

NEW NORTH



Annual Report 2014-15

New North
SANC Services Inc.
Annual Report
2014-15

Table of Contents

Chair's Message	3
CEO's Message	4
About New North	5
New North Mission Statement	6
New North Highlights 2014-15	7-12
New North Special Programs	13
New North: Partner in Consultation	14
Communications	15
New North Member Events	16
New North Issues and Briefs	19-24

Message from the Chair

Dear Members,

On behalf of the Executive of New North SANC-Services Inc., I am pleased to present the Annual Report for year ending March 31, 2014-15.

When I look back over the last year as Chair of New North, I see a lot that I like about what has happened, and about what we have done.

I am pleased that the municipalities have managed to maintain the one point of Provincial Sales Tax that is allocated as revenue sharing. I am especially pleased that the provincial government is continuing to recognize the challenges faced by the northern municipalities by actually increasing our level of revenue sharing.

The government's decision came after continued lobbying by New North and our partner associations, SUMA and SARM.

We are also pleased that government listened to us in continuing to support the water and sewer upgrades program, so essential for the health, well-being and growth of our communities.

I also look back with pride at the Northern Symposium for Safer and Healthier Communities, or what we used to call the Justice Symposium, where we celebrated the 15th anniversary of the signing of the Framework Agreement on Policing. The Agreement is symbolic of the strong working relationship we have with the RCMP and government to tackle the negative impact of the criminal justice system on northern people.

We can also see progress in addressing some of the social challenges in our communities, such as in the work being undertaken by the Northern Housing Advisory Committee.

I am also proud of the relationships we are forming with our First Nations partners and neighbours in the north and around the province, who we share so much in common with.

But while this is a time to reflect on some of the positives from this last year, we can only pause

for a short time.

As much as we celebrate and are thankful for the great things that make the north unique, we must continue to face the challenges. There are challenges in mental health, for example, where we face the problems of dwindling resources and mounting need.

We see huge challenges in addictions, in violence in our communities, particularly against women and children, and the lack of opportunities for our people, young and old; we see problems stemming from loss of identity, from unemployment, from the legacy of the residential schools, from years of government neglect and from mis-management.

The issues are very big, and New North is only a small association. We sometimes forget the difference in size, and when we forget that we underestimate just how successful we are, as leaders and as community people, in making change.

I am proud as the Chair of New North and as a northerner to see so many positive things happen this year as a result of the work being done by this association, and by you in your communities. The success proves that together we are stronger.

On a final note, I want to thank my fellow New North Executive Board members, for their support to me as Chair, and for setting such a great example of northern leadership to all of us. And, on behalf of the Executive, I would like to thank the staff at New North for their hard work and commitment.

Yours Sincerely,



Georgina Jolibois
New North Chair



Message from the CEO



Dear Members,

*I*f there is one thing I can say about the last year or so, it is that it was a year of real uncertainty. If there is another thing I can say, it is that it was a year of surprises.

Unpredictability is the last thing we need in northern municipal government, and so in many ways it was a difficult year for municipalities, and a difficult one for us as well as the association representing your interests.

There was uncertainty about how senior governments would carve up the New Building Canada Fund. The initial allocations to municipalities, particularly the amounts accessible to the north, were very small, and a great disappointment to the associations.

There was also uncertainty around municipal revenue sharing, when the Premier, Hon. Brad Wall, began to talk about reducing the pool in the face of falling oil prices.

But then we had the surprises. The provincial government re-thought its New Building Canada Fund, and it is now fairer and better, especially for the north.

As well, rather than cutting revenue sharing, the provincial government increased it; there is more money for municipalities than ever before.

But there is a pattern here: the surprises came about as a result of intense lobbying from the municipal associations, including New North. Without this lobbying, we don't think the results for the municipalities would have been anywhere near as good.

What this year tells me is that when things become uncertain and the future looks cloudy, we need to be working harder. This goes not just for New North, but for the municipalities as a group.

The evidence of this work is there to see.

So, despite a year of uncertainty, there is one thing I am certain about, and that is this: lobbying works. Sticking together as an association works.

This year, New North also sought to solidify its operations by securing a shot in the arm via a grant increase and a member contribution from you, the members. We are very pleased that the members have whole-heartedly thrown their support behind us in helping the association plant its feet on solid financial ground going forward.

In the midst of any and all uncertainty in the municipal sector in the future, we can now absolutely assure you that the association will be there every step of the way, better and more effective than ever, to help the communities of northern Saskatchewan grow and prosper.

