum has more than doubled to \$364, and housing advocates are concerned about the gap that will be left once applications cease.

Gross pointed to the housing available through affordable housing programs in the north and through the Sask. Housing Corporation. Sask Housing currently has a 13 per cent vacancy rate in the north and its units cost 30 per cent of the income from its low-income renters. The provincial vacancy rate is part of the rationale behind suspending the SRHS. The CMHC pegs the vacancy rate at 8.9 per cent in 2017— compared to 4.5 per cent in 2005—and while housing advocates say the rental market isn't reflecting that in its prices, Aitken said a recent report from Saskatoon said rents are coming down about \$150 a month.

"We do think clients have more choice in terms of how their options of how they might be finding accommodations across the province," Aitken said.

She added that specific data is not readily available for the north, "so that's always a challenge."

Aitken said she encourages those concerned about not having enough SAID, SAP, or TEA money to cover rent to speak to their income assistance worker "to help them work through those challenges."

Presently, virtually every housing stakeholder in the province is advising the ministry to reconsider its position on winding down the supplement. The Saskatchewan Landlords Association, the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP), among others, as well as the NDP have come out against the proposal.

New North is asking northern residents to write to us express to their concerns. New North plans to meet with the Minister of Social Services in June to see if there is any movement on reversing the decision. ■

## Budget 2018

*We take a critical look at a budget that doesn't contain much for northerners to get excited about ...*

# Govt. Shifts a Little Money Around, Makes Some Cuts Increases Taxes, and Foresees End to Endless Deficits, in Budget 2018

The fact that provincial budgets have themes is something we've grown so used to seeing we barely even register what they are most of the time. Epithets like "Meeting the Challenge," "Keeping Saskatchewan Strong" or "That Half-finished Yogurt is Mine" are intended to reassure us that government has some kind of plan in mind when they put these things together, but also tells us what's keeping them up at night.

Clearly, it is the deficit that is the biggest worry for government right now. The theme of the 2018-19 Budget, "On Track ..." (it's possible we added the elision ourselves), leaves a lot to the imagination (and gave way too much to the NDP to play with), but what they clearly intended to convey here is that the government is "on track" to achieving an operating budgetary surplus.

Following operating deficits of so many millions we've lost count, this year they are predicting a deficit of \$365 million, and a surplus of \$6 million next.

### They Might Just Do It, Too

The NDP Finance critic, Cathy Sproule's, careful dissection of the government's deficit reduction strategy, which was essentially to start reporting on a summary basis, whatever that means (which resulted in headlining a smaller deficit than otherwise), was one of the highlights of the post-budget legislative melee. But the criticism doesn't matter, and here's why: the people who care about deficits or surpluses (ie, small government-types, who want services slashed and public servants marched out the door) will decode this budget as delivering fiscal responsibility (and support the fact that the tax increases are taxes on consumption, not taxes on inputs), while those who think deficits are necessary during economic slowdowns will decode it as, well, delivering another necessary deficit.

As it stands, government looks very likely to achieve their surplus target next year, or come very close to it. Now matter your view on how they've done it, it's actually quite remarkable.

### Municipal Sector

The Minister of Government Relations had already announced what the revenue sharing pool would be, so the only surprises for the sector came by way of a nifty measure to resolve the cancelling of grants-in-lieu and redirection of crown corporation surcharges in the last budget. Municipalities with natural gas hook-ups will now have the option to impose a 5% surcharge on residents' gas bills, which government predicts will add about \$50 to annual household gas bills (hardly enough to get excited about), and potentially provide millions in additional, long-term and predictable revenue to municipalities. That these households are the same households that municipal leaders complained about having to raise taxes on to offset lost GIL revenue is irrelevant, since closing the fiscal gap is never really about who pays the taxes (we all do), but rather who wears the blame for doing the taxing. And for those interested, the natural gas surcharge is effectively a tax on energy at the rate of about \$12 a tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>.

In other municipal sector news, Education Property Tax mill rates stay the same, which is hardly surprising given the rise last year. Over the last couple of years, government has collected almost \$84 million annually in additional property taxes, partly by increasing the mill rate and partly from rising assessments. EPTs have increasingly back-filled education funding—effectively eclipsing any increase from the GRF—and now represents around 40% of school operating funding.

### Used Vehicle PST Exemptions

Raising about \$90 million will come the removal of exemptions on used cars. Interestingly, in the budget announcement the removal of the used car exemption was packaged alongside the removal of exemptions on energy efficient appliances, as if to disguise how much that measure would really be raising. In fact, the energy efficiency exemption will cost consumers about \$2.5 million a year, which is peanuts

compared to the other one. Those who point out that the removal of the vehicle exemption will mostly impact those on lower incomes (who tend to buy more used vehicles) are overlooking the incredible value for money of the brand new 2019 KIA Sportage.

