

Upcoming

New North AGM
December, 2020

Saskatchewan Association of
Northern Communities

NEW
NORTH

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Monthly-ish Newsletter
September 2020

New North to Undertake Major Study of Economic Impact of COVID-19, Minor Study in Jazz Tap

New North is embarking this month on an assessment of the economic impact of the COVID pandemic on northern residents, businesses, and municipalities.

The six-month study is funded by Western Diversification and will not just consider the economic impact of COVID. The goal of the project is to create jobs by helping to identify areas where municipalities and their related businesses might look to create economic opportunities for themselves.

Globally, the economic impact of COVID has been profound, with many speculating that it has already cost about 500 million jobs around the world.

Statistics released by Statcan last month show a 4.6 percentage point drop in the number of people employed in the province between August 2019 and August 2020. Although the province is recovering at a faster rate than the others, employment levels are still far below those pre-COVID.

The absence of reliable statistics makes figuring out the impact in the north a difficult task. The New North study will be one of the first ever to not rely purely on conventional sources of data. Over the period, interviews with business owners, administrators and financial staff, government and others, will be combined with up-to-date financial statistics to complete a picture of both the impact of COVID, as well as a snapshot of the overall health of the northern economy. This snapshot will create a baseline against which future such studies might be compared, enabling us to get a better sense of any trends.

More importantly, the study hopes to be a wealth of material for those engaged in advocating for greater and more comprehensive levels of support for northern economic development, among whom we might count New North. The New North project will include the creation of materials related to economic development and a forum bringing leaders, businesses and government together to discuss job creation initiatives, likely in late March.

Preliminary Thoughts

Cameco's suspension of activity at Cigar Lake has had a ripple impact through the north. Employees continued to receive some portion of their income, but external contractors engaged in catering, janitorial and other services shut up shop and sent their workers home with nothing to go on with. A

number of businesses connected to northern municipalities are among those impacted, although this was a problem pre-COVID too. Tourism, particularly that related to the outfitting industry, has been severely impacted by the closing of the US border, although that, of course, has pleased everyone else.

Consumer spending—a big driver of economic activity—plummeted at the onset of the pandemic but has since recovered, with the exception of alcohol and cannabis sales, which haven't skipped a beat.

Impact of CERB

The federal government's CERB program has created a safety net of sorts, but how many people in the north were able to take advantage of it? The eligibility requirements meant that only those with work-related incomes of at least \$5000 in the last year, and who were laid off because of COVID, could get the payment. Northern Saskatchewan has high unemployment rates and extremely high non-participation rates—meaning that few people would have met the employment requirement. While northern under-employment means that the impact of COVID may not have been as significant as elsewhere, the north wouldn't have benefited from the stimulus-effect of CERB either.

Barriers to Continuous Employment

A completely expected barrier to those with access to employment emerged when reasonable childcare options started to dry up. Child-care responsibilities mean that women experience greater barriers to employment than men generally, but COVID, as with a lot of things, made something already bad so much worse, as traditional home-based carers and local co-operatives wound back operations during the worst of the outbreaks. To this day we are not sure how many childcare places have simply up and vanished. The latest speech from the throne has, in our view, correctly identified childcare as a key area in need of additional support.

With the possibility that school attendance may be periodically disrupted—forcing some carers to take time off to look after kids—the next year or so could be one where a continuity of employment, for businesses and employees, may be hard to achieve.

NewNorth News & Updates

Expanded New North “Pathfinder” Project Gets Underway

Thanks to some funding from the Red Cross, New North has expanded the scope of our “Pathfinder” project to have a greater impact on the youth of northern Saskatchewan.

New North’s “Pathfinder” project is a part of New North’s youth development strategy, and is an initiative aimed at creating an awareness of the services and supports available to northern youth, while supporting mental health promotion and engaging in activities to enhance cultural and community connectedness.

The Pathfinders will not only have a chance to impact youth in their own communities, but will be provided with leadership training and personal growth opportunities as well.

Pathfinders will utilize social media and other relevant forms of communication to reach their peers to create conversations about how to cope with the anxieties of the present day, encourage mental health “hygiene,” wellness and to help those in need of further assistance to find the supports they need (hence the name—pathfinders).

The Pathfinders will themselves be engaged in community-based activities, including land-based healing, and perhaps the odd game of DnD (my suggestion).

