



# STC Gets the Editorial Treatment

See inside.

## Upcoming

Public Relations &  
Communication MLDP  
Module

June 26, Coronet

New North AGM

June 27, Coronet

Saskatchewan Association of  
Northern Communities

**NEW  
NORTH**

### This month ..

- Chelsea continues her investigation into FASD in the north
- Laurent Mougeot on effective governance
- Ombudsman getting fewer complaints about municipalities
- Bits and Bobs
- Environment Canada reveals which countries summer already underway in

**Monthly Newsletter  
May 2019**

## New North AGM to Feature Education Property Tax Presentation. Yes, Seriously.

Education Property Tax (EPT) is an important source of revenue for the province, taking in about \$700 million a year and counting (about three times more than municipal revenue sharing gives out). Although the EPT regime has been significantly reformed over the years, the reform everyone at this end of the spectrum wanted to see—its elimination—was obviously not one of them. It's here to stay, and, as we said, becoming more and more important to the province. Virtually any increases in education funding is financed by the rising EPT pool.

The northern municipalities levy about \$7 million a year. The mines are levied about the same. A change a few years ago means that municipalities don't remit their EPT to the school divisions anymore, but to the province. And the province doesn't seem to write-off the receivables the way the school divisions used to do. And that's brow furrowing.

The other reason we bring all this up is because the province has snuck "good standing with EPT" into their eligibility requirements for revenue sharing as of next year.

That's also brow furrowing. Our general rule is two brow furrowings gets a presentation at a Gathering, so

we are pleased the Ministry of Government Relations is coming up to help us understand what the state of play in EPT collections is, as well as explain how abatements and exemptions work, at our AGM and Mayor and Councillor Gathering on June 27 at the Coronet in Prince Albert. It might be a good idea for administrators to attend as well.

Apart from that, and the usual AGM business, the agenda at this point is wide open to ensure there's plenty of time for general discussion.

### Resolutions

An important part of any AGM is the resolutions session. Resolutions need to be submitted to the New North office at least a few weeks before the meeting date; ideally, we would like to circulate the resolutions to the membership so they can have a good think about them.

### Public Relations Module: June 26

Because we always like to provide something else for people to do when they come to the AGM, New North is hosting the Public Relations & Communications MLDP module on June 26. See the next page for more about that. ■

# NewNorth News & Updates

## New North Scholarship Open for 2019

New North is once again pleased to announce that applications are open for the New North Public Administration and Leadership Scholarship.

Every year we set aside about \$3,000 to provide financial assistance to northern students studying at a post-secondary institution. Applications are not assessed on academic performance, but rather on an essay students write in which they tell us about how their course of study and chosen career will strengthen the north. We are particularly interested in seeing applications from anyone taking the LGA.

This year will likely be the last time we offer this particular scholarship, as the Executive decided back in April that they'd like to focus more on training and education for northern administrators. We will be

looking at both significantly increasing the amount of money we put into this, but also making it more geared to New North's own objectives of improving administrative capacity.

New North funds this scholarship and similar endeavours from fees we pick up from administering programs on behalf of other entities.

Go to [www.newnorthsask.org/scholarship](http://www.newnorthsask.org/scholarship) to find the application form. It is due June 30.

Since 2014, New North has provided more than \$15,000 in awards to more than a dozen northern students, studying in a diverse range of fields including nursing, education, environmental science, and of course the LGA. ■

## New North Hosting Public Relations & Communications MLDP Module

June 26<sup>th</sup>, Coronet Hotel

Most of us think a good communication strategy starts by making sure your foot is no where near your mouth before proceeding with the issuance of words.

But in a complex organization like a municipality, or a budding young non-profit advocacy group, how do we make sure that everyone has their feet where they should be? Does your council have one spokesperson, or 6? Is your administrator allowed to talk to the media? What about a potentially damaging crisis requiring the creation of key messages to get your side of the story across? How would you go about

crafting messages that don't end up making things worse—because a badly crafted message can do that.

And in a public sphere characterized by the incessant rumbling of the social media maw, municipalities, like any small and under-resourced organization, are in new and mostly uncharted territory.

