



Brad's

Premier Style Cuisine!

NewNorth

Saskatchewan Association of Northern Communities



Annual Report
2016-17



From the Chair, Bruce Fidler

It seems like every year is a challenging one. In early 2016, we had an event in La Loche that challenge not just the strength of that community, but sent shockwaves through the rest of nation. It was a moment of absolute crisis, that sparked a determined and resolute response from the leaders and the community members to “take back” their community from the grip of grief and despair.

Like La Loche, many other of our communities continue to be challenged by the day to day impacts of addictions and mental health and wellness issues, by socio-economic disadvantages, by isolation. The impact of the slow-down in the uranium industry is only starting to show, and we know that when we see lay-offs, we see increased stresses placed on families, rises in drug and alcohol use. We see more kids heading off to school hungry and dispirited by the abandon they see at home.

This was a year when, with all these challenges, we told the provincial government that they didn’t need an austerity budget, because we were already up to our ears in austerity.

Thankfully, the municipal sector in the north experienced only the 5% set-back in revenue sharing. But there were other impacts: cuts in education and the reduced autonomy of elected boards to make decisions to address northern issues in education, were a blow to northern governance over northern institutions.

We saw the elimination of two northern post-secondary programs, Nortep/Norpac, and the International Centre for Northern Governance and Development. You couldn’t help but think the government was trying to tell us the north was getting it too good.

But let us not focus too much on the negative. For every one of the challenges we face—whether it’s crime, or food security, or poor housing—there are opportunities to make improvements. With a new board elected by our members in November 2016, I can tell you that we are determined to keep moving forward. We are determined, as we know our members are, to be more creative, more committed and more engaged as ever. Our residents deserve nothing less from the people they have elected to represent them.

Let’s only take a moment, as you read through these pages, to reflect on the year we had. Let us look forward to the year ahead, steel our souls and our hearts, grasp whatever chances we can to make change, and be thankful for the privilege of the opportunity to do so. ■

From the CEO, Matt Heley

To be sure, among the many other things happening in the 2016-17 year, this year will be marked as a year of transition. This is true of election years, generally, but it was more so this time. We perhaps saw more newly elected mayors and councillors than in any previous elections. And with those new faces, comes a lot of new expertise, and new expectations. The turn-over in the northern elected translated into a mostly new New North Executive as well.

And internally at New North we saw some changes, too, with staff turnover and role changes at all levels of the Administrative branch.

Amidst all this change, the mission of New North has not been any different or any more clear than before. We face challenging times on all fronts. The province’s financial situation is impacting the municipal sector, as we all know, and we can only speculate how those fiscal challenges will continue to play out as we go forward. The term “transformative change” has been used by the government as a fairly blunt instrument to undertake some very radical reforms in health and education governance, and we wonder if it can be long before the municipal sector is also similarly impacted.

As we so frequently say at New North, our business model can be summed up in one word: “forming partnerships!”

You can’t make bannock without a flour, water, salt, oil, and a skilled set of hands. It’s the same for us trying to make changes and in pushing our members’ interests forward. We are fortunate to have been able to develop valuable working partnerships with staff at Northern Municipal Services and the Management Board of the Northern Municipal Trust Account, some of whom even know how to make actual bannock.

The reason these partnerships work so well is because most people we deal with in our work for the association are committed to heading in the same direction. It is hard to find, whether among the northern municipal leadership, or the many dedicated workers from our partner agencies, people who don’t have as their guiding vision the radical and transformative agenda to make the north a better place tomorrow than how they left it today.

We hope that this sentiment is conveyed in the pages of this report. If it isn’t, we can only reflect on the words of the Irish playwright Samuel Becket, who said: “Try again. Fail again. Fail better.” ■



[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 Bruce Fidler (Chair), Mayor Robert St. Pierre (Vice Chair), Mayor Gord Stomp (Treasurer), and Central Sector Representative Mayor Mike Natomagan, and Far North Representative, Councillor Keith Laprise.

New North has a staff of two: Chief Executive Officer, Matt Heley, and Executive Assistant, Sunshyne Charles.

