



Who's Wearing What at the Northern Justice Symposium

Find out inside

Upcoming

Northern Justice Symposium
March 3-5

Northern Administrators
Association Conference
April 23 & 24

New North Waterworks Workshop
April 29 & 30

Saskatchewan Association of
Northern Communities

NEW NORTH

This month ..

- Executive Meets with Ministers
- NJS preview
- The implications of the Cole Bay decision
- Province releases a garbage strategy

Newsletter

January-February 2020

Big Issues. Big Stage.

The Northern Justice Symposium March 3-5, 2020 Saskatoon Inn

What started out, almost 20 years ago, as a kind of companion piece to efforts to smooth relations between the communities, government and the RCMP, through the creation of Community Police Boards and the Framework Agreement for Community Policing, has taken on a life of its own. The point of it is whatever you want it to be—you get out what you put in—but the Northern Justice Symposium remains one of the few, if only, events of its kind to bring communities from across the province, from across jurisdictions, under one roof to discuss common problems, with a focused and contemporary agenda where the key point of contention is the massive and disproportionate impact of the criminal justice system on northern and indigenous people in this province. In an environment where issues of crime and punishment are increasingly polarizing, where the solutions getting thrown into the political arena seem increasingly designed to divide people rather than actually solve problems, we look to education and the transfer of experience and knowledge to redress the balance. Anyone who says there is an easy path is kidding themselves and trying to kid you. No one is going to say that the NJS has been able to shape the political discourse around crime. But it would be our hope that if there is any shaping to be done it would be done by the people in that room.

This year's event is the usual mixed bag of government, agency, community and RCMP presentations. Everyone wants to showcase their initiative, get support for their thing. We are as always happy to give them that stage, and it's the biggest one yet, at the Saskatoon Inn.

It kicks off with Treaty Commissioner Mary Culbertson speaking about reconciliation in Saskatchewan, and quickly gets into stride, and on point, with a session outlining a strategy to deal with the over-representation of indigenous people in the criminal justice system.

In amongst some community-focused presentations, including by Nick Daigneault from Beauval, we have a motivational session by Pinehouse's Regan Mispona Ratt, who also happens to be U of S student Union President.

A topic getting coverage for the first time at this event is human trafficking, and there are two presentations dedicated to a discussion of crystal meth.

Cadmus Delorme, Chief of Cowessases First Nation, was a hit at the last symposium, and is back to deliver closing remarks, now with two more years as Chief under his belt.

Linda Gaumont Northern Excellence Awards

A highlight of the event for many will be the Northern Excellence Awards—renamed the Linda Gaumont Northern Excellence Awards to honour the memory of a very much-loved and much-missed northern Saskatchewan matriarch.

The awards will once again recognize the contributions of northern people in the categories of Elder of the Year, Youth of the Year, RCMP Member of the Year, and Citizen of the Year.

Registrations are still open and can be found of the New North website at www.newnorthsask.org. See inside for the full agenda. ■

NewNorth News & Updates



Northern Administrators Association Conference

April 23-24, Prince Albert

Early planning is underway for the latest formal get together of the relatively newly-formed Northern Administrators Association, which will be over two days April 23 and 24 in Prince Albert.

The last Administrators Conference, which we probably covered in our last newsletter, was a resounding success. Administrators were given lots of time and space to pull up a chair and chinwag and mostly seemed to enjoy themselves except when the CEO of New North started saying things and then everyone went kind of quiet and looked at their phones.

Input is being sought for the next agenda. At our end, we think there might be opportunities for some interesting discussion about municipal revenue sharing eligibility requirements, the new amendments to *The Northern Municipalities Act* which will probably be in force by then,

New North Waterworks Workshop

April 29-30, Prince Albert

This April's waterworks workshops will be notable for their punchy no-nonsense titles that say exactly what they mean even if what they mean is completely incomprehensible to most of us.

The first CEU workshop (worth 0.3 CEUs) is called "Membranes" which seems to suggest what it's about but who can really be sure, which is followed the next day with two choices of 0.6 CEU sessions, one simply called "Pumps" and other called "Hydrochlorination," which come to think of it might be the name of an Ezra Pound poem, the one about hydrochlorination.

and perhaps some thoughts about requirements related to the publishing of Public Accounts.