You can't ignore it, so come along to the MLDP module on Public Relations and Communications on June 26 at the Coronet, to learn more about it. ■

## SAVE the DATE! Northern Justice Symposium Scheduled for March 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, 2020

It's hard to believe we're already half-way through 2019, let alone that next year is 2020, the year which we grew up expecting to see an "available flying" option on a new Camry, people making phone calls on TVs the size of a moving van side wall, and where single-piece polymer jumpsuits would be breaking new ground for sartorial elegance and practicality.

But I digress. The Northern Justice Symposium is the first of the new space age-influenced events we have planned for next year, the others, which have no dates as yet, include the ins and outs of dome living.

The Northern Justice Symposium in 2018 was a big success, with a renewed focus and attention on having communities come along to share their own success stories. We saw, for

example, tremendous interest in the land-based healing project at Montreal Lake, which other communities have now looked at and said "we can do that too!"—and so they have. The upcoming symposium will once again be a chance for communities to showcase the kinds of holistic, community-driven justice initiatives for which northern communities are known.

In the meantime, you will soon be able to nominate a community, RCMP member or local resident for a Northern Excellence Award, which this time around will be presented at a special black tie gala event, complete with entertainment. Black tie optional, of course.

Stay tuned for more information about the symposium and the excellence awards in the coming months. ■

## From the New North Chair

BY BRUCE FIDLER, MAYOR OF CREIGHTON

A few weeks ago I met with the federal NDP leader Jagmeet Singh during his northern tour.

We didn't have a lot of time to discuss our issues, but one thing we did want to hammer home is the importance of getting federal recognition for northern transport issues in the hope that he can carry this message further.

The announcement in April of federal funding for road improvements along Highway 55 shows that this is an area that the feds are willing to weigh in on. We just need the federal government to look a little bit further north.

I've been driving northern roads for more than 30 years. Roads are one area where I don't think I've seen much improvement. We've had huge investments in other critical infrastructure, like water and sewer. Investment in broadband have connected many of our communities to what they used to call the "information superhighway."

Those things are important, but we could also really do with some dollars being put into actual highways!

I noticed in the federal budget that about \$400 million is being set aside for transportation infrastructure in the territories. No doubt that money is badly needed there. The government says they want to improve safety and foster economic and social development in that region.

We feel that northern Saskatchewan is overlooked as a region ripe for development. We have many of the infrastructure and social challenges of places further north. We have small communities often isolated by poor roads and suffering from a lack of access to services, but for some reason "our north" is not often included when governments talk about a northern strategy. Linking the provincial north into the federal government's plans for the northern regions of Canada is something that we need to do as New North, and with a federal election campaign coming up, I hope to see this



Federal NDP leader Jagmeet Singh (left), New North Chair Bruce Fidler and former New North Chair and current member for the federal northern riding, Georgina Jolibois.

becoming a bit of an election issue in the northern campaign as well.

One other issue I think we need to get renewed traction on is resource revenue sharing. I noticed that over in Ontario the new Ford government has committed to a revenue sharing deal with northern communities that will deliver them about \$20 million a year in diverted tax and royalty revenues from mining and forestry activity. It was a campaign promise by Ford that he obviously intends to follow-up on. The resource revenue sharing discussion has been off the radar of the major political parties in our north for a number of years, but what's happening in Ontario shows that something like that is never really off the table. We just need to keep talking about it. The fact that we have seen billions in revenue going to mining companies operating in the north, yet we still have the same roads we've always had (as one example), with not a lot to show for all that activity in other areas (like improvements in educational achievement), really just underlines how important it is that we get this back on the agenda before the next wave. ■

# Government Wants You to Enjoy the New Publications Centre Experience

We're not sure how many years ago it went from gov.sk.ca to saskatchewan.ca—it wasn't that long ago—but ever since they did that the experience of navigating the online gateway into the world of the provincial government has been beset by frustration and angst. If intended as a commentary on most people's experience of government, then their website succeeds spectacularly well, but if intended as the thing it's actually supposed to be, not so much.

Well, we're happy to say that the new Publications Centre portal—which can be accessed by typing “publications Saskatchewan” into Google—works really well.

It has a simple landing page that beckons you—practically begs you—to simply type in what you are looking for. Below in the “most popular documents” section is a list of the things they think you are most likely to want to find. It seems that the Anglers Guide and the Hunters' and Trappers' Guide are the most popular documents.

## Ombudsman Report Shows Drop in Municipal Complaints

Legislative changes following the investigation of the RM of Sherwood brought municipalities within the all-seeing gaze of the Saskatchewan ombudsman's office back in 2015.