Of course, as pointed out by the automotive dealer lobby group, the estimated yield from the removal of the tax exemption will probably be significantly lower than government is predicting. This is because government estimates appear to be based on removing the PST exemption from all used vehicle sales, whereas the policy itself will be to only tax vehicles under \$5,000 and on the difference between the trade-in and purchase value. If that is so—and we can't say for sure if it is or isn't—government could very well be doing the political equivalent of kicking an own goal while shooting themselves in the foot.

### **Phasing out of Rental Supplement (see article)**

We knew that the government would continue its tinkering with social assistance, and this year they have identified the rental supplement as a program ready for the axe. Current clients will continue to receive it, but new clients won't be taken after July 1. Government says it will save about \$5 million a year from the phase out.

### **The North**

The northern MLAs will continue to say the government is ignoring the north, but this really depends on how we define "ignoring" and "north". The Ministry of Social Services have, upon request, sent us a detailed breakdown of the new funding for disability services, which clearly shows some benefits to the north. To take as one example, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) will be receiving an extra \$6 million ...

... targeted to those providing direct daily care to adults with intellectual disabilities. Approximately 75-80% of the Ministry CBOs that provide direct care services to people with intellectual disabilities will receive a funding lift. These CBOs deliver day programs and residential services to adults with intellectual disabilities. In particular, approximately 85-90% of the 23 CBOs CLSD funds in the North Service Area will receive a funding lift.

This, of course, is outstanding news—if we let slide the fact that the "North Service Area" "encompasses all communities north of Saskatoon."

La Ronge does, however, receive funding for a new group home, which is a credit to the group that has been lobbying for that for years.

### **Northern Highways**

Some re-paving north of Green Lake on the 155, and attention to the 123 to Cumberland House, are features of this year's Highway's plan. As always, the vast bulk of expenditures in the northern line item are related to operation and maintenance. The Wollaston Lake road appears to be closer to reality, with the province showing a willingness to put in their share of funding, as long as the federal government does too. ■

## **Ministry of Highways Introduces New Gord King Range of Culverts for 2019 Construction Season**

### **The A-Line Mini**

Finding the culvert that not only looks good but feels right is made a whole lot easier this construction season with the return of an old classic with an updated, modern vibe. Refined without being bland, sharp without being too dressy, the A-Line Mini has versatility written all over it at a price anyone can afford

### **The Notch Collar**

For those wanting something a little different, you can't wrong with the Notch Collar look, especially when combined with a shear one-piece. For a culvert that rolls mystery, allure and practically into a single package, the Notch collar ticks all the right boxes.

### **The Joan Fontaine**

Fancy without being overstated, the Joan Fontaine revives the classic look of yesteryear but with the touches of modern convenience we'd come to expect in a culvert in 2018.

### **The Standard**

Precast concrete never looked so good! With the Standard—the Gord King Collection's answer to those looking for an uncomplicated culvert at a sensible price—you have the best of both worlds. Sexy without being provocative, flashy without the ostentation, the Standard is our culvert of choice for this construction year.

## Events Round-Up

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### New North Waterworks 2018 Baffles, Mystifies, Flocculates

The provincial, federal and municipal expenditures on water and sewer infrastructure in northern Saskatchewan over the last 15 years now exceeds well over \$200 million. For that, we get some of the best water in the world. The quality of the raw product itself helps, of course: the water in the northern lakes, where many community systems draw from, is pure rainwater. Water treatment mostly amounts to taking out the effects of the organics—the result of the fact that we share the water with birds, four-legged animals, fish and beer. Systems in the south that have to cope with the run-off from fertilizers and pesticides can produce harder water. “Softners” can do the trick, but they increase sodium levels, which will effect anyone who suffers from hypertension and general all-round saltiness.

None of this investment matters if you don't have the skilled operators to work the stuff, and this is where the ongoing training and certification of northern water operators is really paying off. Northern Saskatchewan has as few “upsets” as anywhere else; and northern operators are as skilled, knowledgeable and good looking as any in the south, a fact we are reminded of each and every year New North hosts the Annual Waterworks and Baseball Cap Jamboree.

This year the event kicked off as usual with the Water Security Agency providing an overview of the water and wastewater regulatory framework, which as we all know stems from the inquiry into the contamination of the North Battleford water supply, leading to an outbreak of

### Spring 2018 AdminCon

The New North Northern Administrators Conference is one of the few opportunities administrators working in northern municipalities get to come together to network, share stories, pick up bits of useful information, and draw their chairs right up to the dessert table with absolutely no one judging.