Sincerely,

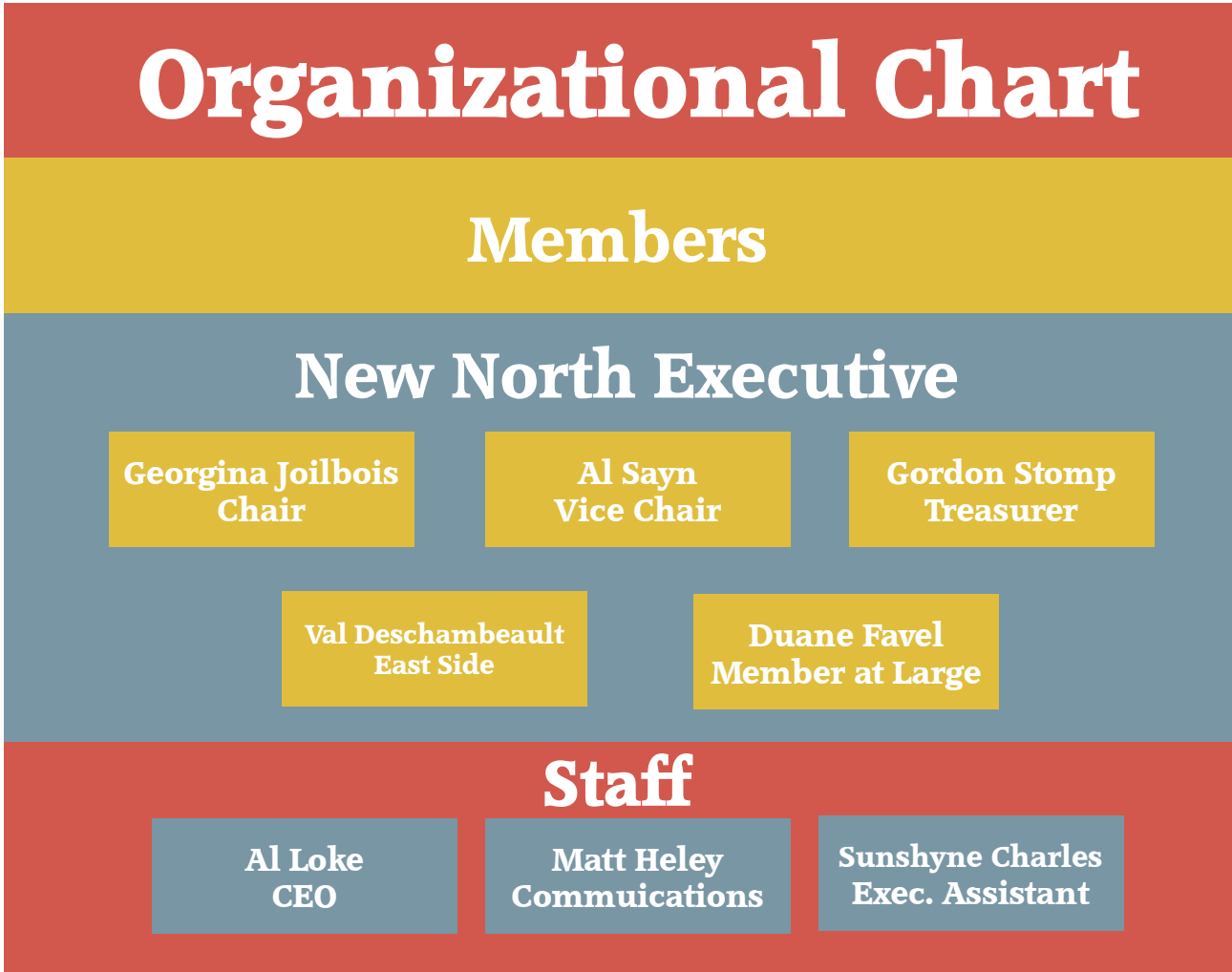
Al Loke
CEO, New North

About New North...

New North—SANC Services Inc. is a non-profit organization, based in La Ronge, dedicated to serving the interests of the 35 municipalities of northern Saskatchewan.

New North’s governance is supplied by a Board of Directors (the “Executive”), which is elected from among the Mayors and Councillors of the 35 municipalities. New North’s Executive is Mayor Georgina Jolibois (Chair), Councillor Al Sayn (Deputy Chair), Mayor Gordon Stomp (Treasurer), Mayor Val Deschambeault and Mayor Duane Favel (Member at Large).

New North has a staff of three: CEO Al Loke, Communications and Research Officer Matt Heley, and Executive Assistant Sunshyne Charles.





Mission Statement

The following Mission Statement is taken from New North's Strategic Plan, 2011-2015.

Municipalities are often referred to as “creatures of the province,” insofar as the legislation that governs what they can do is a product of the provincial legislature. But municipalities are also a separate and independent form of government.

For the north, this status is recognized in the Northern Municipalities Act, which is known as “permissive” legislation. The Act is a reflection of the historically and culturally unique space that northern municipalities occupy in the municipal system in Saskatchewan.

New North – SANC Services Inc. (Saskatchewan Association of Northern Communities) is organized to:

- **Advocate** the issues and concerns on behalf of the Northern Communities within the Northern Saskatchewan Administrative District (NSAD) of Saskatchewan;
- Organize and co-ordinate **capacity building** training and development activities for the municipal governments and organizations; and
- Build and maintain **strategic relationships**.

Advocacy includes identifying the issues of importance to northerners and northern municipalities and communicating with other governments and organizations to inform them of the issues and ways to resolve them. It includes acting and speaking on behalf of northern municipalities in meetings and activities set up by governments to discuss issues that affect the northern people and municipalities.

Capacity Building is about improving the knowledge, skills and abilities of northerners and northern municipalities. It includes governance, management, and community economic development. There is a need to raise the capacity to some minimum level and to look at structural means of building capacity for the municipal governments of small communities.

Strategic Relationships are constructive relationships, partnerships and cooperative arrangements with other organizations and governments to promote the interests of northerners or to achieve mutual benefits.

In attaining its mission, New North:

- Will promote fair and equitable policies and procedures for all Northern Communities.
- Will speak and act on behalf of the Northern Communities in pursuit of both common objectives and issues of common interest.
- Shall provide leadership for Northern Communities and create a forum to raise public and government awareness of Northern specific issues; and
- Shall support existing and future community initiatives



New North Highlights 2014-15

Top Issues for 2014-15

1. Northern Revenue Sharing
2. Northern Water and Sewer Program
3. New Building Canada Fund
4. Roads and transport
5. Landfills and Solid Waste Management
6. Conflict of Interest
7. Economic Development; Northern Strategic Planning
8. Fire Protection for Northern Communities
9. Violent crime rates
10. Bootlegging and Addictions
11. Mental Health; suicide intervention and prevention

Accomplishments

In a year marked by uncertainty, unpredictability, furious lobbying and steadfast resolve, New North SANC Services Inc. continued in its aim to provide a level of service to members far greater than our size.