No one really knew how municipalities would rate with respect to the kind of complaints the ombudsman office handles. Would the municipal sector become the most complained about government type? Would the number of complaints, and any consequent investigations, paint a picture of an institution in deep trouble? That's how things have generally gone everywhere else, why not here?

After three years of the ombudsman taking complaints about municipalities, doing investigations and publishing their results, we can safely say that we have no idea where things are at.

True, it looks like the overall number of complaints is decreasing, from 506 in 2016 to 452 in 2018. The north went from 18 to 21—so an increase—but given the small quantum it's not a variation that would warrant attention.

The statistics provided by the ombudsman's office are not that useful, otherwise. Without any countervailing information, could we just say that there's one rural municipality that so antagonizes its residents that they filed 145 complaints against it last year? Absolutely. Could we say that virtually every complaint actually comes from one person with a lot of time on their hands? Sure, why not.

At some point the ombudsman's office will probably publish an overview of the types of complaints they are seeing to

We're not sure how they determined that; is it based on searches or just what people around the office think? Well, we can easily find out: if everyone joins me in entering “Government Gazette Part II January 5, 1995” into the search bar we could see if that that comes up as the most popular document, with the attendant, potentially hilarious outcome, that whoever monitors these things will wonder why that particular issue of the gazette has so captured the public's imagination.

The useful thing about the Publications Centre is that it is actually useful. Need a curfew bylaw? Type in curfew bylaw and a sample will come up. Need a school division annual report? Type in which one you need, and bang, there it is.

A sure indication of how good an archival website is is how many hours you waste just randomly typing in things into the search area and delighting in the results. Government, you have wasted many hours of New North's time. Mission accomplished. ■

help the sector better understand where it might be falling down. There's really no one else positioned, or inclined, to do that; government certainly could, but we know they won't.

In the meantime, the results of the investigations published in the Ombudsman's annual report, and available on their website, shows some of the kinds of practices that the ombudsman has deemed as unfair. Unfair practices investigated included a couple of cases where councils didn't follow conflict of interest procedures in handing out contracts to family members of municipal officials and the appointment of family members to a fire suppression crew, and another where council banned a ratepayer from speaking at council meetings without giving them the benefit of a heads-up.

The ombudsman's investigations and reports are instructional; the ombudsman has no power to compel municipalities to take any particular course of action. In fact, it is not unusual for municipalities to reject the findings of an investigation. In most cases, though, it looks like municipalities accept the recommendations of the ombudsman, and promise to be better. That's really all anyone can hope.

The Minister of Government Relations, as part of the changes in 2015, can act on an ombudsman's findings, although, as far as we know, the minister has yet to exercise that power. ■

*In Part 2 of her investigation into the issues relating to the supports and services for FASD, Chelsea Laskowski this month examines ...*

# FASD Diagnosis and Stigma in Northern Saskatchewan

**By Chelsea Laskowski** | If you had a health condition that seriously affected your life, you'd want a diagnosis, right?

That's the thought that passed through my mind repeatedly when I first started researching this series on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in northern Saskatchewan. Media reports on serious court cases indicate that lots of people don't get diagnosed until far later in life, when they've had run-ins with the law, and I wondered what was behind that.

As time went on, the reasons why people in the north might not be able to get an FASD diagnosis, or even want one, started piling up.

Several reasons came up when I spoke to Dr. Gerald Block. He's the only one who gets dedicated funding from the province's Ministry of Health to do FASD psychological assessments for adults in northern Saskatchewan, a practice that started several years ago.

The assessment can be unappealing because it is not a quick in-and-out 15-minute appointment, "it's very personal," said Dr. Gerald Block.

"If that support person doesn't bring these individuals to my office, they don't get to my office... It's a full-day assessment for adults, and adults that are struggling generally aren't interested in a whole-day assessment focusing on strengths and weaknesses with me."

Explaining to an adult with FASD what the diagnosis means, and why it would benefit them is "not always easy," said Dana Lapworth, the executive director of Children North in La Ronge, which administers a number of programs related to FASD.

Child assessments are done in Prince Albert and Saskatoon, which presents a challenge in and of itself, said Justin Galloway, the Saskatchewan Health Authority therapy team lead and interim team lead for mental health and addiction based out of La Ronge.