The project will create more than 2000 hours of employment this year, and will hopefully carry onto next year, and spread to more communities, as new funding becomes available.

New North AGM, Board Elections, Likely in December

The change of the municipal election date would have pushed back the date of the New North AGM from late November to early December anyway, but the pandemic, with the attendant restrictions, has made us extra cautious about setting an exact date, although we are still toying with December.

What *is* clear is that, given the restrictions on gatherings, the meeting will have no more than 30 people in attendance.

The New North AGM following municipal elections is when a new board is elected. The sectors are given authority in our bylaws to decide how they will run their own elections.

However, by time-hallowed tradition, the elections take place at the AGM, in one room—although the sectors still run them independently of New North administration.

The election of the member at large takes place with all eligible members present.

The plan is to go ahead with a December AGM—exact date to be decided—but ask communities to send only one delegate each. That delegate will be empowered to vote on resolutions and in board elections, and to stand for election if they desire.

We will also present our financials for 2019-20 (see below).

The meeting will not likely have any agenda item other than those relating to the AGM.

Newly Elected Workshops in March, Probably

New North typically hosts workshops for newly elected municipal officials along side the Gathering. Given the circumstances, it might be advisable to push the workshop back to later in the first quarter of 2021.

New North 2019-20 Financial Statements, Annual Report on Website

The COVID pandemic has created the type of paradigm shift that makes the pre-COVID world seem almost quaint and paradisaical by comparison. In those days, people shook hands as a greeting, put pants on to go to work, rode in elevators and attended Riders’ games. Coughing in a supermarket wasn’t viewed as a highly seditious act.

New North financials are a record of that time and about as interesting, and relevant, as an STC bus timetable from 1982. Still, for those who want to know where the cash is stashed and

the bodies buried, there’s no better place to start than the approved 2019-20s, which we have up on our website. Bonus points to anyone who can follow any of it.

We’ve never put a lot of store into financial statements. No where in them will you find out how many staplers we have, for example—a weird source of pride for us.

It’s seven, by the way.

We have also posted our Annual Report.

From the New North Chair

By Bruce Fidler

This is not the way any of us thought we'd be ending this current four-year term, waiting out a pandemic. If the end ever comes, which we all hope it does. The pandemic, I'm talking about.

Being in charge is difficult and I don't think anyone really relishes the responsibility at times like this. It is my view, after many hours of conference calls with our different elected officials and government ministers, and carefully watching events unfold and people's reaction to them, that the northern leaders have done extremely well.

Northern communities are very vulnerable to this virus. It thrives in places where people are crowded in homes and where the social determinants of health are adverse. High rates of health issues related to the lungs and diseases like diabetes elevate the risks of people developing serious complications.

Yet, to this point, the impact has not been as extensive as anyone might have thought, given the risk factors. Preparedness has helped. Leadership has helped. Residents doing the right thing has helped too. In my view, the fact that many northern residents jumped on the mask wagon even while Canada's own health experts were downplaying their usefulness could have been a positive factor. I wonder if, while the social determinants of health may be against northern people, something else in the northern character was working for them. Call it a

heightened awareness of risk, perhaps, or some kind of resiliency gene. I don't know what it is, but, right now, I'm confident we can see this through, come what may.

Ric Richardson

I want to take a moment to remember our good friend and the former Mayor of Green Lake, Ric Richardson.

Ric was a gentle, kind and passionate person. He was not just an excellent mayor of his community, but an all-round great northern leader. He had a vision for the north that burned like a fire.

At New North Gatherings, few will forget the impression he made when addressing the group or a minister. He was probably one of the best speakers we have ever heard. He spoke about resource revenue sharing, the importance of developing renewable energies to solve economic, social and environmental issues, and his love for his community, the historic Northern Village of Green Lake, which he did so much to promote.

New North remembers Ric Richardson so fondly we will be naming a scholarship in his name. The scholarship will try to encourage something he himself pursued to the end: higher educational attainment.

Vale, Ric. You will not be forgotten.

Northern Communities Spend \$500,000 on COVID Checkpoints

The first arrival of COVID in the province in March saw a number of northern leaders immediately jump into action, throwing up checkpoints on the access roads into their communities to monitor arrivals and ask awkward questions about their general health, well-being, and plans for the future.

There's no question in our mind that the quick action by the leaders prevented the spread of the virus through the north.