With municipal elections coming in Fall, it might be an appropriate time to check in with everyone to make sure administrators are aware of the changes to *The Local Government Elections Act* where it now says only good looking people may run.

We're joking, of course; there were changes to the LGEA but we have no recollection of what they may have been. Hopefully someone at the conference will know.

Communication from the administrators of the Northern Administrators Association comes via a monthly email blast or e-blast or whatever they call those things, so look out for those. ■

As always, 1.0 CEU will be on offer, but attendees have to stay for the whole two days and participate in two sessions to obtain that magic number.

The cost is \$60 for Northern Municipal Operators and \$160 for everyone else.

Look for the registration form on our website fairly soon or call us to find out more.

Challenge Exams

One slightly downer note: we won't be offering challenge exams at this waterworks. However, we are looking into a June date for that. ■

From the New North Chair

BY BRUCE FIDLER, MAYOR OF CREIGHTON

Recently, I was very honoured to be recognized at the SUMA/Municipalities of Saskatchewan Convention with a lifetime membership. I was also a little embarrassed by it, because I can think of many others who deserve recognition before me. SUMA/Municipalities of Saskatchewan is a very fine organization—and I'm saying that not just because I'm now a life member! This honour will be treasured, I can guarantee that.

We have some awards coming up at the Northern Justice Symposium where far more deserving people than I will be getting recognition for their service to the north. The

Northern Excellence Awards are now called the Linda Gaumont Northern Excellence Awards, to honour the memory of a very special person, who passed away last year.

Linda was a tremendous champion of the north and a wonderfully strong presence in our lives. This coming Northern Justice Symposium is dedicated to her and we will be thinking about her as we sit down to listen and think about and discuss the issues that get raised at the symposium, and to which she dedicated so much of her time to over the years. We hope to see everyone at the symposium in a few weeks to join us in remembering Linda. ■

New North Executive Meets with Ministers of Environment & Government Relations

The New North Executive sat down with the Minister of Environment Dustin Duncan and Minister of Government Relations Lori Carr, early February, to raise concerns about forest management, lease fee increases for commercial and recreational sites located on crown land (see below for the subsequent announcement), and eligibility requirements for municipal revenue sharing, which we believe the communities are not ready for yet.

Concerns about the how the ministry issues logging permits came through in the recent Mayor and Councillor Gathering in November, where communities wondered if their feedback was getting passed along to ministry officials, or whether the consultation process was really just for show. One way of "closing the loop" would be if the community was provided all the information that the ministry received during the consultation process.

The Executive also questioned the roll out and logic of lease fee increases for sites located on crown land, as well as the process for turning commercial or recreational leases into TRU leases.

The ministry has since announced that lease fees for cabin owners would be frozen at current levels for five years.

New North also requested the ministry exercise its prerogative to ensure the Saskatchewan Scrap Tire program come up with a way to remove legacy tires from northern communities.

The main topic of discussion with the Minister of Government Relations was the proposed introduction of eligibility requirements for revenue sharing, set to come into force in 2021. The New North Executive is not opposed to such requirements, but is questioning whether it would do more harm than good to bring the requirements in before the communities had a reasonable chance to meet them. A range of programs will be launched this year—by New North, the NMTA and with the support of GR—which we think will significantly enhance the administrative and governance capacities of communities, but we need time for these programs to take root and to have an impact.

There will be more discussion of this issue at the next Gathering in June. The ministers of Environment and GR have been invited to attend. ■

Environment Changes Direction on Remote Recreation Lease Fees

The Ministry of Environment has decided not to go ahead with the plan to radically increase lease fees on recreational sites located on crown land.

Instead, they will freeze the fees at their current rate of \$888, and review them again in 5 years.

There are almost a 1000 cabins located on crown land, with the vast majority of those in the north. The Minister of Environment announced the change of heart at a conference in Weyburn.

The ministry had originally planned to increase the fees to \$1500 a year which, as was frequently pointed out, is way more than most people pay in municipal taxes in the north.

There is no word about what the ministry will do with commercial lease fees on crown land, which the ministry had also planned to radically increase.

In a separate and apparently unrelated policy announcement a few months back, the province indicated lease holders would be able to purchase their leases at some point. ■

Issues in Municipal Capacity

Pinehouse Report Released

The long-awaited report related to the Inspection and Inquiry into the Northern Village of Pinehouse was released this month, along with about a dozen recommendations, hopefully bringing to an end years of speculation and rumours about the operations of the village.