[New North Communities]

New North's members are the 35 municipalities of northern Saskatchewan. They are: The Northern Villages of Green Lake, Beauval, Buffalo Narrows, Pinehouse, La Loche, Ile a la Crosse, Denare Beach, Cumberland House, Sandy Bay, Pelican Narrows and Air Ronge; the Northern Hamlets of Dore Lake, Cole Bay, St. George's Hill, Michel Village, Turnor Lake, Timber Bay, Stony Rapids, Black Point, Weyakwin, Jans Bay and Patuanak; the Northern Towns of Creighton and La Ronge; and the Northern Settlements of Sled Lake, Bear Creek, Brabant Lake, Camsell Portage, Garson Lake, Descharme Lake, Missinipe, South End, Stanley Mission, Uranium City and Wollaston Lake.



[New North Mission Statement]



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.

New North *Accomplishments*

Advocacy

Met with the RCMP senior command to advocate for more policing services for northern Saskatchewan, and continued to advocate for greater communication and greater responsiveness of policing services to northerners

Participated in solid waste advisory team meetings as an avenue for exploring ways of bringing regional solid waste solutions to northern Saskatchewan, and continued our efforts to lobby the provincial government for funding for northern solid waste management solutions, of which we are now seeing the fruits of our efforts

Participated in dozens of consultations on a range of

issues including:
marijuana legalization, education property tax amendments, the review of the provinces response to the northern wildfire event of 2015, and many others

Partnered with the Ministry of Justice to rejuvenate the northern community police boards, administering more than \$80,000 in meeting honoraria and workshop and travel expenses

Submitted responses on the priority of maintaining northern governance for northern school divisions, the reform of the health system, marijuana legalization, among others

Participated in federal/provincial discussions around asset management for municipalities

Ensured that, with changes to policing costs for municipal entities across Saskatchewan, most northern municipalities are still excluded from paying policing costs that would, in most cases, bankrupt communities

Partnered with communities across the north and the Ministry of Justice to facilitate community-driven community policing and justice workshops

Provided administrative and secretariat support to the Embracing Life, Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Post-vention Committee



Top Issues for 2016-17

1. Northern Revenue Sharing holds steady
2. Provincial budget cuts challenge education health, social service and STC
3. Mental health and addictions gets stronger focus
4. Landfill regionalization becoming a reality
5. Roads still need significant focus
6. Community Police Board funding continues
7. Significant water and sewer upgrade announcements for the north
8. Increasing incidence of crime
9. Police Service Levels critically looked at
10. Education & Health governance reforms

Continued to grow the newsletter as a key communication channel, with newsletter subscriptions increasing more than 300% year over year

Published 12 editions of the newsletter, comprising more than 80,000 words of news, commentary, education and other useful information, helping our members and our stakeholders to deepen their appreciation of northern issues

Garnered hundreds of media mentions in print, radio and online, presenting opportunities for New North to articulate our position on a diverse range of northern issues

Generated media interest and publicity for northern municipal and social issues, including the policing crisis, mental health and addictions, and educational governance reform

Hosted more than 200 people from across the north and throughout Saskatchewan at the 12th Annual Northern Justice Symposium

Collaborated with the Ministry of Social Services and the Northern Housing Advisory Committee to establish a new home-ownership program for social housing tenants

Municipal Capacity Building

Certified 65 northern water and sewer operators at our annual waterworks conference

Entertained northern clerks and administrators at our annual administrators conference

Co-coordinated and hosted the Northern elected workshop in following the October 2016 municipal elections

Continued to provide advice, recommendations and hands-on assistance to municipal elected and appointed officials

Served more than 1000 plates of baked ham

Capacity Building AdminCon2016

New North Administrators Conference, Prince Albert, July 2016

Although competing with the drawsy, forgetful and endless days of summer, the northern Administrators Conference managed to pull a reasonably alert group of northern administrators and clerks to the Holiday Inn in Prince Albert, July 7.

One of our special guests was provincial Ombudsman, Mary McFadyen (pictured). With the change to *The Ombudsman's Act* last November, Mary McFadyen's office now has municipal entities within its jurisdiction. Municipal entities also includes municipal development corporations.

Mary was very careful to reassure people that her office's role is neither to advocate on behalf of people making a complaint, nor to take the sides of the municipalities.

"People do get defensive because they think that we're looking at, that they've done something wrong, and that's certainly not our intention, not our role. We're just trying to determine the facts, what process was used, and if there's any way that we can help them make their processes better for citizens," Mary McFadyen told MBC's Chelsea Laskowski, who was the only one who thought to bring a working pen, at least not one without a giant novelty-sized eraser on the end of it.

If people *were* looking for some good juicy gossip, that was never really going to happen, as the Ombudsman's office conducts their business in the strictest confidentiality—although some case studies are provided in their annual report.