However, communities were at that time pretty much on their own. Lobbying by leaders saw the provincial government, via the NMTA, providing New North with \$350,000 to distribute for checkpoints, on a 50/50 cost-share basis. Despite the challenge to come up with their

share of the funding, many municipalities have taken advantage of the money.

To date, \$230,000 has been paid out in checkpoint grants to more than a dozen northern municipalities, mostly on the west side.

This means that, altogether, municipalities are approaching \$500,000 in checkpoint spending since May.

New North will open round three of funding shortly, but we are advising municipalities to hold back on applying until they really need it.

With winter approaching, and assuming nothing else changes, we are expecting further outbreaks in the north, perhaps worse than before.

New North Launching Regional Admin Pilot Project

It's been delayed by a year, but the New North Regional Administration Pilot project is now back on track and scheduled to begin later this year or early next year.

The pilot project will see two experienced administrators running around assisting communities within a particular regional cluster with their day-to-day municipal administration operations, with an emphasis on training and education.

There will be an annual cost to participating communities—\$1600 for villages, \$800 for hamlets—but for that they will get to have access to the regional administrator more or less whenever they need them, either in person or over the phone. Setting up effective remote working relationships will be a key role of the regional administrators in the first year.

LGA “BootCamp” Slated for 2021

New North was dead against the requirement that every community needed to have a certified administrator, but we have to deal with the fact that it's happening, and to think about ways we can support our members.

The Local Government Administration certificate offered through the U of R is the educational qualification administrators in Saskatchewan typically obtain to fulfil that part of certification, but the course can be challenging. Doing it entirely online is a challenge all its own.

Could Your Sewage be an Early Warning System to Detect Outbreaks?

As the host of the annual waterworks workshops, New North has more than an abiding interest in sewage, wastewater, camo gear, so the possibility of testing wastewater to detect COVID viral loads in a community seems like a particularly fascinating use for it.

The idea is of interest to Saskwater, too, who, according to sources, are monitoring the developments in wastewater testing in other jurisdictions.

“Wastewater surveillance”—as it is often called—is not a new thing. Jurisdictions will sometimes use such techniques to monitor and detect the presence and extent of drug use in a community and to get an overall picture of a community's health. It should provide a particularly good understanding of a community's overall consumption of dietary fibre.

There are some caveats, though. Wastewater testing, according to Saskwater, does not differentiate between

The rest of the cost is borne by New North, with additional funding coming from the Targeted Sector Support Initiative.

Because this is a pilot project, we expect this idea will evolve a bit overtime.

In light of the new requirement coming in 2021 that every municipality will need to employ a certified administrator, one thing we are keen to explore is whether communities would like to nominate the regional administrator as their community's certified administrator, who would provide mentorship, training and support to a community's acting administrator as they work toward their certification.

New North will contact communities individually over the next few months to provide more information about this pilot project, and to tell you where to send the checks.

To help out, New North is intending to offer an intensive week of LGA preparation, which we are calling a “bootcamp,” for no other reason than that's the first thing that came into our addled brains.

Because we blew all our cash on the Regional Admin program, this will likely be at cost to participants. New North will soon be polling budding administrators to gauge the level of interest in this concept, so look out for that.

live viral matter and dead viral matter (yet—work is progressing on this), so it may be difficult at this point to draw good conclusions on whether an outbreak exists or the extent of it—any more than the current level of regular testing, anyway.

The usefulness of it might come later, when people are no longer getting tested because we've all just assumed it's gone away.

A regular testing regime—say, once a week—could be put in place and become a normal part of a water operator's routine. A viral load above a certain level (say, zero) would alert the public health authorities to the presence of the virus. A local emergency declared, and a mass testing regime implemented, followed, perhaps by a frank and open discussion about the benefits of a balanced diet, high in fibre, and maybe fewer Doritos.

Turn-Out in Northern Municipal Elections Key Concern

The Chief Electoral Officer Michale Boda warned that having the municipal and provincial elections so close together might lead to “voter fatigue,” but no one could have predicted that the biggest factor affecting interest in the elections is likely to be a microscopic nucleoprotein wrapped in a viral envelop and stamped all over with spike proteins which look a bit like crowns and that give the thing its name, Glenda.

This year is likely to see a record number of people voting by mail or taking advantage of advance voting, but there’s other things in play as well, not all COVID-related.