Noteworthy in the findings of Justice Vancise was that the litany of FOI requests that formed the basis of the government's decision to conduct an investigation to begin with was an orchestrated campaign designed to swamp the village's administration. Vancise found no evidence that the village had tried to obstruct the LAFOIP process and that delays in providing information regarding the requests were due to capacity issues, a situation further "aggravated," Vancise said, "by a concerted effort to overwhelm the village with a 'blitz' of FOI requests."

Among the recommendations of Vancise include changing LAFOIP legislation to make it easier for those subject to requests to disregard vexatious or frivolous ones, and

especially those where the only purpose seems to be to "overwhelm" the municipality.

Other findings and recommendations of the Inquiry include:

- The village work with the Administration Support Consultants contracted by the Ministry of Government Relations to improve administrative processes and internal controls, increasing transparency and guiding council in following its adopted bylaws; and deliver training to all village elected and appointed officials on municipal governance, and roles and responsibilities of village officials.
- The Minister (ie, NMS) ensure that all northern municipalities are fully informed of their responsibilities and obligations under the municipal legislation.
- The local council assist and support the local administrator to achieve municipal administration requirements. ■

Targeted Sector Support Initiative Applications Still Open

Targeted Sector Support (TSS) is a portion of Municipal Revenue Sharing (\$1.5M for 2019-20) that will be used to encourage inter-community collaboration and good governance in all Saskatchewan municipalities. The funds will be used to support projects that help advance the priorities set by the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee consists of representatives from the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA), the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM), the Saskatchewan Association of Northern Communities (New North) and the Ministry of Government Relations (GR).

The application is looking for inter-community projects that fall under the following funding streams:

1. Dispute Resolution & Relationship Building
2. Capacity Building

3. Regional Co-operation
4. Municipal Transition

Inter-community collaboration includes, but is not limited to, municipalities, First Nation, organized hamlets, parks, etc.

Ineligible projects include, but are not limited to: infrastructure, engineering studies, projects that are normal municipal operations and don't advance the program objectives and capital projects.

The TSS Initiative will provide funding assistance on a cost-shared basis. For successful projects the TSS Initiative will offer 75% of the project's eligible costs to the specified maximum amount in each stream as funds are available. This means that project partners will be required to contribute 25% of the eligible costs. ■

Boards of Revision Re-visioning

The municipalities Acts confer on municipalities the responsibility of hearing residents' assessments appeals. In the NMA the provisions are from s246 onwards, and are pretty straight forward, unless you are a complete idiot, in which case they are extremely complex. To us they are extremely complex.

Boards of Revision are appointed by council from members of the public, and for many of them, that's where the problems start.

In view of this, the province has initiated a review of the whole Boards of Revision concept to see if there might be a better way of making a mess of this.

We're joking, of course.

In point of fact, the idea seems to be that there could be a way of creating a provincial board of revision which would somehow take responsibility for the appointing of an appeals board away from municipalities, which would be a glorious outcome for many of them. For those who want to hang on to their own board they can.

While these possibilities are still up in the air, what seems likely is that members of BORs will probably need some kind of formal training and become certified in hearing assessment appeals, which I think many of us agree is a good thing. ■

Opinion Issues in Solid Waste

Is the Province's Solid Waste Strategy a Heaping Pile of Trash?

A little over 12 months ago, the current premier, Scott Moe, ran a leadership campaign that had winding back, or slowing down, solid waste reform as a key tenet (even then he was marking himself as the old-fashioned rural populist). This, despite the enormous strides that the province, and municipalities, had been making in adapting to a new mindset. Landfills had already been closing by the dozens, new regional partnerships were forming, and forward-thinking municipal and government officials were beginning to grasp how to leverage federal dollars aimed at dealing with solid waste issues on First Nations lands, something the north has been leading the way in. As we wrote in these pages back then, Moe's position was really going against the grain.

In actuality, the province's solid waste regulations were only going to get more uncompromising. Eventually.

The latest Solid Waste Strategy released this month builds on, and takes for granted, the successes of previous "strategies" while kicking away the ladder that got them there. This is an interesting strategy in itself, but not surprising given that province is really not that comfortable with up-turning some long-held traditions in Saskatchewan, one of them being that solving solid management problems in this province is something that should be left to someone else.