The Ombudsman's office doesn't have the power to issue binding orders where the validity of a complaint is upheld (although that seems like the wrong word for it), but will rather issue recommendations, often with the intent that that will lead to a remedy of the process or situation that led to the complaint in the first place. It's up to

the entity (ie, the municipality) to decide if they'll carry out the recommendation.



One thing made clear by Mary is that her office doesn't have the power to overturn a bylaw.

During the investigation, the Ombudsman can subpoena people and documents, quite often simultaneously, but rarely has to as most organizations co-operate with her requests for information. So far, her office has issued three notices of investigation since November—but none involve northern municipalities. An audible groan of disappointment went round the room at hearing that.

Also on the agenda was Kerry Desjarlais from the Water Security Agency, wading into the contentious waters of who is legally responsible for the local water for sewer works; it is, of course, mayor and council who are the permittees, but they may delegate the responsibility to others to carry out the duties, which is often the administrator.

After lunch, Diane Manegre, from Sask. Housing, spoke on the Northern Encouraging Community Housing Options, the Rental Development Program, and the Northern Home Ownership Program. Housing issues bring out the feistiness in northerners, and a meaty discussion about subdivision development in Sandy Bay raised some important questions about how communities can afford to develop lots for private homeowners who

cannot afford to buy them. The suggestion was made that a community could explore a subdivision development in partnership with Sask. Housing whereby a certain number of the lots could be set aside for private housing in exchange for land for social housing.

The speckled sun slanting in through the venetians, and with eyelids growing heavy, it was time for Roy Anderson to take administrators through the early thinking behind the new Administrative Capacity Building program being rolled out under the guidance of the Northern Municipal Trust Account Management Board.

Earlier, Brad Henry, who popped in from time to time to answer questions and contribute to the discussion as per the extent that his schedule and his progress in Pokémon Go would allow, took administrators through some of the changes they would have seen on the Northern Revenue Sharing notices sent to communities, the letters of non-compliance that were issued to some communities for, ah, non-compliance, and who the successful municipalities have been so far in winning projects in the latest Northern Water and Sewer program.

With the sun finally sinking behind the giant Smoke Signals sign, it was time for the strobing electric neon to own the night, and for us to roll up our beach towels, turn our boats leeward and allow the current to take us back ceaselessly into the past, or at least to Movados. Henrietta Ray, Sandy Bay's Administrator, celebrated her 29th birthday on the day of the Northern Administrators Conference. It was 10th time she's turned 29, she said. It's an old joke, but a good one. And that's pretty much how we feel about AdminCon2016, too, a format that's now had its day probably, but still turned out all right in the end.

Capacity Building New North Waterworks

New North Waterworks Conference, Prince Albert April 2016

Planning for the annual New North Waterworks—an event enabling water operators to catch up on their required Continuing Education Units (CEUs)—can be a stressful exercise for our small team.

There is, at least in theory, some comfort in knowing that we are catering to men and women who spend a good portion of their lives wading through sewage, are comfortable in

confined spaces which can be simultaneously too hot and too cold, experience the dual burden of both unreasonable public expectations and little recognition for the work they do, and are in addition, the last people anyone invites to the staff Christmas party.

People, in other words, who might carry around lowered expectations like a water-born bacteria cell carries around a flagella.

Yet, every year we are stung by how wrong our assumptions are. When we are reminded that the sorbet is too sweet, the mattresses not fluffy enough, the swimming pool a touch too tepid, the cream puffs “clearly not made with real cream,” and the chardonnay “room temperature and [having] obviously just

been opened,” we know we have a tough crowd.

This year, we went all out to give these heroes of the sewer lines the best New North Waterworks ever.

Over two days about 80 women and men—about 70 of whom were actual water operators—packed into the ballroom of the



Prince Albert Inn to hear presentations about workplace safety by Ken from A to Z in Prince Albert, and to participate in an Operators Math course, presented by Sean from KGS in Regina. The second day was dedicated to water disinfecting by ATAP’s Bert Gaudet.

The math course was quite challenging, at least for this observer, bringing to mind the TV quiz show, *Are You Smarter than a*

5th Grader (a show which, incidentally, proves that no one learns anything of lasting use in the 5th grade). Thankfully, the operators didn’t have as much difficulty with the math (perhaps because they have round the clock access to the minds of grade school kids?), but no one could name three Egyptian Pharaohs.

Luckily, there isn’t call for it in the water business.

