

Launch of the Urban Agenda

The SUMA Board of Directors and staff recently attended meetings on August 31-September 1, hosted by Government Relations, that focused on the development of Saskatchewan's Urban Agenda. The meetings began with a presentation from guest speaker Mike Harcourt, the Chair of the Prime Minister's External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities. The following day, meeting participants were engaged in a dialogue session that consisted of facilitated discussions and brief presentations from senior provincial officials.

Mike Harcourt released the report "From Restless Communities to Resilient Places: Building a Stronger Future for all Canadians" in June 2006. As former Mayor of Vancouver and Premier of British Columbia, Mike Harcourt brought a wealth of experience and knowledge to the "Urban Agenda" session. His address provided a good base for the initial discussion on the Urban Agenda. Mr. Harcourt spoke about the consultation process and provided commentary on the following key recommendations from his report:

Adopt a "place-based" approach to delivering "locally appropriate solutions," given that "Canada's places are varied and different, with different opportunities, desires and capacities."

Pursue a "double devolution," meaning a shift of responsibilities and resources from the federal to provincial to local levels to "ensure that choices about how to raise and use resources, including tax choices, move to the most appropriate local levels, where accountability to citizens is most direct." (The report recognizes that "property taxes are not an adequate base for municipalities.")

Close the "infrastructure gap": immediately tackle the infrastructure deficit that exists because municipalities lack the resources to make necessary infrastructure investments. This needs to happen "before cities and communities can take on new responsibilities or develop their own taxation systems."

Create "sustainable strategies" and harmonize policies and programs to support local "capacity-building measures" and shared "best practices." ("Sustainability looks to the public interest beyond narrow market outcomes" and includes social and cultural dimensions as well as economic and environmental ones.)

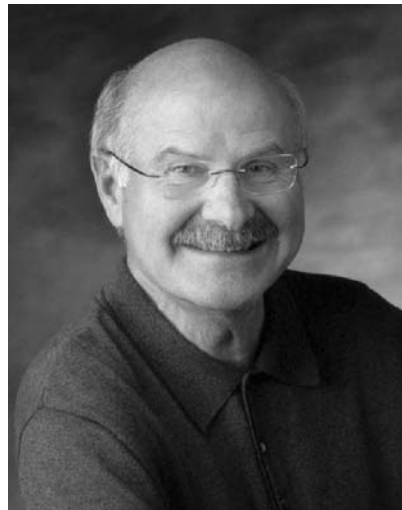
Coordinate "competitiveness" policies for improved access to international markets, removal of internal trade barriers and "maximizing the local effects from all governments' investments." The report found that "city-regions are increasingly the focal point of global economic activity, [but also] that Canada's resource-based rural and remote communities provide an economic key to Canada's future prosperity."

Improve long-term "liveability" by developing innovative environmental technologies and strategies for integrated renewable energy, transportation (including freight and transit), waste management, improved air and water quality and revitalized urban cores.

Prioritize "at-risk neighbourhoods" and "those with potential to change," employing tri-level agreements and the creation of "community capacities, integrated streamlining of services and sustained program support."

Endow a "non-for-profit Culture in Place Foundation" to engage all citizens in stimulating arts, sports and other cultural fields.

The following day, brief presentations were made by senior departmental officials on initiatives and directions within their respective portfolios which are relevant to or have an impact on urban municipalities. The presentations were broken down into two categories: Economic Development and Human and Community Services. Following the presentations, meeting attendees were assigned to breakout groups consisting of both municipal and government officials to engage in the facilitated discussion portion of the meetings. Each group was asked to provide feedback on the following questions to the larger group:



Former Mayor of Vancouver and BC Premier, Mike Harcourt



The EACCC Report: **From Restless Communities to Resilient Places**

1. Do we have common priorities and are there gaps?
2. What needs to be done to encourage economic development, human and community development and who should do it?
3. What do urban centres contribute to economic development and the provincial economic strategy?
4. What do urban centres contribute to the provincial human and community services strategies?

After the breakout sessions, Mark McLeod, President of ISC and Saskatchewan's representative to the Harcourt committee, addressed the participants and provided some perspective into the development of an Urban Agenda in Saskatchewan. Mark provided an analysis of the recommendations in the Harcourt report and spoke to some of the hurdles that

Inside this issue

President Schlosser bids farewell while Laurent Mougeot makes a case for increased municipal funding.

SUMA hosted a successful luncheon to increase women's participation in politics.