Of the many things Saskatchewan excels in—drink driving, anything related to tractors, self-awareness—knowing what to do with or where to throw our garbage is not something anyone is going to win awards for. Saskatchewan lags every province for waste diversion, produces the most garbage per capita, still has more landfills than we know what to do with, and has a poor range of stewardship programs. Sure, we might point to our small and scattered population as the reason for all this, but that's not really it. Montana, for example, with similar geographical challenges to ours, went from hundreds of similarly dispersed and scattered landfills and dumps to a couple of dozen virtually overnight, and no one's been happier. We might look at the strangle-hold of small town and rural Saskatchewan on the political culture of

the province and point to that as maybe having something in it, but then how does that explain Saskatoon's problems in bringing in an organics program? It doesn't. So the province's latest stab at this has huge challenges ahead of it, partly because no one really knows why Saskatchewan has been so bad at solid waste for so long. At the end of the day, maybe we just don't believe in it, not enough to spend any real money on it, at least.

Let's look at the things that the newly-released strategy defers to the never-never:

- What to do about plastics recycling
- The gaps in existing stewardship programs
- The review the Municipal Refuse Regulations

Here's what they have a definite time-line on:

- Mandatory certification of landfill workers

While it's easy to poke holes in the strategy and ignore the many good things about it (the graphic design is really nice, for starters), it's very difficult for us to get past the fact that most of the good things about it have come from previous, now discarded, efforts. Government has a solid grasp of the progress of a number of initiatives that've been going for the last five years, but has little idea of what the next five years might look like. Like the kid doing a book report on a novel he's only read the back of, the province has an excellent understanding of a couple of key plot elements, and has only the vaguest idea how the thing ends (maybe they should have watched the film?). While this might be a bit harsh, it's really just a reaction to how tepid, and pointless, the new strategy is. It's not just that the big targets are undercut by the measures with which it seeks to achieve them. The strategy skirts the political risks of talking tougher about trash by catapulting them into the never-never, taking for granted that it was precisely that risk-taking that moved us forward to begin with. ■

New North Now Has Seat at Scrap Tire Program Table

New North Chair Bruce Fidler is to be appointed to the advisory committee of the relatively recently-formed Tire Stewardship of Saskatchewan, the approved operator of Saskatchewan's tire recycling program.

A new entity was created following a review of the previous program (run by Saskatchewan Scrap Tire Corporation). The new program, and new entity, has a new governance structure, where non-commercial stakeholders like the municipal associations are provided an opportunity to exercise a small measure of oversight via an advisory committee.

The board of the TSS is made up entirely of industry interests (with one member at large). New regulations created in 2018 by the Ministry of Environment gives the ministry—at least potentially—a bigger say in the implementation of the program.

New North's survey of northern communities a few years ago revealed that most have got the tire situation under control, but for those who haven't the tire stockpiles are starting to get out of hand. The new program needs to come up with a solution to help northern communities rid themselves of this potentially community-threatening hazard. ■

Northern Justice Symposium

March 3, 4, 5 2020

Saskatoon Inn

Registration Information: Go to www.newnorthsask.org to download the registration form.
Or call: 306 425 5505.

Conference Agenda

Tuesday, March 3

8.00 - 8.30	Registration Open
8.30-8.45	Symposium Opening Remarks MCs Nick Daigneault & Duane Favel Ministry of Justice New North
8.45 - 9.30	Reconciliation in Saskatchewan: Commissioner Mary Culbertson, Office of the Treaty Commission
9.30 - 10.15	Pan Canadian Strategy to Address Over-Representation of Indigenous People in the Criminal Justice System Barbara Tomporowski & Jan Turner
10.15 - 10.30	Break
10.30 - 11.15	Family Law for the Average Joe/Jolene Kim Newsham, Rolande Wright
11.15 - 12.00	Domestic Violence Cst. Joele Neiman
12.00 - 1.00	Lunch
1.00 - 1.30	Motivational Speaker Regan Ratt Misponas, USSU President
1.30 - 2.15	Benefits of a Community Safety Board Indigenous Policing Services
2.15 - 3.00	Not One Left Behind Ioana Begg, Caroline Parenteau
3.00 - 3.20	Break
3.20 - 4.05	Northern Village of Beauval Nick Daigneault
4.05 - 4.30	RCMP Youth-Police Partnership Jacob Abdel-Messih
4.30 - 5.00	Day 1 Closing Remarks