Events such as the Northern Symposium for Safer and Healthier Communities continued to maintain focus on the impact of the criminal justice system in the north, and was an excellent opportunity for the northern municipalities, northern First Nations, the RCMP and government to come together as one, unified by the joint need to partner to tackle the impact of the criminal justice system on northerners.

New North worked hard behind the scenes, and publicly, in keeping northern municipal interests high on the agenda of government. Some of the lobbying and advocacy highlights for this year included:

- The increase of the Northern share of Municipal Revenue Sharing by \$600,000
- A fairer allocation of the New Building Canada Fund



- An increase in funding for northern roads and transport
- Financial support for Community Police Boards
- Widening of funding and programming for northern housing initiatives

New North hosted three Mayor and Councillor Gatherings.

The focus this year, as into the future, is to evolve the Gatherings from an information-sharing forum, to one focussed on bringing northern elected officials together with government elected and appointed officials, into a problem-solving forum.



New North Executive Maintains its Drive

The New North Executive continued to meet on quarterly basis and provide a strong direction to the association and a strong voice to government. The Executive continued to lobby and advocate for greater support for suicide prevention and intervention, greater recognition by government of the need for funding and support for northern landfills, roads among many others.



The Executive also welcomed aboard Duane Favel, Mayor of Ile a la Crosse, as the new Member at Large.

Municipal Capacity Building

The Annual Waterworks Workshops and the Administrators Conferences continued New North's focus on capacity building at the municipal sector level. This focus will continue to expand in the future with New North's winning of the contract to provide financial and administrative services to the northern municipalities. The aim of this service will be to help municipalities with the production of their annual financial statements, and over the short and long-term, to help bring overall administrative costs down.



Forming and Maintaining Strategic Partnerships

The strategic partnerships with other groups and organizations is an essential part of moving issues forward in the north. In the last 12 months the association has taken big strides working with First Nations peak organizations, such as PAGC and FSIN, to deal with the issue of bootlegging, and will continue to work with our neighbours across jurisdictions in the north to tackle issues of mutual interest.

And Looking ahead ...

New North's Plan 2015-16 And for the plans for the future, our Business Plan for 2015-16 is available on our new website: www.newnorthsask.org.

The 11th Annual Northern Symposium for Safer and Healthier Communities, held in Prince Albert from November 25th to 27th 2014, was big on statistics.

Yet the more than 200 delegates, who came from many communities across the north, including representatives from First Nations and municipalities, as well as government and the RCMP, were more interested in the messages of hope and resilience than they were in facts and figures.

Elder James Burns of James Smith First Nation told delegates not to be victims, “but to be victorious.”

Although the symposium’s topics ranged from suicide prevention, boot-legging, the new driving legislation, and victim services, one topic emerged as an unofficial theme: violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

Fittingly, on day three, the provincial



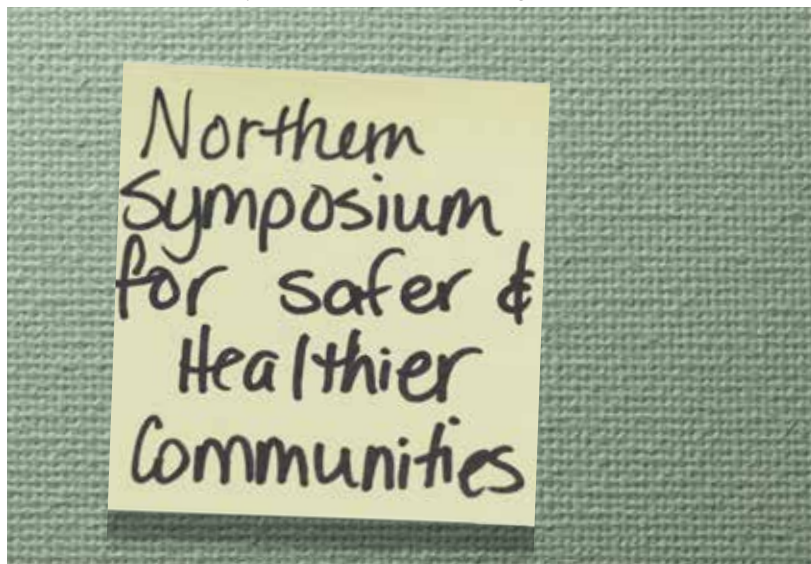
government presented its Framework for Addressing Violence Against Aboriginal Women and Girls for discussion.

The symposium heard that six northern communities are in the top 10 in the nation for reported violence against women. However,



that statistic only scratches the surface of the magnitude of the problem, as it is believed the vast majority of acts of violence against women go unreported.

Mayor of La Loche Georgina Jolibois



said that those leaders who speak out on violence against women can become victims themselves. “When you take a stand against violence against women you actually stand out. You get abuse for that.”

Responding to a petition circulated by delegates calling for a national inquiry into murdered Aboriginal women, Deputy Minister of Justice Kevin Fenwick reiterated his government’s support for such an inquiry—which the federal government is holding out on—but said the province was not going to wait.

“Plans are in place for a national roundtable to discuss the deaths of Aboriginal women, to be held in Ottawa in February or March,” Fenwick said.