The agenda was once again fairly packed, and following a brief overview of the activities of New North and Northern Municipal Services, our friends from MNP in Prince Albert came along to explain some of the logic behind the composition of financial statements, which was actually far more interesting than anticipated, and should, we hope, have the ancillary impact of encouraging communities that don't produce annual financial statements to go ahead and produce them, since no one understands them anyway.

MNP also touched on a topic that we would like municipalities take a great deal of interest in, and that is internal controls, which relate to anything to do with how you safe guard the integrity of your financial management systems, and can be as simple as having cash handling policies that ensure every transaction has at least two sets of eyes on it, to more complex and involved tasks like tracing back who left the yogurt out of the fridge. Internal controls, in other words, are important to establishing an “audit trail”—a paper trail—that shows the linkages in a financial transaction and helps ensure transparency and accountability.

cryptosporidiosis. Contributing factors there included the operation of the water plant, and some fault was attributed to the handling of the contamination by the operators. Poor record keeping was identified as a factor as well, which is why EPOs tend now to hammer operators about how well they're keeping their paperwork (it's also the reason why it never comes up as a topic at these conferences: operators already hear too much about it).

After lunch, A2Z Safety delivered WHMIS training, the obtaining of which is compulsory for anyone exposed to hazardous materials in the workplace. As of December 2018, all workplaces will have to comply with the new WHMIS provisions, so this training was timely.

On the second day, Bert Gaudet from ATAP took delegates through the basics of filter surveillance. Although filtering water would seem to be pretty straightforward exercise, removing particles from water is actually quite complex. This is where an understanding of basic chemistry comes in handy which, in our case, meant we didn't understand a word of it, although we did pick up the term “flocculation,” and are actively seeking opportunities to use it in conversation.

The New North Waterworks was attended by more than 80 operators, guests and presenters from across the north and south. The event's major sponsors included ATAP, Anderson Pumphouse, SRC, the OCB, HACH, Cleartech and Enviroway, in no particular order. ■

Just before lunch, Cynthia Mamer from Sask911 took administrators through the Civic Address Registry, an important tool in use by emergency responders, but pretty useless if municipalities aren't signed up to it. At least two northern municipalities are not on the system, the identities of whom which Cynthia, quite sensibly, didn't reveal, and which no doubt prompted every administrator to check their status when they got back home.

Following lunch, we met the new provincial landfills manager, Tara Pidborochynski, having only this year replaced Sarah Keith, who hath now dominion over Land and Air.

After that, Jordan Woodsworth stopped by via Skype to provide some insight into her research into dog control issues, and provided an opportunity for those present to share some of their own ongoing initiatives, including in the Beauval area where PLEDCO is looking into setting up a regional pound in partnership with surrounding communities.

Jordan also provided us with a copy of the new Dog Book, a tool that communities can use to try to develop their own dog control strategies. A link to the book is on the New North website.

Rounding out the day was Kerry Desjarlais from the Water Security Agency with her waterworks permittee responsibilities presentation. We look forward to the next AdminCon in September ■

FROM THE CEO

**MATT HELEY**

Just after the provincial budget each year, we send emails to the ministries that have business in the north and ask them in what way the budget speaks to northern issues.

Most of the time the responses are careful rewordings of the official budget press releases, and so less than useless. Clearly, this budget had less in it for the northern communities than usual, but even with that in mind, it was especially odd how little effort went into trying to disguise that fact.

Let's take the decision in the budget that baffles us every which way: the one to phase out the rental housing supplement.

The problem with this decision is not so much that it's cutting income assistance. If government truly wanted to scale back the safety net, it should just do that, and wear the criticism. Rather, the problem we have with this decision is that doesn't pass the smell test: none of the objectives government is hoping to achieve by winding down the program needed the winding down of the program to actually achieve.

For example, if government is concerned about the rental supplement artificially propping up rents in

the cities—where vacancy rates apparently run at 10%—then why not scale back the supplement available to clients in those markets. As it is, the program already has different rates for different communities, so why not simply adjust accordingly? (It infuriates residents of Sandy Bay, for example, that the supplement scale is higher in Creighton).

If government believes that families are not taking advantage of social housing, then remove the eligibility barriers so families can take advantage of social housing. Because SaskHousing won't take more than 30% of your household income—the eligibility threshold for the supplement—families moving into social housing will naturally reduce demand on the supplement program.

And we could go on.

The biggest problem with this decision, of course, is how it arbitrarily affects the north. None of the reasons provided by government for ending the program apply to us, even at a pinch. And yet the decision absolutely applies to us.

The reason we are so focused on this budget decision is because it speaks to a growing worry of ours: that, to government, those on the margins don't matter anymore.

And you can't get more on the margins than economically-vulnerable families in housing need in northern Saskatchewan. ■

## 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)  
Mayor Mike Natomagan  
Councillor Keith Laprise

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