Although cartoon videos instructing what to do in the event of being blasted by radioactive plasma photons suggest the safety course was not specifically geared to water plant operators—a minor complaint—it was nevertheless pretty good at drumming home the idea that workplace safety can often—but not always—come back to choices you make on the work site.

The 0.6 CEU presentation on water disinfection techniques was also very worthwhile, leaving behind the impression

that while there are alternatives to solving our water issues by dumping truckloads of chlorine into our systems, most of them are too expensive to contemplate.

And once again we owe a big thanks to Kerry Desjarlais from the Water Security Agency for helping to make this happen.

In the end, we think the whole thing went well.

New North Scholarship

The New North Executive was once again pleased to award three New North Public Administration and Leadership Scholarships this year.

The recipients were: Tiffany Dorion, Samatha Settee, Brandon Roy, and Alexis Clarke.

Each received \$1000 toward expenses related to post-secondary study. Two recipients are using the money to help them complete their LGAs, and one has ambitions to be a nurse.

The New North Scholarship began back in 2013, and has so far awarded more than \$10,000 in scholarships to students enrolled in courses as diverse as Nursing, Law, Local Government Administration, and the Arts.

While the scholarship is not based on a student’s academic performance necessarily, to receive the award students do need to show in their application that they are aspiring to be future leaders in their communities and have a commitment to northern Saskatchewan. •

Supporting Community Policing Initiatives

“Empowering Our Communities”: Community Police Board Training, March 2017

One clear day in May, 1999, New North Mayors, RCMP leadership and representatives from government, gathered in the Legion Hall on the shores of Lac La Ronge to sign an historic agreement. The Framework for Community Policing Initiatives is more or less what it says on the tin. Essentially, it was an agreement that said the RCMP, the government, and the northern municipalities would work together to improve relations between the communities and the men and women who have sworn to protect them.

A part of the agreement was that everyone would support the formation and growth of Community Police Boards. Eighteen years later the CPBs are still going, better than ever, and “Empowering Our Communities” was a pretty good time to celebrate that fact.

Billed as a training event, it was both more and less the sum of its parts. It is significant that the original agreement was motivated, at least in spirit, by First Nations policing agreements, and it was fitting that “Empowering Our Communities” brought the municipal-based CPBs together with the First Nations’ Community Consultative Groups—or what used to be called Police Management Boards—who’d inspired the CPBs to begin with. The event was really just another chance for everyone to learn from each other about what’s working in their communities. Clearly, a lot is working.

There was almost too much packed into this agenda to talk about. And then, as is so typical of these events, there was the “shadow agenda,” the spaces that are carved out with the musings and reflections of the participants themselves, the Elders’ wisdom that can be as instructive, if not more so, than anything you’ll find on paper, that led emcee Nap Gardiner to joke about the event as “half a day of presentations and two days of closing remarks.”

At the end of day 1, Pinehouse’s Phyllis Smith spoke about “Reclaiming Our Community,” an initiative from that small village that for many years, and for many communities, has been a model for how to do community policing. Sandra Erikson and Tracey Tinker presented on Buffalo Narrows’ “Taking Back our Community,” Nick Daigneault spoke about Beauval’s BRIC (Beauval Reclaiming Its Community), while Nap Gardiner did double-time presenting on Ile a la Crosse’s Community Safety Board, and Candice Evans-Waite spoke effervescently about youth engagement in her community of Buffalo Narrows. Gail Gardiner from Beauval spoke about the tremendous success of restorative practices at her Valley View school in reducing the expulsion rate of students. There was, amongst all this,

considerable discussion about the difficulties of recruiting Aboriginal people into the force. The point was also made that RCMP training should be reflective of who members are more likely, statistically, to encounter in their work, given the massive over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system. Irene Chepil from Waterhen First Nation said that if the new RCMP members are not properly acclimatized to their new cultural surroundings, they will work on them until they are. And she told the story about how her community, who have a

custom of bestowing a gift to a parting RCMP member, followed one around for days so they could measure his feet for a pair moccasins (they didn’t need to, of course; everyone knows the police wear size 12s; it’s something to do with selection criteria, apparently).

Muskoday First Nation’s Herman Crain and Ava Bear spoke about the success of their community’s “intervention circle,” a wrap-around, hub-style program that’s

proving the best community justice initiatives are those that begin and end in the communities themselves.

