

Upcoming

New North
Newly Elected Training
March

Saskatchewan Association of
Northern Communities

NEW
NORTH

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Monthly-ish Newsletter
November 2020

Northern Leaders Call for More Action in COVID-19 Response Survey

A survey of municipal leaders and officials conducted in the first couple of weeks of November—arguably, at the height of the province’s inaction—shows a desire for tougher restrictions and greater supports to combat the impact of COVID-19.

The survey—which opened before the province had extended mandatory mask-wearing to the entire province—reveals the true extent of the frustration of northern leaders and officials with the failure of the province’s actions in bringing the pandemic under control.

Northern communities are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Factors including a lack of community-based physician services, challenges related to the transportation of specimens for testing, low COVID-19 testing numbers, combine with preexisting challenges including vulnerabilities resulting from adverse underlying social determinants of health, including high unemployment rates, overcrowding and food insecurity, and crises related to suicides. Over the years, northern communities have experienced disproportionate rates of other communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, pertussis, and others.

Against this backdrop, the vast majority of survey respondents were “highly concerned” or “moderately concerned” by COVID-19, and 60% “very dissatisfied” or “highly dissatisfied” with the provincial response.

(The latter finding conflicts with provincial survey results, which are largely approving of the provincial response.)

About 40% of respondents felt they were “adequately supported” by government and agencies, while another 40% felt they weren’t.

Among the additional restrictions respondents would like to see there was strong support for closing bingo and gambling venues, limiting shopping hours or closing liquor stores altogether.

In an indication that supports were not getting to the people who need them, respondents want to see more

financial supports for vulnerable populations to deal with food insecurity and shelter costs, especially for those self-isolating and unable to work.

Respondents identified that some communities are still experiencing shortages of essential items such as toilet paper, paper towels and sanitizing products.

An increasing need for more isolation units was also identified.

Respondents showed strong support for the existence of checkpoints and other community security measures, and wished for the funding for these items to continue (which it is).

The responses indicate the extent to which northern municipal leaders and officials are working at the coal-face to combat the impact of COVID-19 on their residents, as well as the extent to which the pandemic has deeply disrupted daily life in many northern communities, as elsewhere.

Respondents didn’t seek any new authority for local governments but rather funding and resources to support the authority they already had.

Earlier in the year, the provincial government “fast tracked” northern municipal revenue sharing to supply the entire year’s NRS up front, and in September, the province distributed \$70 million in federal funding to municipalities on a per capita basis, with the north receiving around \$1 million.

The province in May announced \$150 million in new capital funding to municipalities, with the north getting about \$2 million.

However, what is clear is that the northern municipal leaders and officials see deficits in supports for the basic needs of residents, and are feeling an increasing pressure to supply those needs.

NewNorth News & Updates

New North Newly Elected Training Slated for March But What Year Not Decided

We know newcomers to local government just can't wait to get their hands on their first council package so they can experience, in equal measure, the heady rush of power and the deep feelings inadequacy from not knowing what to do with it all.

Actually, if I was to give any advice it would be the following. Firstly, don't try to go too fast; no one knows what they're doing. There's a reason you get four years; aim to achieve everything in the last one.

A second bit of advice is to take in as much newly elected training as you can.

Municipalities of Saskatchewan has a Leaders Role and Responsibilities workshop on December 8 which you can attend over computer, phone or on whichever device you get your Internet. We'll be joining via glockenspiel.

Go to www.munisask.ca to sign up to their webinar.

We are delaying our northern newly elected workshops until March in the hope that we can all attend in person, corporeally, or in whatever form you manifest your physical presence.

New North AGM Comes with Elaborate Instructions

Registrations for New North's AGM on December 11 – for either in person or virtual attendance or somehow both – are going strongly considering the circumstances and that the letters A, G and M are everyone's least favourite. The appeal of the event is even more surprising since we're not able to serve the Coronet's famous glazed ham – a fact that I've just realized I should have kept to myself.

Anyway, as everyone knows, masks – the greatest advance in public health-driven accessorizing since the beard net – will be mandatory and attendees will need to stay at least 2 metres away from each other, especially when eating tuna.

The round tables will allow only one occupant and be widely spaced in the ballroom. Canoodling and cavorting are prohibited but mollycoddling is conditionally permissible. Loudly sipping coffee is frowned upon.

Occupancy limits mean we'll be conducting regular head counts so make sure you bring yours.

Entry will be via the main doors. I mean, how else?

Manoeuvring into a hugging posture then pulling away at the last second is allowable.