Athabasca MLA Buckley Belanger once famously said he only won elections because his family was bigger than the other guy’s (he was a mayor before he was an MLA), and he was only half-joking, we suspect. Even so, the slates of most northern municipal elections will feature candidates mostly well-known to voters, either because of incumbency or because they’ve bought fish from them at some point (or both), so perhaps concerns about door-to-door canvassing in larger communities won’t loom as much in the smaller northern places.

Door to door canvassing is allowable under present guidelines, but those whose electoral strategy relies on darkening people’s doorframes and bailing you up at the frozen section in the supermarket may still be at a disadvantage to those more at home with social media, posting heartfelt testimonies scribed at 2am, circulating memes, retweeting and doing whatever else people do on those platforms—not being a user myself.

There are reports that this election (and the provincial one) is already the most social-media saturated one ever. Perhaps what we are seeing is not even an anomaly but rather a natural progression, where the public persona of an aspiring elected official is created less in the crucible of the town hall where oratory and interpersonal skills, and a capacity to convey warmth and be relatable, is less important than whatever the skills are you need to succeed in an online social media space—again, not a user here.

Either way, we’re going to say “checkmate millennials.” Perhaps the social media revolution is exactly what is needed to bring younger people into the municipal sphere, which can only be a good thing. We’ll see what the slate looks like.

Referendum on Pandemic Leadership

To anyone who says that municipal leadership doesn’t matter we present, as Exhibit A, the response to the pandemic, and Exhibit B, this lead pipe.

Leadership has never been more important. Leadership styles have rarely been put under more scrutiny. The ability to muster resources and build coalitions among competing factions is a mark of strong and capable leader. You don’t always need to be out front; many northern municipal leaders have mastered the art of leading from behind.

It will be interesting to us to see how local voters view incumbents, particularly the mayors, who are often asked to be the public face of council decisions. Many northern leaders took the extraordinary step of blocking-off their communities, even before the province stepped in. Public safety was the chief concern, but there is a sense it was a widely supported move.

Voter Turnout, Candidate Numbers

Municipal government is often characterized in terms of “representational deficit” but generally, in the north, voter turnout is relatively high, and most people care about and take notice of what their local government is doing.

Generally, northern municipalities have more candidates per capita than anywhere else in the province. It is not unusual to see 30 or more people running for council in some west-side villages. The slate for mayor is much lower—usually two or three.

And lots of people vote. But will this be the case this time around?

This the first municipal election where candidates are required to lodge a public disclosure statement along with their nomination form. We will never know if this new measure will change the number or composition of those entering the race. Incumbents will certainly be advantaged here—having been required to lodge statements annually since 2016.

It’s possible this requirement will lower the number of candidates, especially first-timers.

As for voter turn-out, everything depends on what happens between now and then; the communities going in early October may provide a barometer for the rest of the province.

But pandemic-related turn-out need not be an issue if municipal offices are doing everything right in ensuring social distancing measures are followed, and are communicating that fact to residents.

Election-fatigue-related voter turnout is a different matter. It’s possible a combination of factors will act to suppress voting, which may serve to benefit incumbents.

Provincial Electorama

Provincials Feature Most Candidates Ever to Have “Turned Their Lives Around,” in Redemption Election 2020

Although polls are suggesting it'll be the most one-sided contest since the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, the October 26 provincial election—co-incidentally, a day after the anniversary of Agincourt—still has quite a lot of interest in it for politicians and insiders and those of us who appreciate a good drubbing.

The Saskatchewan Party leads the NDP in most ridings, and across most local government areas, including the cities. It is unlikely they'll sweep the field as completely as did the English against the French all those centuries ago (after all, where are their Welsh archers, looksee), but they'll go close, with the NDP lucky to hang on to the current contingent of ... 13?

Nothing says you're on the Road to Damascus quite like running for public office. A truly arresting feature of this year's election is the number of candidates declaring a criminal conviction, at 12. At 6-apiece, this is the one place where the two major parties are actually on level terms. Virtually all convictions are way in the past, and mostly relate to DUIs and the occasional bodily harm, so nothing the law thinks of as a “moral crime,” and no crimes of passion, either, alas. What we have is an election where the phrases “young and foolish” sit alongside “fiscal responsibility” and “low taxes” in a candidate's press release. Interestingly, research suggests that the rates of conviction for DUIs among the candidates more or less compares with those of the general populace, which perhaps make this one of the most representative cohorts ever assembled, at least on that metric.