And in one of the more inspiring sessions, which could only have gladdened the heart of their boss, Supt. Larry Wilson, three young constables, Jennifer Parson from Sandy Bay, Nikolas Eaton from Stony Rapids, and Alyssa Ogieglo from Montreal Lake, spoke rapturously of the “welcomes” they received from community members when making their moves into their respective detachments. They left the impression that the RCMP doesn’t recruit officers, but community builders.

Russ Mirasty, in his closing remarks (among the many closing remarks), said that the shift he has seen in the developing relationship between the RCMP and the communities since the 1990s has not really just been in the improvements in the best practices of the police, but in the practices of the communities themselves, who are taking so much more responsibility now to bridge that gap.

No one could walk away from “Empowering Our Communities” without feeling that the former CO of F Division is right. The Framework Agreement for Community Safety and Policing Initiatives is essentially an MOU signed by the RCMP, government and New North communities, to work together. The agreement was barely mentioned by name after the first day, mainly because it’s such a mouthful, but also because, outside government, it doesn’t need to be talked about anyway. Its principles are now just a part of the policy furniture. Everyone should be proud of that.



Supporting Community Justice Initiatives

New North Northern Justice Symposium, May 2016



It is remarkable how often the individual syncopatic beats of the Northern Justice Symposium—held at the Ches Leach Lounge in Prince Albert from May 17-19—achieve a kind of thematic synergy, echoing, circling back, piercing arrow-like leitmotifs, popping up again and again in each presentation, and providing the event with a distinct vibe that is neither planned nor expected.

Chords resound of strength, resilience and optimism, for sure, but quite often something else as well, notes that can feel uncomfortable to the ear at first, like a strident counter-theme muscling in on the action. And here we saw it, in the refusal of passivity, blending with a refusal of the victim narrative, following a natural progression to an understanding that the problem has not just been with us all along, it has, in some way, now become a part of us.

The theme emerged incipiently in form in the vibrant presentation of Dr Ken Coates, of the University of Saskatchewan, who began with the observation that a “lot of people don’t come out of the system healed,” and delivered an address with a surprisingly personal twist: his own son is currently in jail in the Yukon. Dr Coates said that we have a tendency to see social problems as rooted in a distant colonial past. “Most Aboriginal people,” he said, “didn’t go to residential schools until the 1950s.” In the north, the real problems didn’t happen until the 1960s, with the collapse of the fur trade and greater dependence on social welfare programming, contributing to the changing role of men and women in the north. Opportunities came with resource development, but Aboriginal people had no control over that. Instead, “it was rapid imposed changes” that we saw, and alongside that, the imposition of a “formal justice” system, which we see today, that was “fundamentally racist” in its basic assumptions.

Dr Coates says that while we are here focusing on the formal justice system—the courts, the RCMP, the ministries and the agencies—it is “basic justice” that we need to address: the roots of social and economic inequality. The path forward is “cultural partnerships,” reversing “external interventions,” getting government

to “step back,” allowing more autonomy to First Nations and Aboriginal governments.

If there was an implicit call in Dr Coates’ presentation for northern people to “step up” as government “steps back,” Russ Mirasty’s view of the internal dynamics troubling “engagement” was far more explicit: “Ultimately we have to take responsibility for our own behaviours, our own children, their education, their activities,” he said. “We have to recognize that some of it is ours to own. So when we accept that, then it’s ours to fix.”

When talking about engagement, he said it is the expectation that government will consult with stakeholders, but they do not have a good model of engagement: “It has to be almost one-on-one,” he said. “Some would say ‘well that’s impossible for government leaders to do that, but it’s not, quite frankly. If you want to know the north, if you want to know northerners, you have to speak to northerners on a personal level.’” But, he said, an important element of engagement is self-reflection. How much do we accept responsibility for the failure to engage?

He noted, following his work with the Ministry of Education, that the students he spoke to craved attention from their teachers, parents and grandparents, and he wondered how students can be expected to care about their education if no one else does.

Applying this idea more broadly, Mirasty identified a number of barriers to effective engagement that can limit reciprocity—such as the belief that decision makers don’t care and will do what they want anyway. Mirasty touched upon the vicious cycle that contributes to apathy—that people who don’t believe they will be listened to won’t engage—and said that the only way to break it is to “believe we can contribute ... we have to believe in ourselves.”

Throughout the presentations focusing on community-driven initiatives, like Al Ducharme’s talk on RADA—Reserves Against Drugs and Alcohol—the point was made again

and again that communities have become stronger, and have the capacity to meet their own challenges.