The AGM agenda will be driven by the usual combination of legally-required things (Board elections, review of financials, resolutions) and optional regrettable wastes of time (the CEO's Report). To keep things snappy we have just one non-New North item of business.

Only one person per member community will be permitted in the room at once, but anyone is welcome to join the gathering virtually via a link we will email out closer to the day.

Municipal Revenue Sharing Grant Declaration of Eligibility

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

- o Administrators: if you did 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.**

From the New North Chair

By Bruce Fidler

I don't think many of us thought that we'd still be dealing with the pandemic at the end of 2020. But I think if we haven't learned the lesson of this year by now – that the pandemic doesn't care about our expectations, wants or beliefs – then we never will.

Even though the north has more cases per capita than the rest of the province and many parts of Canada, I still think it could have been worse. And I believe one reason it is not worse is because of the actions of community leaders and their staff. I know my staff works tirelessly to keep my community safe, and not just in attending to the business needs of the community. Their actions are much more personal than that – delivering food parcels and supplies and checking up on the elderly and vulnerable.

I also think we are entering a dangerous phase of the pandemic.

The phase when fatigue with restrictions and mask-wearing sets in. When we just want to see our long-missed families and give them a hug. Get back to work and get back to normal. But, like I said and we all know, COVID doesn't care about what we want. We have to adapt to this thing until it is gone and this

is not easy for a lot of us, especially those who like to meet obstacles head-on. Because a virus is a different kind of beast. It takes away our ability to develop immune responses. It attacks us in a way that destroys our ability to defend against it. The best defence is definitely not attack.

The effects of the pandemic will impact us long after a vaccine has given us immunity. The impacts will be felt personally, on the health of those who fell sick, who may find it hard to go back to work and support their families.

But it will be felt broadly too, on the economy, on municipal budgets, on the ability of people to recover financially.

The best way to reduce the on-going and long-lasting impact is to reduce its impact now.

The actions of my fellow leaders are helping to do that. From setting up isolation units to stop COVID from spreading through extended families to agitating for greater support and the transfer of medical resources to northern health centres. And this will go on long after everyone else has tried to forget.

Moe Cabinet Shuffle Takes Us on a Journey of Mixed Metaphors and Confused Etymology

The word “cabinet” came to denote the coterie of elected officials exercising executive power in government in 17th or 18th century Britain.

In those days, a cabinet was another word for a small room. Today, we use it in the same way we use the word cupboard, but in those days a cupboard was a sideboard or table. Over time, the place where a group of government advisors met (a cabinet) came to denote the group itself, as is often the case. I don't have particularly strong beliefs about anything much, but had they met standing or sitting or similarly reposed on or around a table or sideboard, I do believe we'd be calling them something else altogether now, and life would have been the richer for it.

Anyway, as expected, the premier Scott Moe—or ScoMo—has evidently taken a good look at his cupboard (I'm going with it) and, like Andy in Toy Story, has made some changes to his play roster, one forced.

The new Minister of Social Services is the former Minister of Government Relations Etc, Lori Carr, while Paul Merriman moves from Social Services to Health, and Don McMorris, who has been sitting on the back bench for sitting in the front seat, if you know what I mean, comes over to the Ministry of Government Relations And Additional Things.

Dustin Duncan goes from Environment to Education, Warren Kaeding goes to Environment, Joe Hargrave goes to Highways and the others are more or less the same, with notable exception Jim Reiter, who goes from Health to the

new Ministry of SaskBuilds, which is more or less just the new version of central services but sounds better. Ordinarily you'd say this was a demotion, but this is Reiter.

Another ministry that has a new name is the Ministry of Rural and Remote Health, which is now the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions and Other Things.

In fairness, this last one is not really a ministry as such—it is rather a schism of Health.

Departing the cupboard is Greg Ottenbreit and Ken Cheveldayof.

Another interesting move is that the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency is now under the Minister of Policing Christine Tell, which would make zero sense if you didn't know they're all ex-cops there now.

New North Still 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 in the first quarter of 2021.

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.

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.

The Northern SK Administrators Association Corner Bit

The NSAA brings northern administrators and clerks together to provide for ongoing discussion on capacity building priorities. While members haven't been able to come together over these past months, the NSAA continues its work on the priorities set by the members in 2019.

The list of current projects the NSAA is working on includes:

HR Tools

At the last gathering, NSAA members identified a need related to the development and use of HR tools. We are working from a prioritized list of HR topics, and will be engaging members in a process to build and tailor HR tools and policies. The process will include assistance and guidance on how and when these tools should be used. While this work is important to those working in administration, these tools are also key to the work of councils.