Among other presentations, Judge Gerald Morin, who hails from Cumberland House, used his keynote address to reflect on how far the criminal justice system had come in the

north.

“If you look at the history of corrections in Saskatchewan, if you look at the annual reports, they would count the number of bushels of wheat, number of bags of carrots, number of potatoes, and somewhere in there would be the number of prisoners. Not a mention of any type of programming, but merely looking at the delivery of warehousing within that particular system,” Judge Morin said.

One way the system had changed was in the use of conditional sentence orders, sometimes referred to as community sentence orders. “People ask why I give out conditional sentence orders? Well, I ask, what rehabilitative chance do people have in jail?”

Judge Morin also spoke of his experience of racism: “I had bought a brand new BMW. A police officer stopped me. He asked me where I

out, and claim that it is for personal use?” Fenwick said.

However, Fenwick expressed the view that, based on Manitoba’s experience, limiting bulk sales won’t stop bootlegging.

Earlier, on day one of the event, Ministry of Policing and Corrections Deputy Dale McPhee spoke on “the Big Six”—the “alignment” of mental health and addictions, community mobilization, serious violent offender response, jobs and literacy, community safety programs, and justice sentencing practices, to stem the flow of individuals into the criminal justice system. “We know that 80 to 95 per cent of crime is predictable. If we can predict it, we can prevent it,” he said.

Deputy Minister McFee spoke about the province’s upcoming mental health and addictions strategy, aimed at the group most likely to



got the car. I asked him where he got his uniform?”

In a wide-ranging address, Judge Morin had some thoughts on bootlegging.

“Why is it [government] will subsidize every ounce of liquor that goes into La Roche, but won’t subsidize fruit or vegetables that go into that community? I wonder who the real bootleggers are,” said Judge Morin.

Bootlegging was also the topic of a presentation by Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming’s Darry Rideout, who expressed frustration at the limited means available to government to prevent bootlegging, a view later repeated by Deputy Minister Fenwick.

“How is it still possible for someone to back a truck up to a liquor store, buy the place

have contact with the criminal justice system. “They are the most vulnerable population to reoffend and most vulnerable population to go from non-criminal to criminal,” McFee said.

Two key highlights of the symposium was the presenting of replica Police Framework Agreements to mark the 15th anniversary of the signing of the original agreement. The agreement, the first and only one in Canada, is a landmark symbol of the co-operation and partnership among the northern communities, government and the RCMP.

A second highlight, which symbolized the level of cross-jurisdiction co-operation among northern organizations in the event, was the round dance and feast held at the PAGC gynamisum on the Wednesday night.

2014 New North Waterworks Workshop

La Ronge was once again the location for the 2014 New North Waterworks Workshops, held in April.

Almost 80 water participants, industry vendors and government officials gathered at the La Ronge Hotel to talk about stuff that most of us don't want to know about: what happens to water when we are not using it.

The theme for this year's event was "Emergency Preparedness," and the agenda, put together by Environmental Protection Officer Kerry Seckinger from the Water Security Agency, included

a presentation from an individual at the forefront of dealing with the water emergency in Prince Albert in early 2012, Andy Busse.

The discussion of the emergency in Prince Albert, in fact, touched upon one of the challenges of being a water operator: no one notices you until things go horribly wrong—even if it is not your fault.

A point frequently made by presenters at Waterworks 2014 was the crucial role operators play in maintaining the health and well-being of their communities.

This year's attendance was very strong—with delegates coming from most of the northern municipalities, as well from a number of First Nations.

Operators require 1.0 CEU (or Continuing Education Unit) every TWO years—in other words, 0.5 every year. New North typically have courses available worth the full 1.0 CEU. As a result, many northern operators actually exceed their CEU quotas over the certification cycle.

A particular highlight this year was the solid attendance of a number of EPOs from the Water Security Agency. Formed about 18 months ago, the WSA is a splinter group of the Ministry of Environment with the responsibility of water management in the province.

Their leading role in the organization of the event ensured that Waterworks 2014 was as relevant as it was informative.

CEU presentations were provided by a commercial vendor, Enviroway—who have a product that uses microbes found up near

Missinipe—and the Saskatchewan Research Council. The SRC provides the lab that does water analysis, and so it was appropriate that the topic of their presentation was water sampling.

ATAP once again provided the day-long CEU, focused on the

implementation of standard operating procedures in water plants.

The event wasn't all septic pipes and clogged grease traps, though.

On the Wednesday night operators were invited to a Meet and Greet at the Hotel, an outstanding networking opportunity for the top men and women in the field to mix on a casual basis, where they could talk about ... talk about ...well, they talked about water stuff mainly. Professionals to the core, they don't know when to switch off, these guys.

The New North Waterworks is just one small way that the association can contribute to improving the quality of life of the residents of northern Saskatchewan.

When a municipality has a debt it needs to collect, it generally falls to municipal administrators to do the dirty work.

Things got very “grimy” indeed at the New North **Administrators Conference** in La Ronge in October 2014, as around 30 people gathered to brush up their knowledge on the tools municipalities have at their disposal to get what’s owing to them when property owners default on their taxes.

The Tax Enforcement Act and *The Northern Municipalities Act* are the places to look for the rules. But sometimes what we really need is someone just to talk us through it all.

Sandra Galambos from Northern Municipal Services, and Ann Nostbakken from Information Services Corporation, recounted the steps outlined in the legislation, from the time a council decides to act on a defaulting property, to the registering of the lien using ISC’s online



submission process, to title acquisition and disposal.