"Moving these individuals from their home communities down to Saskatoon or Prince Albert for a period of time, putting them up in a hotel, it sounds simple, but for people that are struggling with children with severe behavioural challenges, it's not that simple," he said.

To even get to that assessment, there need to be people willing to support the individual before, during and afterwards.

"If I make suggestions, and they don't have support, what good have I done?" Block asked.

Galloway said there is a lack of respite support to ease the exhaustion of caregivers, which could be keeping them from seeking diagnosis.

"Advocacy work can be put into place by, whether it's health providers or some champion in the community, it's whether or not there's enough mental strength or physical strength I guess from those caregivers to actually carry through with it," Galloway said.

The Health Ministry funding covers only 12 assessments per year, which at times is limiting, Block said, but right now the waitlist is only four months, "which is phenomenal."

So how does someone get in to see Block in the first place? People come to him through referrals. One of the biggest helps he's had is community support workers — like social workers or probation officers — who recognize the symptoms of cognitive disability in their clients, and get the ball rolling. In La Ronge, one of those people was Joan Johnson, he said, who had built an alliance with her clients.

"I rely on people like Joan who have a relationship" in their communities and have built trust with the individual, Block said, partly to identify those supports, but also because there is a requirement under the Canadian diagnostic guidelines for FASD that there is confirmation of a biological mother having consumed alcohol during pregnancy.

"Generally, in a northern community, I'm not going to be the one getting the history. I mean for me to go into a northern community and to ask a mother if she drank while she was pregnant, I don't know the community, that can go bad real fast," Block said.

Community support workers often have preliminary information from mothers, aunts or a family member who knew the mother while she was pregnant with the person now undergoing the assessment.

## Anatomy of an FASD diagnosis

Confirmation of pre-natal alcohol exposure is foundational to an FASD diagnosis. There are two ways to do that:

- 1.) Reliable clinical observation, self-reported consumption, reports from reliable sources, or medical or legal records related to drinking during pregnancy.
- 2.) A medical physician finds three specific facial features associated with pre-natal alcohol exposure (small eyes, thin upper lip, smooth ridges between the upper lip and nose). The doctor must be confident that the person being assessed wasn't prenatally exposed to anything else that might cause those facial features. In this case, a confirmation can be reached without information from the biological mother or others. If an adult with suspected FASD can't get social history and really wants a diagnosis, Block will connect that person with a doctor who accepts these referrals. But there's only one who does this right now that he knows of.

That first method can be difficult.

"The mother, the family needs to be ready to be asked and discuss that pre-natal history. Because if the mother is very much involved and you ask questions that for some understandable psychological reasons highly distress the mother, you have to weigh the pros and cons. Is that going to help the child or the adult?" Block said.

Once confirmation is complete, there is a psychological assessment. There needs to be evidence of a brain dysfunction in the level of "severe impairment" in three of nine neurodevelopmental domains such as language, motor skills, social communication, impulse control and hyperactivity, and academic achievement.

These criteria are meant to give confidence that prenatal alcohol exposure is the cause, and not another brain-based deficit.

Block is involved in the psychological assessments and most confirmations, and then a doctor makes the final diagnosis. Block said he's never had one rejected.

### Without community will, no assessment

With reference to FASD assessments, Block has a mantra: "Above all else, do no harm for communities and families."

Past versions of the FASD diagnostic guidelines laid out, foundationally, that the individual, family and community are interested in the assessment.

"So in the north, if the family views a diagnosis of leading to being stigmatized, marginalized, then they shouldn't do it. If the community is not ready to view people with an FASD diagnosis, as having brain-based functioning deficits that are deserving of extra support, then it's risky," he said.

Who is seeking them? Block said often individuals he sees do not live with their biological family, and have a support worker motivating them to understand how a diagnosis will benefit them. This could help for probation arrangements or individual accommodations during court proceedings for someone with FASD, whether they're a victim or an accused.

Lapworth said she does not think the diagnosis of FASD is helpful because it comes with stigma. She would rather term it something like an acquired brain injury.

"If I had to sign a piece of paper saying I drank all the way through my pregnancy or some of my pregnancy or whatever, I'm probably less likely to admit that because of the stigma that comes along with it," she said.