Duties and Responsibilities

Following the creation of the NSAA, members were asked to set priorities for the capacity work. Members identified 'performance evaluations' as a key interest. Many members shared that they didn't have job descriptions – a key piece of the performance discussion pro-

cess. Over the next few months, members will be using a new tool to create their own job profile – basically, outlining their current duties and what they are currently responsible for in their job. Members will then work with their councils, or their Chief Administrative Officer in some cases – to formalize their job description.

Onboarding program

The NSAA is building an onboarding tool kit that can be used by municipal councils when they are looking to recruit people for administrative positions. Employee turnover is a challenge, and effective onboarding helps in recruiting the right individual and supporting them in the early days in their new position. Research shows effective onboarding leads to stronger job satisfaction and employee retention. In addition to the role of council, this program will outline roles for stakeholders, such as the NSAA.

Member Resource Bank

The NSAA has created an online bank of tools, procedures and policies that have been developed by NSAA members. The overall objective is to allow members to take advantage of the work of other members, and to encourage interaction between members on how these tools and policies can be most effectively used.

Data Shows Distinct Patterns, Allows us to Make Predictions

There's a reason health officials keep drumming into the public the importance of getting tested in the fight against COVID-19, and it's not just to find out whether you or a loved one has it: data.

Without testing we have no data, and without data authorities have no way to know how to design an appropriate public health response.

Early days, before we knew what we were dealing with, the mantra went: social distance, wash hands, don't go out. Jurisdictions all across the world put their citizens into lockdown, even the United States.

Fearing economic collapse, many opened up again. The rapid increase in positive cases in recent weeks, particularly throughout the northern hemisphere, has authorities worried, but with few tools in the kit to fight it. With no appetite to go back into lock down again, government responses are tending to be nuanced and targeted, for better or worse. Which makes data collection more important than ever. Which makes testing more important than ever.

What does testing data show us? Some pretty obvious things.

Straight up, data shows us that a significant number of the new cases are linked to family and private gatherings, where perhaps social distancing is not typically practiced or enforced. If it seems strange that Saskatchewan worries more about how many people you have in your house than at your wedding reception at the local hotel, then that's why: businesses have an incentive to enforce restrictions, while we tend to drop our guard when we're at home.

That an increase in cases is linked to private and family gatherings is borne out by what happened on or around October 13. All across Saskatchewan, testing numbers spiked on Thanksgiving—immediately followed by a spike in cases. There were more than 100 new cases in the month following October 14 in the far north west (25% increase), and 50 in the far north east (140% increase).

Correlation and causation are not the same thing; there might be no causal relationship between the national day of stuffing and the spike in cases two days later.

But assuming there is, what does the data tell us will happen at, say, Christmas? Well, we know what will happen: assuming nothing else changes, we will see a tsunami of new cases that'll make Thanksgiving look like a ripple in a wading pool by comparison.

Federal Financial Supports Still Worth Checking Out

Whatever you might say about the federal government, you can't say they don't know how to spend money.

Since March, the federal government has spent about \$382 billion in virus-related aide since March, which ranks among the highest in the world per capita, and represents about 20% of all Canadian economic output this year.

There are some who will say the fed's COVID spending is so high because the Liberals are a "big tent" party—a so-called "brokerage party" – whose road to staying in power is by balancing, and appeasing, as many interests as possible. We'd almost certainly have seen a different response from Conservatives – one where tax credits featured heavily, most likely.

Whatever the case, the federal government's dizzying array of programs and supports is worth digging through, and the best place to start is by going to www.canada.ca and then clicking on "COVID financial assistance."

Admittedly, some funding is simply being re-directed from other programs (housing, for example), but others are quite novel, and insanely generous.

If you own a business or know someone who does, take advantage of the CEBA program, which provides a partially forgivable loan of \$60,000 to small businesses—and any business which could seriously use \$60,000 is by definition small.

The beauty of the CEBA program is the amount that is forgivable—\$20,000, or 30%—if paid back in full by December 2022.

Municipalities can take advantage of the COVID Resilience Fund which is part of the federal Investing in Canada Plan, and provides money to municipalities to cover capital costs for retrofits and measures to support physical distancing, and so on.

We have a link to this on our website so check it out.