This truly is a redemption election, but the question is why? Last time around there were just five candidates. The answer could very well be the premier himself, who has not one but two well-known run-ins with the law. The fact that the premier has not only lived his prior convictions down, but made them a part of his redemption story, has created a path for others to do the same. It's actually quite a nice thing. No one wants to be imprisoned by their past, and besides, vanquishing a demon shows a kind moral of character in itself. This is a story a lot of people can get behind, although we suspect there's a limit, and perhaps even an undisclosed element of hypocrisy. While the people of Saskatchewan seem OK with alcohol-related convictions, would they feel the same way about, say, heroine, or even cannabis? We'll see.

The North

It took a while for the SaskParty to plant a candidate in the Cumberland riding, waiting more or less until the last minute to field Darren Deschambeault, who was born and raised in Cumberland House. The SaskParty's troubles in the north mirror those of the NDP in the rural south, but with the difference that the SaskParty is actually the ruling party, and the NDP isn't, at least not outside their imagination.

Watching SaskParty candidates trying to win in the north is fascinating. They are put in the invidious position of more or less saying that the north is ignored by the very party that they themselves are running for, which takes a special kind of cognitive dissonance to utter with any conviction. The fact that the SaskParty candidates don't run on the basis that the SaskParty has been very good for the north, so why not reward with them a seat—which is the traditional way for candidates for an incumbent party to go—is pretty damning. Whether they realize it or not, the SaskParty candidates are asking northerners to use their votes to endorse a kind cynical politicking where friends get rewarded and everyone else gets left out, which most northerners simply won't go for.

If the SaskParty wants to win in the north they need to put something up first, and many will say that leg work hasn't been done. By this we're not so much talking about how much has been spent on that project or this hospital, or where funding has specifically gone; it's more in the sense that the SaskParty hasn't done enough to make northerners feel like they are a part of the rest of the province. The mess the government made of northern travel restrictions wouldn't have helped.

With that said, voter turnout could be a critical element here. There is a chance that a low voter turnout (because of the pandemic) will help the SaskParty, as conservative voters turnout in proportionately larger numbers, and also use postal and advanced voting more. NDP candidates Doyle Vermette and Buckley Belanger will still need to run effective campaigns to energize their voters.

The Verdict

Governments rarely change hands in the middle of a crisis and this coming election will not diverge from that pattern. The interest will be whether the NDP manages to hang on to the gains they have made in recent byelections, and just as importantly, whether they can hang on to their leader. A good showing might set them up for future success, but an achievable outcome is moving the political compass closer to the centre, where we might see a bit of life pumped into some of the issues the NDP has been traditionally stronger on—social and economic equality, social justice and indigenous issues, and so on.

The NDP probably won't win electorally but they can still make progress in key areas by putting up winning policy alternatives, perhaps forcing some policy shifts by the government. The people of Saskatchewan want a strong opposition not just to keep the party in power on the straight and narrow, but to create the foundations of a vibrant climate of debate and innovation in the public sphere. That is the role of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and it is an important one.

Revenue Sharing

Upcoming Municipal Revenue Sharing Grant Declaration of Eligibility

BY The Ministry of Government Relations

Below is an excerpt that appeared in the Municipal Administrator's Corner of the September issue of Municipalities Today which was sent to municipalities.

A unique link and password for the online Municipal Revenue Sharing Declaration of Eligibility will be emailed to each municipality on **November 13, 2020**.

- o Administrators: if you do not receive the email, please check your SPAM/JUNK folder. If the email is not in your SPAM/JUNK folder, please email grcompliance@gov.sk.ca requesting the email to be re-sent.
- o Reminder that submission of the Declaration of Eligibility, which includes a resolution from council, and meeting the Eligibility Requirements is required to avoid the municipality's Municipal Revenue Sharing grant for the 2021-22 year from being withheld. The deadline for submission of the Declaration of Eligibility will be January 31, 2021. **You will want to ensure that the Declaration of Eligibility is included on the November, December or January council meeting agenda.**

The Eligibility Requirements are the following legislated responsibilities:

- Submission of Annual Audited Financial Statement;
- Submission of Waterworks Reporting, if applicable;
- In good standing with Education Property Tax;
- Council Procedure Bylaw has been adopted by council;
- Employee Code of Conduct has been adopted by council; and
- Public Disclosure Statements have been filed and annually updated by council members.