Tax enforcement is not easy, and it’s not pretty. Sometimes some subtle mind games can go a long way. Threatening to put a lien against a property may be all that is needed to persuade a taxpayer to come good. Municipalities can also seize other property belonging to the taxpayer—a car, furniture, anything lying around in the yard; but not the family pet.

When a lien is registered against a property, there is only one way to get it lifted: by the taxpayer fronting up with the cash. A council

New North Administrators Conference

cannot, at this point, simply vote to have the lien removed. Once the process has gotten to the lien stage, the legislation has already kicked in.

Going to “small claims court”—either the Provincial Court or the Queen’s Bench, depending on the debt—to make a non-title claim against a taxpayer is perhaps the easiest way for a municipality to get a debt repaid. This was the gist of the presentation by Kim Anderson, QC, one of the few lawyers in Saskatchewan specialising in the municipal enforcement procedures available through the courts. He explained that whereas tax enforcement against title first

requires you to register a lien against the property six months before you can resolve to move against it, no lien is required to take non-title proceedings. This is great if you think the defaulter is planning to go to ground.

We also heard from Doug Jameson of the Provincial Mediation Board. A remnant of the Great Depression, the PMB can act as the middle man between municipalities and tax defaulters. The PMB’s involvement is mandated by *The Tax Enforcement Act*. A municipality cannot take a title without the approval of the Provincial Mediation

Board. Prior to this happening, the purpose of the Board’s involvement is to help the taxpayers and the municipality come to a satisfactory resolution regarding the payment of taxes. This will quite often involve a payment plan that can also include the payment of current taxes as well as those in arrears.

The Annual Administrators Conference is an event aimed at getting northern administrators together to network, build capacity and help each other out. New North is proud to have been apart of this event once again this year.

New North Public Administration & Leadership Scholarship

The New North Leadership and Administration Scholarship kicked off its first year with three applicants awarded \$1000 apiece to put toward their studies.

The New North Scholarship was initiated in 2013 to not only help northern students with their educational costs, but to encourage and promote the leadership aspirations of northerners. The scholarship recognizes that students in the north face great challenges in attaining further education, for financial and other reasons. The scholarship also recognizes that one of the greatest needs of the north is the development of skilled and professional administrators.

A great deal of research went into forming the parameters, the aims and criteria for the New North Scholarship, including a review of all scholarships available to northern students. The New North Scholarship is specifically aimed at closing the gap at the administrative and governance level in northern educational studies, and is hoped over time to be a driver in increasing interest among northern students in seeking administration, especially at the municipal level, as a viable and obtainable career choice.

The New North Scholarship is one very small step that we as an association can take to address capacity needs in the north.



New North Financial & Administrative Services Program

An initiative that we are very excited about and that will bring tremendous benefit to the northern municipalities is the Financial and Administrative Services Program.

The program came about as a result of New North's successful bid in the Ministry of Government Relations and Northern Municipal Trust Management Board Request for Proposal process in late 2014.

The purpose of the program is two-fold: firstly, to help municipalities resolve issues related to financial compliance; and secondly, to help municipalities control costs related to financial compliance, and administration, in general, as well build governance capacity. The program, which will comprise of New North contracting experienced former municipal officials to work with administrators, mayors and councillors, on an "as needed" basis to build capacity in bookkeeping, office management, human resources, asset management and any number of issues forming barriers that may be hindering or acting as an impediment to efficient and effective local government administration in the north.

New North's Financial and Administration Services Program reflects the association's commitment to expand our range of services to municipalities.

New North: Partner in Consultation

A significant part of New North's role as an advocate for the northern municipalities is to regularly participate in consultations with the provincial government to provide a northern perspective on government policy legislative changes. Quite often these consultations can have an affect on government's position on issues that have enormous impact on the north. The role that New North plays in the ongoing and daily consultation with governemnt provides the northern municipal sector with an incomparably high level of representation and visibility at the senior government level.

Frequently, New North partners with SUMA and SARM, the two other municipal associations, to form a joint coalition on particular issues.



This year was a busy one on the legislative front for government. New North was involved in consultations around the *The Local Government Elections Act*, *Government Administraion Act*, *Fire Safety Regulations*, as well as consulting on changes to *The Northern Municipalities Act* relating to the tightening and improving of transparency of conflict of interest provisions for elected and appointed municipal officials.

Beyond New North's role in monitoring and providing feedback on legislation, New North Executive and staff participated in a number of committess and working groups, the activities of which have a direct impact on the north.

The Northern Housing Working Group came out of the Northern Housing Summit in 2013, and worked hard this year come up with recommendations to government on potential northern housing initiatives. The working group consists of a member of the New North Executive (Val Deschambeault), the New North CEO, with representatives from the communities and government as well as local housing authorities.

The Northern Police Advisory Committee, which consists of members of the New North Executive, met twice with the Northern RCMP District Command to discuss both local and particular issues related to policing in the communities as well as to exchange ideas and engage in general discussion about policing in the north.

The New North CEO AL Loke sat on the the provincial government's Provincial-Territorial Infrastructure Committee to provide northern representation relating to the New Building Canada Fund. In addition, New North represented northern municipalities in government's MSSP discussion format as well as the MLDP program. As well, New North had representation on the various committees related to the Gas Tax Fund, in a consultancy and advisory role, once again ensuring that northern interests were and continue to be represented and northern voices are heard.

Communications

A key component of any organization's lobbying and advocacy plan is a communications strategy. Since the launch of New North's Communication Strategy in 2012-13, the association has focussed renewed and vigorous attention on the role that communication plays in furthering the interests of the northern communities.