Yet, even then, perhaps the most challenging refusal of passivity, of the victim narrative, was Harold Johnson's "Story of Alcohol," the morning of Day 2, delivered in a measured adagio, his hands jammed into the pockets of his blue jeans or shaking the podium, insisting that "if everything is just story," then we need to change the story we tell about alcohol: "If I say, 'I'm at the end of my drinking career and I have this thing called alcoholism,' if I tell myself that it is a disease, 'I got it by chance. It was God's will. There's nothing I can do about it' — I won't do anything about it. If, on the other hand, I say, 'This is an injury I gave to myself because of my drinking pattern. It's my fault,' then I can also say, 'It's my responsibility,' and then I will do something about it."

If a refusal of the victim narrative thundered as a theme through Harold Johnson's presentation, it emerged as a quiet lilt in Angie Bear's "Traditional Aspects of Domestic Violence." Traditional communities, she said, would not have survived had they not "honoured the role of women." At the heart of domestic violence is the unequal status accorded women by men—a challenge to a society organized by men, in the interests of men. But, she said, that is where the illusion starts. In her family, it was her grandmother who "called everyone home," and in traditional communities, where women were the nurturers, the men the protectors, it is not the roles each plays, but the power that gravitates to those roles that is important. In traditional communities, there were no such power distinctions. She spoke, by contrast, of the "negative energy" in a home where a woman's role is not honoured, which can emerge, powerfully, in passive aggressive behaviour—which she illustrated with the story of the "crooked braid" (a woman will respond to disrespectful behaviour from her husband with poor quality braiding).

The following day's presentation on the provincial government's response to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Inquiry, by Ann Pottruff of the Ministry of Justice, also grappled, tentatively, with how to represent women as agents, not objects, in a context that is, quite literally, shaped by women's victimhood. Pottruff says the key to understanding why Aboriginal women are disproportionately the victims of extreme violence is vulnerability: "Women are and can be strong," she said, "but the situations they find themselves in are too overpowering."

Vulnerability is partly, but not exclusively, framed by the status of women in the home—recalling Angie Bear—but societal attitudes based on "racism and sexism aggravated by vulnerability due to poverty" are also "root causes."

Despite all the talk of self-empowerment and resilience, there is a brute reality here that requires the resources of governments and external agencies to help deal with.



An absence of women's shelters in the north has always been a puzzle. Enter Betsy Kelly, of North Sask. Victim Services, who spoke of the agency's role to help women come up with safe plans to get out of the household and into a temporary

accommodation, or to stay with family. She said that in the past year in the north, its workers in all regions have taken on 21 cases.

If there is a point to the Northern Justice Symposium, in our view, you will not easily find it by mining crime statistics, the numbers of calls for service or drug busts. There are actually fewer problem identifiers than you would expect at this event.

Yet, as Russ Mirasty said, the conversation has changed. "We have evolved to where we can have frank and open discussions," he said. "We no longer talk about what the RCMP is doing or not doing," he said. The Northern Justice Symposium is a conversation. To know where the changes are happening, you just have to listen. By the time RCMP Superintendent and Northern District Commander Grant St. Germaine said that "we cannot police our way out of this" in the closing panel discussion on domestic violence, everyone knew exactly what he meant.

- For a complete write-up of the event, check back at the New North website, www.newnorthsask.org.
- Also, check out New North's new Youtube Channel to see clips of many of the presentations. To find them, search "Northern Justice Symposium" on Youtube, or follow the link on our website, www.newnorthsask.org.
- A big thanks to the organizing committee—too many to mention here. But you know who you are! A special mention for the involvement and support of PAGC.
- Also, thanks to the provincial government, particularly the ministries of Justice and Policing and Corrections, for their financial contribution.
- We look forward to the next NJS in 2018

Advocacy Representing Northern Interests

A significant part of New North's role as an advocate for northern municipal interests is to participate in consultations with the provincial government and other stakeholders. Quite often, through these consultations, New North can have a positive impact on government's position on a particular policy or position. New North is in daily and ongoing contact with many government ministries with an interest in northern Saskatchewan, and through this contact we are able to provide government with the unique perspective of the northern municipal sector. As well, the New North Executive and staff quite often work alongside our fellow municipal associations, SUMA and SARM, on a number of provincial committees. Here are some of the highlights of the activities of the Executive and staff as advocates of northern interests this year:

New North Executive & Staff Committee Representation

Police Advisory Committee

Gas Tax Oversight Steering Committee

Solid Waste Advisory Team

Northern Justice Committee

Gas Tax Communication Committee

Northern Housing Advisory Committee

Taskforce on Policing

... and many others

Infrastructure

With infrastructure spending now accounting for so much of senior government's economic growth agenda it has become even more important for the infrastructure-starved northern communities to have a voice at the table to ensure that the interests of small and regional municipalities are not overlooked. New North sits as a member on a number of provincial committees that provide oversight to provincial and federal government grant programs, including the New Building Canada Plan and the Gas Tax Fund.