"In my personal opinion, what's the difference between having FASD and developmental delay besides the stigma? You're still going to work the same with that person, you're still going to provide the same supports but there's no stigma...I think in the long run we would help way more people if we diagnosed with something more strength-based."

Children and youth can be diagnosed through the Parkland Child and Youth Developmental Clinic in Prince Albert or the Alvin Buckwold Child Development Program in Saskatoon, which offers full-family supports.

A big development of late has been through Jordan's Principle funding, which the Government of Canada says "responds to unmet needs of First Nations children no matter where they live in Canada." As of April, Children's North have funding to have a psychologist and pediatrician come up four times per year with a primary focus on FASD diagnosis. The will go up to Wollaston Lake, Pelican Narrows Deschambault, Pinehouse and areas in between, Lapworth said.

### The argument for diagnosis

Vanessa Hrvatin is a journalist who spent a year interviewing people across Canada who either have FASD or support a family member

who has FASD. Her series on the topic was published in late April in *The National Post* and *The StarPhoenix*.

Most people she spoke to were better off for having gotten a diagnosis which they mostly got later in life after a period of not having had the types of supports Block said are necessary for a diagnosis to "do no harm."

"I met people who got diagnosed when they were in their 40s, and were like 'I would have given anything to be diagnosed as a kid because it would have explained so much of what was going on with me.' They had no idea, so they just thought they were bad or stupid or had all these problems and it was never really addressed," she said over the phone.

Some people she spoke to did have a really hard time coming to terms with their diagnosis though, and some adoptive parents took up to a whole decade to get confirmation from family.

Hrvatin did meet many people who were pretty sure they had FASD but had never had the support to go through diagnosis.

"I think the ones who weren't diagnosed, maybe didn't completely realize what a diagnosis could do for them," she said.

Hrvatin said concrete changes like housing supports, better understanding of themselves and other supports were "life-changing" results of diagnosis for some people she spoke to.

"My personal thoughts are getting a diagnosis, if nothing else, it at least gives you some clarity or some

understanding," she said.

Galloway said he knows that there are supports, extra fundings dollars for those diagnosed with FASD.

"Diagnosis is good if there's a purpose that it's serving," he said, in relation to the environment the individual is in, for example, trying to set children or youth up for success in the education system.

"When you look at a continuum, is it easier to get services when younger or when they are older?" he asked.

He noted the justice system is one spot where that point is valid.

"It's one of those it's more reactionary versus more of that upstream, preventative, trying to be more proactive up front and figuring out ways for people to learn and thrive in society versus being reactive to a crisis that's happened in life now and we're trying to play catchup versus trying to build up a plan for success," Galloway said.

It's interesting that despite there being national diagnostic guidelines for FASD, the regions in which they're being administered vary so much. The supports available play a huge factor, as does the community's attitude towards FASD and the ability and willingness of a family to open up about prenatal alcohol use. In the end, it's up to communities and individuals to decide if diagnosis is the right path for them. ■

# Municipal Governments and Good Performance

By Laurent Mougeot\* According to the results of a survey recently released by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities 42% of Canadians rated the performance of their federal government as poor or very poor. In comparison, when asked the same question about their local governments, only 19% of Canadians felt their municipality performed poorly. These results indicate that municipal governments pay attention to the needs and expectations of their residents and local business operators.

Municipal governments are best positioned to influence the quality of life for Canadians. Mayors and councillors are very much in touch with their constituents. Local council members have more one-to-one contact with regular folks than federal or provincial officials. These connections and relationships create an environment that fosters engagement and accountability.

If the water system breaks down or a street requires major repair work for example, council members will usually hear promptly from affected residents, people expect that elected officials will follow-up immediately by contacting municipal managers to confirm that available resources are deployed to fix those problems.

Every morning, by the time they are off to work or to school, residents of your communities will likely have already used 4 or 5 municipal services without even thinking about how it all happens. For them, drinking water flows from the taps, sewage goes down the drain, garbage goes into the bins, and recycling gets recycled. These services are taken for granted by everyone. The true value and complexity of the water plant is never really appreciated until there is a shut down. A two-hour shut down of the water plant can quickly become a major crisis. You will all hear about it and are expected to get it fixed quickly.