Feds Expand Uses of Canada Infrastructure Plan to Include COVID Resilience

Among the capital expenditure choices municipalities may have been thinking about a year or so ago it's unlikely they'd have been tossing up between a splash park and a morgue, or between a biking trail and a field hospital, and yet here we are, or at least, that's where the federal government thinks we are, as they contemplate a future in which municipal governments apply for funds for self-isolation units and mobile ICU facilities as part of a COVID resilience plan.

Those are actually eligible expenditures in the new tranche of funding carved out of the federal Investing in Canada plan going by the name of the COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream, applications for which are now open.

The Feds will commit 40%, and the province 33%, to total project costs as long as municipalities can come up with the rest.

Municipalities can also apply for funds for more mundane things like flood and fire mitigation, but it's the COVID

resilience category where things really liven up. Here, eligible expenditures include "designated hospital overflow sites, emergency vehicles, security support vehicles, barriers, passenger safety improvements, driver safety improvements (barriers etc.), video screens and PA systems for announcements, automatic vehicle location technology, security enhancements, food security infrastructure," and we'd go so far as to add, floodlights, circling helicopters, military personnel, barely restrained dogs, a rogue virologist and other related items featured in the Dustin Hoffman film *Outbreak*.

The federal funding to support community preparedness couldn't have come at a better time, with many experts predicting the northern winter could see a renewed spate of outbreaks.

To apply, go to our website, www.newnorthsask.org, where we have links.

Municipalities Splash on Infrastructure with MEEP Money

The provincial government's Municipal Economic Enhancement Program (MEEP) hasn't been wasted on the northern municipalities, with most taking advantage of their portion of the \$60 million or so made available as an economic stimulus through June and August for Saskatchewan municipalities. Northern communities spent

money on new graders, signage, flood mitigation, gravel and gravel trucks, lego trainsets and a quonset to put it all in. Municipalities also received additional operating funding through the federal safe start program, which was also distributed to eligible communities on a per capita basis. We don't know what they did with that.

From the CEO
MATT HELEY

One of things about the pandemic is not knowing whether the worst is in front of us or behind us. The same can be said about the Star Wars movies.

Another thing about it is the way it continues to upset received wisdom and re-write the rules about how governments, societies and people behave. Who could have predicted that the first things people would panic-buy is not non-perishable food items but toilet paper.

Another example: it's incredible to think that, back in January, the World Health Organization's pandemic response play-book advised against closing international borders. Ironically, jurisdictions that ignored the WHO have fared better than those that followed them, at least in this regard, which severely eroded trust in the WHO. To this day there are those who will walk out of a room whenever Baba O'riely comes on.

So many new categories of the unthinkable have become thinkable its virtually impossible to list them. For example, a few years ago no one was giving serious thought to a basic guaranteed income. It seems almost inevitable now.

The pandemic has created a world where nothing can be ruled out. Uncertainty is the new certainty. Living in a constant state of anxiety is the new normal. It's interesting to see how this kind of thinking invades risk management strategies in areas completely unrelated to the pandemic. No one can ever say again, "Oh, that will never happen!" Because we now know that everything is possible, no matter how improbable.

What we are experiencing right now is called a "paradigm shift." A paradigm shift is a change in the basic principles by which we understand or view the world, or some major disruption that changes the way societies work. The last great paradigm shift came with the invention of the Internet. Before that, digital watches. The paradigm shift that came with the Internet, and Casios, is sometimes referred to as the "digital disruption."

What would this pandemic look like without the Internet? Even a few years' ago working or studying entirely from home would have been an impossible challenge for many. The "digital disruption," ironically, has made the pandemic disruption almost tolerable—at least, more tolerable. Would social restrictions have been as effective had there not been on-demand sit-coms to keep a potentially unruly populace inside?

But the Internet as panacea only goes so far. This is because the Internet only goes so far. The federal government's minimum speed standard for broadband Internet is laughably low, at 5mp/s. In most northern communities it is significantly lower than that.

The pandemic has decisively shown that digital corridors can keep an economy mostly afloat, and perhaps even improve productivity. The pandemic has done nothing if not accelerate the role of digital technologies in our lives. It has also revealed a great divide—one that has existed for years—between the digital-haves and the digital have-nots. Perhaps one good thing to come out this will be adequate digital infrastructure in even the most remote place. It's not unthinkable.

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

Sunshyne Charles
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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