Landfills: Solid Waste Management Team

New North is going along with the Ministry of Environment's entering of a new pragmatic phase in assisting the municipal sector achieve both compliance with solid waste regulations and/or move to regional waste systems, as a part of the ministry's Solid Waste Management Team (SWAT).

The Executive Won't Stop Meeting on Northern Issues

As key personnel, the New North Executive stands at the vanguard of all New North's advocacy efforts, reflecting our goal to maintain government-to-government relations at the highest level. Throughout the year, the Executive met with countless government officials and agencies, across a number of ministries, conducting business on any number of important issues. Among the key highlights included meeting with the Minister of Government Relations, Donna Harpauer, and the former Minister Jim Reiter, where the Executive continued their campaign to have northern revenue sharing

recognized as not only essential for municipalities to deliver basic services, but as one of the key pillars of northern economic and social development. With the Minister of Rural and Remote Health, Greg Ottenbreit, the Executive sought to highlight the devastating impact of mental health and addictions on northern communities.

In the summer of 2016, the New North Executive brought together a collection of senior government officials from six of the main service ministries active in the north to reinforce the need for government to not only better co-ordinate their planning, but to be consultative with northern communities on directions going forward.

Community Police Boards (CPBs) have been an important avenue for communities to address local policing issues and improving and maintaining positive relations between communities and the RCMP since the late 1990s. However, CPBs have not always had the ongoing support they need to be effective and to overcome the barriers for community members to participate in regional boards.

CPBs have had the benefit of funding from the provincial government to cover the cost of meetings, honoraria and travel expenses for members, ensuring that everyone has a chance, not just those with mobility or who are already on council, to participate in the activities of the CPBs.

This last year, New North lobbied the government to enable us to hold and distribute the money, to take some of the

administrative weight off the communities where that was required, but also to bear some of the responsibility, as a key stakeholder, in ensuring the sustainability and longevity of the CPB concept going forward.

Between November 2016 and March 31 2017, New North has distributed more than \$80,000 to CPB across the north. During that time we also worked with the Ministry of Justice to help develop policy around the CPBs, with the intent of coming up with ways of enabling the CPBs to shape how they would like to respond to local criminal justice issues, and to make the CPB initiative as community-driven and responsive to local priorities as possible. We are very proud of the work we have done with the CPBs, and of the work undertaken by the CPBs, and hope to see them continue to flourish for many years to come. •

Member Events

New North holds a minimum of three Gatherings a year, usually in Summer, Fall and Mid-Winter. For full accounts of the Gatherings, take a look at the newsletter for the month in which the Gathering was held, available on our website, www.newnorthsask.org.

Mayor & Councillor Gathering June 2016

“Dotmocracy,” Clickers and the First Steps Toward a Northern Strategy

It's not often that northerners get a chance to have a meaningful say in anything much, but they did so at the New North Gathering, June 16, and in the best possible way: with electronic clickers and tiny sticky dots.

The meeting was about priority setting for what was being called the “For the North and By the North: A New Northern Strategy ... With Clickers”—although we may have added the last bit ourselves—facilitated by staff from the U of S's International Centre for Northern Governance and Development, led by the Centre's Director, Dr Ken Coates.

In his opening comments, Mayor Duane Favel said that “we know as northern people that solutions lie in the communities in the north,” and it was an observation that lost little poignancy through repetition.

Before getting on with the clickers, Dr Coates fired up the northern elected by telling them “what governments know about you is not necessarily what you'd like them to know about you.” Well, government now knows that the northern elected would like to have a northern strategy steering committee of at least 8, and a working committee of 8 as well.

These were the matters settled on the day, as were the northern elected officials' “top priority areas” for the northern strategy, which were arrived at by abandoning the clickers and resorting to “dotmocracy”—the placing of “dots” on butcher's paper strung on the walls of the Travelodge's ballroom, which was less technologically interesting, but did have the benefit of making people get up and move around. The priority areas this time were employment, youth, business development, education and training, housing and safety.