Wednesday, March 4

8.00 - 8.30	Registration Open
8.30-8.45	Opening Prayer Day 2 Symposium Opening Comments MCs Nick Daigneault & Duane Favel RCMP Assistant Commissioner Mark Fisher
8.45 - 9.30	Motivational Speaker Dr. Shaun Lessard: “Positive Youth Leadership & Development”
9.30 - 10.15	Crystal Meth Say Know, Matt Ingrouille, SPS
10.15 - 10.30	Break
10.30 - 11.15	Crystal Meth SayKnow
11.15 - 12.00	Community Resources PAGC Holistic Wellness Center Stephanie Davidson
12.00 - 1.00	Lunch
1.00 - 1.30	Motivational Speaker Bigstone Community Youth Center, Edmund Clarke
1.30 - 2.15	Montreal Lake Project Hope: Lionel Bird
2.15 - 3.00	La Ronge Gang Strategy Alex Turcotte
3.00 - 3.20	Break
3.20 - 4.05	Human Trafficking Cst. Tina Platford & Bruce Fenske
4.05 - 4.30	CSC/Parole Board of Canada Federal Victims Programs Paula Vargas & Laurie Burnouf, CSC VS
4.30 - 5.00	Day 2 Closing Remarks
6pm - 9pm	Linda Gaumond Northern Excellence Awards Gala Night

Thursday, March 5

8.30 - 8.45	Opening Prayer Symposium Opening Comments MCs Nick Daigneault & Duane Favel
8.45 - 9.30	Motivational Speaker: Chief Cadmus Delorme, Cowessess First Nation
9.30 - 10.00	Embracing Life Committee Brandi Bell
10.00 - 10.15	Break
10.15 - 10.45	Northern Lights School Division: Violence Threat Risk Assessment Model Maureen Elias & Viviana Ruiz Arcand
11.15 - 11.45	MMIWG Sgt. Robin Zentner (10.45 - 11.30) MMIWG Engagement Session Kylie Head (11:30 – 11:55)
11.45 - 12.00	Symposium Closing Ceremonies/Draws
12.00 - 1.00	Lunch

Cole Bay Decision Clarifies and Confuses, the Best Kind

A decision in the provincial court last month not only settled a bitter dispute which has paralysed the small Northern Hamlet since June, it has also clarified the powers of council under *The Northern Municipalities Act* to vacate a position via resolution, a power which has, to our knowledge, never actually been used. The decision by the court means that these powers will never be used, because they don't exit.

To really understand this story we need to go back to late 2014, with the report into the RM of Sherwood by Justice Barclay. You might recall that the Reeve of Sherwood was alleged to have done everything in his power to have council move forward with and make the appropriate arrangements to accommodate a deal to develop some property, the only egregious part of which related to the fact that it was his property getting developed. The Barclay Inquiry found the allegations well-founded, and recommended to the minister that he be removed. He was.

The report also made a bunch of recommendations related to bolstering everyone's understanding of conflict of interest, which led to a few legislative changes, as well as the expanded jurisdiction of the Ombudsman's office to include municipal governments. For the last few years, the OMB has diligently investigated conflicts of interest and issued reports and recommendations. The Sherwood case, as well as the OMB's new role, has significantly heightened awareness of the rules of conflicts of interest, for better or worse, but mostly for the better.

Interpretations of COI rules in a number of determinations by the OMB has also added a new dimension to our understanding of when and where conflicts of interest may occur, building on some principles adumbrated in the Barclay Report, including the application of "common law" principles related to conflict of interest, which is where our story picks up.

In June 2019, the Ombudsman issued a draft report with respect to the conduct of a number of Cole Bay's elected officials, with the determination that the officials had breached the conflict of interest rules. This was enough for the remaining councillors to seek to use what they thought were their powers under the Act to "vacate" their positions.

This is where things get messy—or messier. Whether because the resolution was feared not valid because of the absence or a quorum, or because of a legal interpretation that the Act required it—an application was made to the provincial court—by a resident—to have the officials disqualified and formerly removed from office.