Media

Media attention for northern municipal interests is essential to a high level of public and political support.

New North registered more than 30 media mentions this year, and not just in the northern media.

New North received coverage for each of our Member Events as well our Special Events. When the Northern Symposium for Safer and Healthier Communities raises interest in the media, we know that the issues that are of concern to you are getting a good public hearing.

The roads issue in the north continued to gain media focus as well, with New North stoking the fires with a media release in October that received widespread attention.

Government

Maintaining and developing the lines of communication with government is an important part of any communications strategy. With daily contact with many of the key government ministries, New North continued to make its presence felt in government circles, encouraging honest and open dialogue on issues of importance for the north.

Stakeholders & Members

Of course, no communications strategy is complete without robust mechanisms to communicate with our own members and stakeholders. New North management continued to work on best practices to ensure that our stakeholders and our members are kept in the loop on all our goings on. As well, to try and keep the conversation going both ways, we continued to look for ways of improving our members' and stakeholders' ability to communicate with us.

New North Website

Under development and frequently updated, the website moved to a new location, and has a new address, **newnorthsask.org**. It will continue to be developed as a key communication tool for the association.

Monthly Newsletter

Not everyone has internet access, so we worked hard to ensure that our Monthly Newsletter is faxed, emailed or mailed to all our members.



Annual Reports

We have committed ourselves every year to report to members in an annual report format, such as the one you are reading right now! The Annual Report is a way for our members and stakeholders to check-off our accomplishments, and to remind us all of why we are doing what we do.

Annual Business Plans

We cannot report on our accomplishments if we don't tell you what we are aiming for. The annual business plan is where we take the issues that our members have brought to our attention, and stake-out a strategy for achieving them.

New North's Business Plan is published on our website annually, and our plan for 2015-16 is there now. So take a look!

New North Member Events

New North Mayor & Councillor Gathering, June 13-14, 2014

Landfills, by their nature, are not very glamorous. In fact, municipalities generally treat them like dirt.

At the June Mayor and Councillor Gathering we heard from Sheri Praski, Executive Director of the Northern Lights Chapter of SWANA who noted that, just about everywhere, landfills are the last place anyone wants to put public money.

Ministry of Environment officials, including provincial Landfills Manager Sarah Keith, provided the June meeting with their overall “vision for landfills”—words you don’t often hear in close combination to each other—and a frank, and open, dialogue with mayors and councillors followed. The meeting heard that one the key issue for municipalities is fines for non-compliance.

The ministry’s resurrection of the 2008 report on landfill regionalization in the north, commissioned by New North, is a welcome hint of some kind of long-term strategic thinking by the province.

The meeting also heard that SWANA would hold “landfill training” in the north if there was a desire for that to happen.

Apart from landfills, other items on the agenda included a discussion of Asset Management by Brad Henry from Northern Municipal Affairs. Elected officials asked about the pos-

sibilities for asset management training. Some officials expressed scepticism of the relevance of asset management to the vast majority of northern municipalities, given their size and capacity.

The ministry of Economy continued to maintain a presence at New North meetings, with Doug Horowko from the Northern Economic Development branch providing a detailed rundown of the ministry’s activities in the north.

Also revealed was a little more information about the newly developed Northern Economic Development Council, which hopes to



have an officer in place fairly soon.

Finally, Grant St. Germain of the RCMP went over the some of the northern policing issues from an RCMP perspective. Among the concerns brought forward by the communities is the suitability some RCMP personnel placements. St. Germain indicated that the force is very aware of the need to make sure communities receive personnel suited to the challenges of northern policing.

New North Mayor & Councillor Gathering, January 15, 2015

The first New North Mayor and Councillor Gathering for 2015 heard that Mayor Duane Favel, of Ile a la Crosse, has been appointed to the New North Executive.

The appointment came following the resignation of Kelvin Roy. Although government business kept the three invited ministers in Regina, the New North Gathering was still a very well attended event, with virtually every community represented. In place of the ministers were Assistant Deputy Ministers Keith Comstock and Blair Wagar from Government

Speaking at New North's Mayor and Councillor Gathering in January, Dr Ken Coates, of the University of Saskatchewan, suggested that northerners should accept "nothing less than equality of opportunity" as Canadian residents.

Dr Coates' words were spoken as part of his presentation on what he considers the essential ingredients to the successful economic and social development of the north.

Dr Coates began his presentation by identifying some of things "wrong with the north." The main thing, he says, is the north is simply forgotten about.

This is quite remarkable, he goes on, because the per capita economic activity in the north is the highest in the country. By contrast, the north has the lowest per capita income in the country. Dr Coates compared northern Saskatchewan to northern Alberta—another region rich in resource development. The difference between northern Saskatchewan and northern Alberta is that northern Alberta has a per capita income that reflects region's the high amount of economic activity.

Northern Saskatchewan's high cost of living, Dr Coates says, is the result of government policies. He contrasts the situation in the north to that of what he refers to as the "favoured colonies" in northern Quebec.

However, Dr Coates did not focus on the negative. He said that the north has also experienced tremendous change. The changes in the north have largely come about through the empowerment of local communities, particularly in the rise of Aboriginal development corporations, and through education. Local development corporations enable the wealth that is generated to stay in the local economy. Despite still lagging behind the rest of the population, Aboriginal people have dramatically increased their educational levels and participation rates in formal education, which has led to huge increases in the quality of life in the north.

Still, Dr Coates said that there are a number of things we need to do to continue to get government's attention.