In the world of providing municipal services, the standards are high and the expectations are constant. In addressing these problems, there is really no room for error or complacency. There is no way to recall sub-standard water which has left the water plant, so constant quality assurance and bio-chemistry monitoring are critical. Should the system fail or break down,

hundreds of people could get very sick, quickly overwhelming the capacity of accessible health services.

The finding that the great majority of Canadians recognizes their local governments as delivering good performance should not come as a surprise to anyone. As elected officials, you have oversight over complex and essential services upon which all your residents depend on a continuous basis. Your role is to ensure that proper resources are allocated and respond to the expectations of your community. Setting priorities, identifying funding strategies, planning for the replacement and expansion of services (not necessarily in that order!) are key functions of your responsibilities.

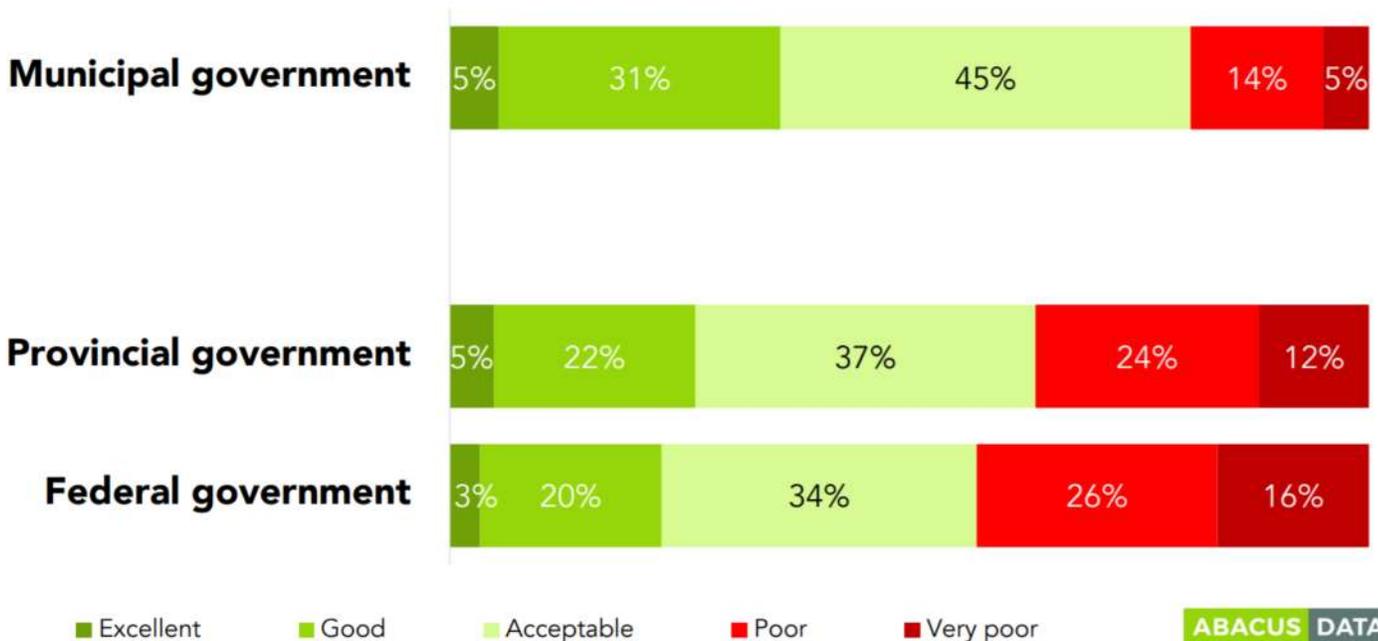
Being a local elected official is a complex job, and as stated during the April governance workshop in Prince Albert your best ally sits with you in your council chamber: your town administrator!

While town administrators may not always have all the answers, they have specialized training to assist you and hold a certificate from an accredited institution to confirm this training. They have chosen to make municipal services a very important part of their lives. They are part of a great network of administrators who promote mutual support and value knowledge sharing. They know the options for fixing problems and will help you sort out the best course of action.

I have been invited by SANC (New North) to provide a regular column in your newsletter to share experience and advice on how to manage the interactions between the three components of your local governance: your community, your town council and your administrative team. You are invited to offer your suggestions for future topics to Matt Heley by emailing him at [matt.newnorth@sasktel.net](mailto:matt.newnorth@sasktel.net). In the meantime, good governance!