While next steps were still to be worked on, further consultation was to take place with New North about how the steering and working committees would be set up, which would also include working out the exact nature of the involvement of our First Nation and Métis partners in the project.

The Gathering was very well attended, with most northern municipalities there. Government was also strongly represented,



with Ministry of Justice Deputy Minister Kevin Fenwick bringing greetings. FSIN Chief Bob Merasty said it did his “heart good” to see everyone “coming together,” noting “we live in exciting times” as Canada finally appears ready to “embrace indigenous peoples.” He also stressed the value and importance of First Nations and municipalities working together. Vice Chief Brian Hardlotte of PAGC commended New North for taking the initiative of inviting First Nation stakeholders, and said that while PAGC represents First Nations, they also recognize the “need to move beyond that line.”

A big thank you to the folks at ICNGD for putting on such an interesting day for us, and to the elected and other special guests for attending. It is a tragedy, of course, that ICNGD subsequently lost their funding in the March 2017 provincial budget. Needless to say, though, the work that was done through the “Northern Strategy” was invaluable in help setting the priorities both of government and New North, over the subsequent months.

Through the work of ICNGD staff, we are better placed to begin the work on a genuine, for the north, by the north, plan to bring greater economic and social development opportunities to northern Saskatchewan.

Solid Waste Management

Make significant progress on a northern solid waste strategy

Work with the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Government Relations, the NMTA, to develop a go-forward plan on solid waste management regionalization, including a communication and “work-with” plan to ensure municipalities are adequately consulted and kept in the loop on the plan’s development and actualization

Work with the Ministry of Environment and SSTC to facilitate scrap tire pick up at no or minimal cost to the municipality

Work with the municipalities and Recycle Saskatchewan and other stakeholders to develop workable solutions for small community recycling

Ensure northern municipalities continue to receive a fair and appropriate share of the revenue sharing pool

Advocate on behalf of the northern municipalities at the upcoming revenue sharing pools review

Help municipalities in the development of their administrative and governance capacity

Host at least 2 administrators conferences this year

Begin development of an online administrators “resource bank”

Host at least 2 MLDP modules alongside Mayor and Councillor Gatherings

Continue to support the NMTA’s administrative capacity building initiatives

Work with the NMTA and the Ministry of Government Relations to ensure municipalities are prepared for asset management provisions of the GTF

Make progress on northern housing issues

Continue to facilitate the Northern Housing Advisory Committee in conjunction with SaskHousing to increase home ownership options for social housing tenants, with the goal of seeing 50 units sold, generating up to \$5million in working capital for new rental construction

Initiate northern needs assessments for northern communities

Provide a grant application support for communities seeking to take advantage of housing funding opportunities

Continue to support the efforts of communities in their community policing and justice initiatives

Facilitate and host the Northern Justice Symposium in 2018

Provide operational and secretariat support to community-driven justice workshops

Continue to support the efforts of the Ministry of Justice in co-ordinating the activities and policy with respect Community Police Boards

Make progress on solar power initiatives for municipal facilities

Facilitate feasibility studies to determine the benefits of solar power and other alternative energies for municipal facilities

Lobby the NMTA and the Minister of Government Relations to approve a solar power revolving fund to enable municipalities to access up-front capital funding to help the growth of solar utilization in the northern municipal sector

Police Service Delivery

Work with key stakeholders at the senior level to ensure adequate engagement between the RCMP, the provincial government and the communities to monitor police service levels in the north

Addictions and Mental Health

Work with the Ministry of Remote and Rural Health to set up working groups to monitor and assess the mental health and addictions services in the north

Lobby the Ministry of Finance and SLGA to implement a northern alcohol tax, with the intent that the revenues of which would be available to communities to deal with the effects of alcohol addictions

Communications and Engagement

Continue our work with stakeholders to build trusting, long-term relationships based around achieving mutually beneficial objectives

Enhance the association’s avenues of communications by continuing to evolve New North’s newsletter and website to reflect the needs and interests of our members and stakeholders

Work closely with media outlets to ensure that northern municipal interests are adequately and appropriately covered, and with communities to help build media profiles around issues as required

Continue to operate transparently and show accountability to members, funders and stakeholders

Maintain order of the association’s financial affairs to ensure members receive the best value for money from New North

Be vigilant in identifying ways of “doing business” more efficiently and more effectively to improve the value proposition of New North to our member communities