Firstly, Dr Coates says we need to establish a clear agenda. Choose three or so priority ar-

Relations and Highways and Infrastructure respectively. The day also featured the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, who will once again bring the Northern Housing Advisory Committee together to consult on possible directions for home ownership options for social housing units.

Also on the agenda was a discussion of the member contribution to New North SANC-Services Inc. as part of the association's request for a core grant update.



eas—for instance, education, training, early years development, access to health or social services—and stick to lobbying those priority areas. Dr Coates warned against having a scattered agenda that changes every time government comes knocking.

Secondly, “know your numbers”; do the research and the ground work to be able to present a clear and well-documented argument to government.

Thirdly, start investigating a “technology strategy” to solve capacity issues. For instance, northerners should embrace new technology in health and education, and even put themselves out there as “test bunnies” as new technologies arise.

Finally, Dr Coates says to “control your own future.”

The underlying theme of a northern agenda, says Dr Coates, is to ensure that northerners have “equality of opportunity.” This does not mean that everyone should necessarily be “equal” in terms of wealth or possessions, but rather that everyone should be able to enjoy the same level and kind of access to a quality of life experienced elsewhere.

If “equality of opportunity” is established as a base-line for the delivery of services to residents in the north, then government policies in the north will flow naturally from that.

New North Mayor & Councillor Gathering, October 2, 2014

The October 2nd Mayor and Council meeting was a generally quiet affair—that is, until it wasn't.

Sparked by the bus crash outside Buffalo Narrows that many feel was caused by the poor road surface, in which five students from La Loche were injured—one seriously—Mayors and Councillors called on New North to pressure the Ministry of Highways to act now on northern roads.

Estelle Laliberte, Mayor of Buffalo Narrows, was particularly adamant that New North organize a march on Regina.

Although most elected officials in the room silently said “you first, Estelle,” the point was taken. Following the meeting on the Monday, New North issued a press release strongly criticizing the state of northern roads.

The response from government nevertheless took us by surprise. The Ministry of Highways issued their own statement, and ministry officials scrambled to contact New North to offer their side of the story.

The good news is that the ministry has plans lined up for northern roads next year—including a “recapping” of many gravel roads. There was also optimism that the ministry will be looking very seriously at two or three major

projects in the north, and will be setting aside money leading up to the next provincial election. At the very least, we believe the ministry will be more forthcoming in communicating with northern elected officials about their plans, and hoped to receive someone from the ministry at the next New North meeting.

But Mayors and Councillors are encouraged to keep their walking shoes on, just in case.

Other highlights from the M&C included a presentation by Tim Trottier of the Ministry of Environment on the latest developments in the ministry's caribou strategy.

As well, Hugh McLaughlin presented an overview of the new Community Safety Officer Program, and Ministry of Government Relations ADM Keith Comstock updated everyone on recent happenings around the Gas Tax, New Building Canada Fund, and next year's Municipal Operating Grants.

New North *Issues and Briefs*

The following section contains summaries of some of the briefing notes, position papers and commentary that have been made available through the year. The positions that are outlined here do not necessarily represent an official New North position, but are rather produced for the purpose of discussion.

Key Themes of New North Lobbying Agenda

We ask that the province consult and work more extensively, cooperatively and openly with the communities of northern Saskatchewan to address the most common problems faced by northerners:

- Very large geographic area with poor or inadequate road connections
- Lower than average median household incomes
- Very high rates of unemployment, high rates of dependency
- High vulnerability of households on fixed incomes; very high cost of living; very poor health outcomes
- Very low housing vacancy rates
- Lack of emergency shelters
- Substandard educational outcomes

Highways and Roads

Key Messages

- Northern road repair/reconstructions do not rate highly (if at all) in the ministry's long-term capital works program
- At least three northern roads are regularly in the top ten in the CAA's Worst Roads in Saskatchewan list.

In order to ensure provincial largesse is spread evenly and equitably throughout the province, the ministry ought to provide a focus to road prioritization that does not exclude, and in fact considers, the health, safety and vitality of northern communities.

As a matter of course, absolute priority in the allocation of road funding ought to be given to projects that provide communities with basic access. Community access roads that represent a community's only means of getting in and out, and which are periodically or seasonally inaccessible or impassable, ought to be prioritized.

Northern Housing

Key Messages

- With rapidly increasing population rates in northern Saskatchewan, rental accommodation options need immediate attention
- The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation's extensive stock of social housing is ageing, and not being replaced
- With rising wages in some parts, northerners are increasingly hungry for home-ownership options
- The construction of new housing must be viewed as serving economic development needs
- Governments, in partnership with municipalities, need to find ways of generating "seed" capital for community-driven, private housing developments

Housing will continue to dominate public policy debates over the next decade. Housing policy in Canada has traditionally been the domain of the federal government, and that government continues to provide more than half of all money spent by governments on housing. While nowadays the provincial government is the delivery mechanism for housing funding, their hands are often tied in how they can use the money. The government has used creative ways to free up federal money for housing (the Headstart on a Home program, for instance), but such opportunities don't come along very often.

In northern Saskatchewan, the "housing market" in many communities is simply the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation's stock of affordable housing. The heavy reliance of northerners on government housing means that market-based solutions to increasing housing options needs to be seriously rethought for the north.

To begin with, northern Saskatchewan communities--which includes First Nations--have shown a willingness to embark on "social housing" construction which, in some cases, appears to be very successful. The impediment preventing the wider use of these types of programs is the "seed" funding needed to get them off the ground.