*\*Laurent Mougeot is the former CEO of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association and is currently a governance advisor with [www.meliusgov.com](http://www.meliusgov.com)*

## RATING OVERALL PERFORMANCE



How would you rate the overall performance of...

## From the CEO MATT HELEY

This month CBC reported on the research project of a U of R grad student which concluded that government made a “fundamental mistake” treating the Saskatchewan

Transportation Company (STC) like a business,

instead of a service, when it shuttered its operations back in 2017. The research suggests that the private sector has not stepped up to fill the gap as expected, or hoped, which, of course, is a story we are very familiar with.

While we can only agree with the report’s findings, it also seems to us to miss the point a little. The fundamental problem with framing the STC closure as a decision based around a “business vs service” type logic is that it ultimately sidesteps any real discussion about the dynamic and productive role of government in the economy and the marketplace in its *role as a service provider*. To carry on the discussion about STC, or any other Crown corporation, in the absence of this broader context, in our mind, is to concede the ground that should itself be the object of debate.

Let’s take the situation we have now. For those who think government shouldn’t be in business, the closure of STC was a no-brainer. The fact that no private entity has been able to make money doing what STC did is proof of the soundness of the government’s decision. To those who say STC was never a business, but rather a service, and services are not supposed to make money, government can simply respond that it was not a service government ought to have been involved in. Not all market failures require a government response.

The counter-factual takes a more nuanced approach, and is based partly on what we have learned since the STC closure. For example, the CBC report notes that shipping rates for one particular customer have doubled since STC closed, threatening the viability of his business. It seems that STC was able to keep a check on courier rates, a check that is no longer there. STC, apparently, played a key role in ensuring a competitive freight and courier market, one which, given the variables at play, is perhaps prone to monopolization or uncompetitive consolidation.

STC, in other words, had a role that many see Sasktel as playing in Saskatchewan. Sasktel’s very presence in the market ensures that we have both a reasonably competitive telecommunication service in terms of

cost, while also putting a floor under existing service levels that would, in a completely open market, be easy pickings for a monopoly player: a completely privatized telecommunications market would almost certainly lead to a significant deterioration in service levels in rural areas. In other words: the exact same situation bus transportation has found itself in this province. And, yes, Sasktel is profitable, but no where near as profitable as it would be as a private entity in the same market.

Let’s take another Crown “service”–housing. It is an open secret that government would like to either make SaskHousing profitable, or at least break-even (ultimately, government would probably like to get out of the housing business altogether). What role does SaskHousing play in rental markets in its role of providing adequate housing to those who can’t afford it–besides the actual provision of housing? SaskHousing, in setting the standards and price of adequate and affordable housing, does the same for the whole housing market–at least in those places where there is a market. Right now it is done by looking at a family’s income, and deciding that one third of their income is about the right amount for rent (it’s actually a CMHC ratio). When government steps into the market like that, especially in a big way like SaskHousing does, it’s impossible for other players not to respond, setting comparable prices and standards. That’s how governments can influence markets for the well-being of everyone.

Sometimes–more often than we think–the markets operate best when government has a significant role in them. STC’s presence clearly addressed a market failure–evidence of which we are seeing now as private operators fail to fill the passenger void. The closing of STC led to the shuttering or shrinkage of other businesses that depended on its existence–Greyhound, for instance–to move people and goods around the country. An efficient transport system is vital to any economy. Its development and maintenance in Canada has been, and continues to be, heavily dependent on government intervention, given the vastness of the territory that needs to be covered. This rule was forgotten when it came to STC.

The axing of STC was a decision that virtually no one thought or expected would happen, not even the right-wing think tanks. There’s a reason for that, and I think it is important we learn from what has happened there. ■

## About New North ...

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

### New North Executive

Mayor Bruce Fidler (Chair)  
Mayor Robert St.Pierre (Deputy Chair)  
Mayor Gord Stomp (Treasurer)  
Mayor Mike Natomagan  
Councillor Keith Laprise

### New North Staff

**Matt Heley**  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
Phone: 306 425 5505  
ceo.new.north@sasktel.net

**Shelley Isbister**  
*Executive Assistant*  
Phone: 306 425 5505  
new.north@sasktel.net

### New North SANC Services Inc

Phone: 306 425 5505  
Fax: 306 425 5506  
207 La Ronge Avenue  
La Ronge, Sk

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