The resultant hearing followed the application, with these outcomes:

1. It was determined that the elected officials had not breached the conflict of interest rules, based on the facts argued
2. The resolution by council to have their positions vacated was in any case not valid
3. The statutory interpretation of conflict of interest was preferred to a "common law" interpretation of conflict of interest
4. The Ombudsman's report, which was submitted as evidence, had no more standing in court than a bucket of fried chicken
5. No one was awarded costs—which means the resident is out a whole bunch of money

Let's burrow down a bit more.

The Interpretation of Section 161.2 (a)

First of all, to the matter of the interpretation of s161.2 (a). Everyone knows this is the section of the Act where council, in enforcing a disqualification, gets to pass a resolution declaring a council position "vacant". What is clear from the judge's interpretation is that this declaration has no teeth. This is what he said about it:

"In my view, [this clause] does not give a northern municipal council the authority to remove a councillor from his or her position. It simply provides a mechanism by which a northern municipal council can formally declare its view that the office of one (or more) of its members shall be considered to be vacant due to the council member becoming disqualified. It serves as notice to the public and as notice to the affected council member of the council's formal view of the matter. Such a resolution would serve to notify the affected council member that the council feels there has been a disqualification and that he or she should have resigned pursuant to subsection 166(1) of the Act. Presumably, and logically, such a resolution could also confirm the council's continuing expectation that the affected council member should still resign; failing which a court application would or could be instituted to fully enforce the disqualification."

In other words, it's really only a first step toward "vacating" a council position. To enforce a disqualification a council would still need to put an application before a judge, as per s161.2 (b), for an order.

Section 161.2 (a) has no counterpart in *The Municipalities Act*, and this is the first time it has come under judicial scrutiny, as far as we know. The effect of that scrutiny is that this section might as well not be there.

Ombudsman's Reports

When making an application to enforce a disqualification, the "Applicant ha[s] the onus of presenting sufficient evidence to prove her allegations," according to the judge. However, the "findings and recommendations of the Ombudsman are not evidence ... [it is] inadmissible hearsay." This is the first time, that we are aware of, where an OMB report has been submitted as evidence in such cases. The lesson here is that while an OMB's finding and recommendations might prompt a particular course of action, in court, the report itself has no status as evidence.

Conflict of Interest

Perhaps the most interesting part of the case was the wrangling over statutory and common law definitions of conflict of interest. You might recall that, in the Sherwood Inquiry, Justice Barclay saw that the Reeve followed the "letter of law" with respect to conflict of interest rules, but flouted the "spirit of law" in his actual conduct. This prompted a focus on some principles of the standard of conduct of elected officials as articulated and enshrined in common law. A generally accepted standard of behaviour is that elected officials are in positions of trust and are expected to make decisions in the interests of the public, without any consideration for their own personal interests.

In the present case, the judge adhered to the legislation, as it was written (the "letter of the law," which was eschewed by Barclay). It must be noted—most likely in anticipation of the likely outcome here—that the province has changed the definition of conflict of interest in the Act to more closely align it with the common law. ■

Municipal Convention Breaks Out at a Danny Hooper Gig

If you ever wanted an event to be truly memorable, announcing a name change in the middle of it would probably be the way we'd go about it. At least that's the main takeaway from the ... well, we don't know what to call it now ... the Convention we were just at.

The coffee was the same all the way through, and still terrible, so that's something.

In a bombshell announcement, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) is now Municipalities of Saskatchewan. President Gordon Barnhart was emphatic in his insistence that there will be no acronym for it—although does anyone really have any control over that kind of thing? Probably not; after all, who gets to choose their own nickname? In point of fact, government is probably already putting their best people on shortening it, even as Municipalities of Saskatchewan is probably assembling a strike team to prevent that. I think I can hear them rappelling from of a chopper right now.

Nope, just the Mayor.

Actually, what will be interesting to see is whether the abbreviated version of their name becomes an initialism, as opposed to an acronym. An acronym is where you say the letters as a word (like SUMA, NASA, etc.) An initialism is where you say the letters *as* letters, like CBC. Will the new abbreviated version of the name be MOS, or M 'OH' S, or just MS. We like M of S.