Mandatory Training for Elected Officials

Key Messages:

- Adequate training for elected officials is essential to developing higher standards of governance in the north
- There are no constitutional or other impediments to requiring mandatory training as long as it is done fairly and non-discriminatorily
- Already-elected officials could be “grandfathered” in (that is, excluded from the policy)

No country, state, province or municipality has a program of mandatory training for elected officials. However, municipal governments, despite their being subject to same basic democratic process as other levels of elected government, are enabled with considerable flexibility as to who can hold office, and under what circumstances. In Canada, municipalities are not subject to “right to vote or hold office” provisions of the Charter of Rights. They are subject to provisions related to discrimination, however, so any mandatory training scheme would need substantial popular support and justification from municipalities. Northern Saskatchewan could “put itself on the map” if it pursued this.

Mineral Resource Infrastructure Contribution

Key Messages

- Municipalities of northern Saskatchewan supply a considerable amount of labour, infrastructure, and “good will” that contributes to Saskatchewan being one of the best places in the world for miners to make money
- The debate about mineral resource “revenue sharing” needs to be radically shifted from its present position

Northern municipalities across the country, not just in Saskatchewan, have remarkably similar positions on resource revenue sharing. They want to see more of it.

Governments’ position is rarely as explicitly stated than in the 1993 report, “The Government’s Position on Proposed Uranium Mining Development in Northern Saskatchewan.”

In the report, the provincial government of the day acknowledged the view of northerners that the “benefits of uranium mining [should] go primarily to northerners,” as well as recognized the “desire for greater economic self-sufficiency” for the north. However, government rejected the idea of revenue sharing as a way of achieving these objectives. Instead, the report proposes (and the government followed-up with) a number of programs to help diversify the northern economy and to provide more opportunities for northerners to find work in the industry.

Government’s position remains that it is not “appropriate for governments to collect revenues and allocate expenditures on a regional basis. Revenues must be collected on the understanding that they will be used in accordance with where they are most needed where they can achieve the most public good.”

The government also maintains that it does not need to support revenue sharing because it already spends more in the north than it takes out of the region in revenue.

The mining industry maintains that it will work with communities that it is obligated, or is potentially obligated, to work with due to sovereignty and related legal reasons.

However, while this is a positive outcome for some communities, many of the municipalities who are directly or indirectly affected by the activities of the mining industry are bearing the cost with little or no direct support from the industry to contribute to those costs.

Bylaw Enforcement Officers (BEOs)

Key Messages

- Regional approach to bylaw officers (BEOs) is appropriate and feasible
- Main issue will be finding support from funding partners to get the program off the ground
- Any program will need to be supported by training
- Creating a program with a focus on dog control is essential

Options for Bylaw Officer Deployment in Northern Saskatchewan

1. Each municipality employs its own BEO (ie, La Ronge, Prince Albert)
2. An officer is located within a regional centre and serves surrounding communities. Although legally employed by one municipality, the communities would sign on to an agreement whereby the costs of the officer would be shared, with each community contributing in some part to that cost. The officer would visit each community on a rotational basis. The municipalities could form an agency or corporation to facilitate and coordinate the agreement, similar to the models used in the various agreements in the La Ronge-Air Ronge-Lac La Ronge area.
3. An officer would be located and employed by a particular municipality. Their services to surrounding communities would be on a fee-for-service (or contractual) basis.
4. A non-municipal agency or entity could be asked to take the legal responsibility of employing a BEO. Municipalities could contract services as required.

Option 1 is suitable to large municipalities, or municipalities with significant financial capacity. Research by SARM suggests that most non-city municipalities that go this way underemploy their BEO. Any municipality that employed their own BEO in the north would be advised to follow Options 2 or 3, and create agreements with surrounding municipalities. The research in large urban areas (mainly the cities), by contrast, shows that BEOs are highly utilized, to the extent that these communities are not willing to sub-contract their BEOs to other communities.

New North research suggests that the most oftenly required service of a bylaw officer would be dog control. It is entirely possible, therefore, that rather than go down the BEO path, municipalities would be better off focussing on seeking regional solutions to the dog issue.

Solid Waste Management

Key Messages:

- Adequate solid waste options for northern residents are important to continue to improve the quality of life and well-being of northerners
- Recycling solutions need not be large-scale; municipalities and the government can begin the process of changing attitudes to recycling in all communities with “small step” solutions. e.g. locating portable recycling trailers in communities that can be transported by an ordinary sized pickup truck
- Government supporting municipalities to fund landfills for the course of their life-cycle (ie, asset management)
- Regionalization is not a lost cause; however, if pursued it should not distract from dealing with more immediate solid waste management concerns
- Northern municipalities need government to keep the lines of communication open to deal with issues that are systemic in nature

Partly in response to public concerns, and partly as a result of making up for years of policy neglect, the costs to municipalities of providing solid waste management to residents has grown in recent years. They will continue to grow into the future.

At present, most municipal landfills in northern Saskatchewan still have significant life left in them. At the same time, most municipal landfills are non-compliant or borderline non-compliant with provincial regulations.

For northern municipalities, the key issues are:

- Lack of recycling capacity, limiting the life-span of solid waste sites by as much as a third
- Underfunding of site maintenance
- Little to no capacity to charge direct user fees
- Heavy, if not total, reliance on revenue sharing to cover all costs related to waste management
- Some landfills are facing closure, with a prohibitively high cost of site decommissioning
- Limited or no co-ordination of costs with communities that share the site

The Ministry of Environment has indicated that it does not require that closed landfills need be immediately decommissioned. The ministry has also indicated (as much through its actions) that it does not take a summary view of non-compliance, but is rather interested in working with municipalities to find solutions to problem issues.



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 in northern Saskatchewan
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