Democracy the Winner in Municipal Elections in Which People Were Also Winners

From time to time you catch news of a civic electoral process in which a dog or cat or some other inapposite, improbable or grossly unsuitable candidate is elevated to public office, sometimes to humorous and diverting effect, like in Omena, Michigan, where locals elected a nine year old feline named Sweet Tart McGee to high office, and sometimes in a dark and deeply disturbing way, such as in 2016, when the United States elected Donald Trump.

Sadly, these stories often turn out to be a little bit apocryphal: in the Omena case, the cat was as much a mayor as Mayor McCheese, since the village isn't an incorporated entity or even a fast food joint. It's all a bit of a stunt they pull, probably staged by the community's press secretary, Harley Jones, who's a goat. In the Trump case, that was just a collective nightmare everyone had, right?

This year's municipal elections in northern Saskatchewan weren't notable for any of that, but they were still interesting in their own way.

The winds of change swept through a number of northern communities, including La Loche, La Ronge, Air Ronge, Sandy Bay, Green Lake and a few of the Northern Hamlets. In a close run race in Air Ronge, Gord Stomp, Mayor since the village's incorporation in the 80s, moves aside for challenger Julie Baschuk.

Georgina Jolibois returns as Mayor La Loche following her stint in federal Parliament, and will be joined by an almost entirely new council.

Incumbents got back in almost every other northern municipality.

The Mayors of Creighton, Beauval and Weyakwin were all acclaimed. Ile a la Crosse stayed mostly the same, as did Pinehouse. The voters of Cumberland House endorsed the incumbents.

Percentage of Value Change Announced by Province

Property values are assessed every four years and these values are used to determine taxable assessment. A mill rate is applied to assessed values to come up property taxes.

2021 is the next year in the evaluation cycle.

One way of shifting the tax burden around is by setting "Percentages of Value" for the different property classes. The POV of residential property, for example, is 80%. This means that only 80% of the assessed value of the property is used in determining its taxable assessment. Farm land is assessed at

Northern municipal councils have mostly always been more diverse and representative than elsewhere—the last cycle being somewhat of an exception. Although not all results are in, this cycle women make up just under 50% of the Mayors, and more than 50% of councillors.



Gord Stomp leaves municipal politics after four decades of doing mayor stuff.

Hamlets tend to have more women Mayors and Councillors than the Villages and Towns.

In all, about 70 Mayor and Councillor spots turned-over, which is roughly half of them.

Eleven communities had a turn-over of 70% or more. Green Lake and Stony Rapids had 100% turn-over. By contrast, Cumberland House had zero.

The newly elected face the challenge of leading their communities through this unprecedented pandemic. Some may face additional challenges due to government's new eligibility requirements for revenue sharing, which is just perfect.

With Electomania 2020 officially over, political junkies are now turning their attention to the counting in California's 5th Congressional District, which is a completely normal thing to do.

between 45 to 55%—a reflection of soaring land prices. The POV of commercial and industrial property has historically been 100%.

Until now.

The province has announced that the POV of commercial and industrial property is now 85%. This announcement is probably to give that property class a bit of a break, but a municipality can still tax that class at a different, higher, rate, than other classes, so we're not sure what the point of the change is. I suppose someone will tell us.