Apart from that, Convention, from February 3 to 5 in Regina, was as diverting as ever, and perhaps slightly more so because of the milder weather. A highlight for many will be the emceeing of Danny Hooper. With the velvet delivery of a hockey announcer, he took very little time in summing up the room as having genteel yet fungible tastes, testing the waters with a couple of mildly risqué jokes and escalating from there, perhaps only reigning things in upon the realization that making fun of people's weight was a little too low-class even for him (deciding to make fun of what they were wearing instead). And like any working musician, Danny Hooper couldn't resist mentioning that he was a working musician and got a few tunes out before anyone could stop him. These included the stone-cold classic "Bury Me in the Chassis of My Massey Ferguson," and the light-hearted "Peevy Mart Wedding."

Still, Danny Hooper moved things along well enough, which was important, because SUMA/ Municipalities of Saskatchewan really packs things in. These things included the Premier's Address, wherein Scott Moe announced, to the surprise of no one, that the province is: (a) balancing the budget; (b) investing heavily in infrastructure; (c) increasing revenue sharing, and (d) still pretty keen on pipelines. The premier also chose that time to tell everyone he was intervening, kind of, in the Co-Op dispute. That played extremely well in that crowd.

The premier's partisanism was equalled by the leader of the opposition the next day, but as an indication of how the NDP is



positioning itself nowadays, and how sharply defined that's becoming, there's probably very little in what Ryan Mieli said that wouldn't have played well in that crowd either. The applause at the end of his address was very warm. Neither leader got a standing ovation, though, Brad Wall-style. Not sure what to make of that.

The Golf Cart Session

It's not often you see a proposal so interesting as to verge on the bizarre, but such was the case during the resolution session where the Town of Nipawin put to a question whether SUMA (it was still SUMA then) ought to start talks with SARM (as they were then and remained that) with regard to the possibility of becoming an "item." There have been worse public proposals, for sure, but most of those have included the appearance of a ring (and if you're interested, can be viewed on Youtube). This one, though ... we're not even sure where to start. If it weren't for the events of the next day, it'd go down as Convention's most daring moment. As it was, no one will remember it, unlike those ones on Youtube.

Fidler Honoured

New North Chair and Mayor of Creighton Bruce Fidler was honoured at the President's Banquet with the SUMA/Municipalities of Saskatchewan Lifetime Membership, something they dole out rarely—hence the honour of it—an award recognizing his decades of service to his community of Creighton, the north, and of course SUMA, appropriate, since it's their award.

The northern regional meeting elected Jordan McPhail as an alternate to Gerald Roy, who is, and will continue to be, the northern representative on the Municipalities of Saskatchewan Board.

The next SUMA Convention will be never. However, the next Municipalities of Saskatchewan will be February 2021 in Saskatoon. ■

From the CEO
MATT HELEY

The Pinehouse report is out and for many the saga is finally over.

The document released this month actually contains the findings of both the recent Inquiry conducted by Judge Vancise and the Inspection conducted by Neil Robertson that ended last year, and gave rise to the latter.

Like similar ones in years gone by, these reports contain recommendations which will form the basis of legislative amendments, for better or worse.

Interestingly, although the government's list of recommended actions appears to only contain those originating from the later Vancise report, a recommendation by Robertson that municipalities publish yearly public accounts was included in the amendments to the municipalities Acts presently before the legislative assembly. The

recommendation by Robertson that Cabinet be given the power to wind up a municipal development corporation is also in the new amendments. In other words, government quietly acted upon the Robertson report's recommendations even while that report was under wraps, which is fine, but as we say, interesting.

One of the things to consider when comparing the two reports is that they arose out of two quite different methods of inquiry. This is acknowledged by Robertson in his recommendations, where he stated that the main goal was that of "fact finding," rather than "fault finding." The fact that the two reports came to conclusions at variance from each other with respect a number of otherwise related matters is not just a result of the two inquisitors' differing opinions on points of law—although there are one or two instances where that is the case.

Robertson's method was, as he stated, "fairly informal"; the latter report issued from something closer to a "trial," where the rules of procedure are much more rigorous. Some would say much more fairer.

What is interesting in the Minister's order to establish an Inquiry is a concern about whether some individuals had been given an adequate "right of reply" during the Inspection. Any one familiar with principles of procedural fairness and natural justice knows that a "right of reply" is absolutely critical to both the appearance and actuality of justice getting done. An Inquiry would allow that to happen, which is why it happened. Intriguingly, legislative amendments in the works address the absence of a "right of reply" in the Minister's Powers to Dismiss provisions in the Acts. Had that piece been in place, would an Inquiry have been needed or required? ■

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.

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