Community	Mayor	Council	Community	Mayor	Council
Creighton	Bruce Fidler		Dore Lake	Kathleen Greening	
		Dan Hlady			Jonathan Fonos
		Anita Rainville			Shawn Feszyk
		Neal Andrusiak			Barb Bartley
		Darren Grant			Joan Buffin
		Colleen Stallard	Green Lake	Rodnery Laliberte	
La Ronge	Colin Ratushniak				Max Desjarlais
		Jordan McPhail			Douglas Sinclair
		Abby Besharah			Dustin Fidler
		Ryan Veteri			Alice Laliberte
		Vivianna Arcand	Ile a la Crosse	Duane Favel	
		Joe Hordyski			Vince Ahenakew
		Hugh Watt			Myra Malboeuf
Air Ronge	Julie Baschuk				Kevin Favel
		Terry DesRoches			Gerald Roy
		Kristy McDougall			Noel McLean
		Corey Hardcastle			Bodean Desjarlais
		Tabitha Burr			
Beauval	Nick Daigneault		Jans Bay	Joyce Gardiner-Maurice	
		Wendy Eldrifge			Michael Maurice
		Bill Roy			Janet Corrigan
		Thomas Durocher			Cassandra Corrigan
		Alvina Aubichon			Melissa Laliberte
Black Point	Fabien Park		La Loche	Georgina Jolibois	
		Paul Herman			Kevin Janvier
		Mathilda Wagenaar			Justina Kilfoyl
Buffalo Narrows	Robert Woods				Leanne Gailey
		Melanie Aubichon			Ida Lemeigre
		Tracy Tinker			Marina Janvier
		Rodney N. McCallum			Georgina Park
		Gary Ericson	Michel Village	Timothy Laplante	
		Darrel Robson			Helena Couillonour
		Shaylee Gardiner			Leonard Sylvestre
Cole Bay	Fredrick Iron				Violet Herman
		Roseann Daigneault			Grace Janvier
		Duane Iron			
		Liz Couillonneur	Patuanak	Hazel Maurice	
		Joseph Couillonneur			Dora Lariviere
Cumberland House	Kelvin McKay				Estelle Maurice
		Alan Bishoff			Tashina Black
		Elaine Crate	Pelican Narrows	Ovide Michel	
		Veronica Favel			Terry Morin
		Ferlin J. McKay			Gabe Michel
Denare Beach	Carl Lentowicz				Rebecca Ballantyne
		Bev Wheeler			Russell Ballantyne
		Jean Champagne	Pinehouse	Mike Natomagan	
		Nicole Bayless			Billie Jo Natomagan
		Dale Holmgren			Conrad Misponas
		Karen Thomson			Betty Ann Durocher
Timber Bay	John Naytowhow				Hannah Smith
		Jerry Hennie			
		Larry LaVallee	Sandy Bay	Gertude Bear	
		Ronald Henderson			Nola Morin
		Rose Bradfield			Kevin Maurice Sr.
Turnor Lake	Marlene Kwan				Phillip Ray Jr.
		Doris Montgrand	St. George's Hill	Nicole Sylvestre	Jessie McKay
		Shane Daigneault			Michelle Morin
		Reva Montgrand			Tamara Janvier
		Paul Montgrand			Philomine Cummings
Weyakwin	George Natomagan				Kim Cummings
		Joshua Brown-Nelson	Stony Rapids	Daniel Powder	
		Rene Natomagan			Terri-Lynn Beavereye
		Nora Nelson			Joyce Torrie
		Medrick Thomas			Kirk MacDonald
					Tyrel Duff

Unofficial
2020
Northern
Municipal
Election
Results



From the CEO
MATT HELEY

Electoral results in jurisdictions across the globe point clearly to the fact that governing authorities taking a stronger stand against COVID-19 are rewarded.

Mostly this favours incumbents—we saw this in the northern municipal elections, too. It was clearly the lesson in the US results, as Trump’s COVID-denial ultimately cost him his job.

Saskatchewan is an exception, but aren’t we always.

Perhaps the worst fear (apart from spiders) that any of us have is that Saskatchewan’s public health settings are being plotted using a political compass. We think these fears are being realized. It would hardly be the first time politics trumped science—the province’s refusal to buy into the federal climate change plan is a perfect example of a policy direction driven by politics rather than science (or even economics).

The province’s mid-November public health order amendment introducing a “mask mandate” for communities over 5000 people, among other things, was alarming precisely because it had the whiff of political calculation. The idea went that the SaskParty didn’t want to apply it to the smaller, rural communities because of the fear of stirring up latent anti-mask sentiment.

Immediately, minds went back to Moe’s acceptance speech following the provincial election in which he seemed to coddle the feelings of the separatist Buffalo Party, which had done particularly well in rural Saskatchewan in the October

election, to the surprise of no one except perhaps themselves. Why, if they weren’t somehow signalling a shift into the symbolic space of this group, would the SaskParty do that? (Moe, of course, immediately appointed a former MLA to find ways to help “exercise and strengthen provincial autonomy”). If nothing else, it showed a continued willingness to appease fringe elements within the provincial political culture, especially those originating in the rural imaginary, and provides a glimpse into the “political unconscious” of the SaskParty in the same way a loved one’s recount of a strange dream might give useful and instructive insight into the mind of the total weirdo you’re married to.

It took a week for the government to realize how foolish they appeared and reverse course, applying the mask order provincially.

Yet even then politics was not far away. The province then declared that the only way out of the pandemic is through a vaccine—a position that no one, not even the frequently wrong WHO, thinks makes any sense as a policy response right now, given how long the roll-out will be.

The point of the announcement was to give the SaskParty the ammunition to attack the federal government, who had somehow managed to make a mess of a deal with a Chinese firm to manufacture vaccines which would have been no use anyway.

The posturing is shallow and boring but not unexpected.

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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