Rodney Audette shares an Administrator's perspective on recruitment while Brittany Staines tells you why *Cars* is a movie every municipal leader should see.

Read up on some interesting developments in Weyburn, join the cutting edge of municipal accounting and follow the success of Choiceland as it lobbies the Department of Highways and Transportation.

Launch of the Urban Agenda	1
Executive Director's Message	2
President's Message	2
Women's Participation	3
UMAAS Editorial	4
Lessons from Cars	4
MLDP Opportunities	5
Attracting the International Smokestack	6
SUMA Advantage Page	7
Consensus-Building and Communications Mechanisms	8
Tangible Capital Assets	9
City Mayors' Caucus Report	9
SUMA Crystal Meth Report	9
Members' Voice	10
New Conservation Resource	11
Associate Members	12

the province will face in the development of the Urban Agenda, and some of the more challenging issues for rural Saskatchewan.

It was positive to see that the province has started to move on the "Urban Agenda" in the context of the many services they deliver to residents of our communities. To have such a broad representation of senior officials discuss how their respective department's roles and responsibilities intersect with urban municipalities is an accomplishment in itself. While much is left to be explored in this area, this initial step may be the long awaited process required to better address issues related to sustainable, adequate and predictable resources to create healthy communities.

President's *Voice*

Well, this is it - my last President's Message. Most of you now know that I won't be seeking re-election as Mayor of Weyburn, so my term as SUMA President is up. It's amazing how fast three years go, but also just how many changes can occur in that time frame. As I sit back and think about this last term, it does become apparent just how effective this organization can be.

We've seen increases to the Revenue Sharing pool during the last three years, and a monumental signing of an agreement with the Federal Government to see infrastructure funding rising to a five cent per litre transfer of the Gas Tax. We've seen resolve regarding the long standing issue of putting together a fair and equitable solution to the RCMP cost distribution formula, and although it won't make everyone

happy, it's based on a solution that we created together. Also importantly, we're working more closely than ever with our partners in the Rural Municipalities through initiatives like Clearing the Path and the School Tax Coalition.

We've also seen significant changes at the administrative level with long-time Executive Director, Keith Schneider turning in his computer and business suit for a pitch-fork and overalls. We've added to our team Laurent Mougeot. Although he has only been here for a year, he has already shown that his expertise and experience are an invaluable asset to the Association as we move into this next century. Our team continues to grow as there's been the addition of a third member to our Policy team so that we can continue to improve our services to you. Those services are now headquartered in newer

rental office facilities after we unburdened ourselves of the old, costly building.

Our work is far from done, however. As we continue to establish the rightful place of municipalities as an order of government in the eyes of those who have traditionally thought otherwise. SUMA continues to seek long-term sustainable funding through the provincial Revenue Sharing pool, and until that need is satisfied, municipalities will continue to struggle to provide the services their residents expect. We also need to remain united as Cities, Towns and Villages if we are to maintain the integrity of our association. Those at other orders of government who seek to control the destiny of our municipalities will only revel in any sign of weakness in the bonds between our members. The successes of the past three years show that as

one unified voice we can achieve great things, but we will see that momentum slow to a crawl if we cannot remain united.

As I reflect upon my term, I'm struck by the thought of the great friends I've made through SUMA over the past thirteen years - people like Murray Westby, Don Cody, George Bristow, Ray Boughen, Dub Henderson, and who could forget our friend, Mike Badham who was so tragically taken from us earlier this year. Finally, I want to thank my wife Carole. Without her love and understanding, I would have never been able to encounter this wonderful experience. Let me just say that I wish whoever takes over this position the best of luck in the future and I'm forever in your debt, as local government leaders, for electing me as the President of your association.

Executive Director's *Voice*

Without thinking about where it came from, we turn on the tap and get drinking water. It just flows out of the tap. Miles of underground pipes collect sewage and take it to a treatment plant where it is processed before being released into the environment. Most individuals don't even know where or how that process takes place.

Household and commercial waste products are collected, processed and recycled. For most of us, the toughest part is who will carry the darn stuff to the curb where it seems to disappear. We never really think about the process involved in dealing

with garbage.

We believe that streets should always be in top shape. And forget about the aging infrastructure, the frost, the traffic volume and the heavy loads which continue to break down pavement and concrete.

For the sake of public safety, people deserve police protection and fire suppression services at any time of day or night. Equipment must be updated and employees must be trained.

Every single day of the year, municipalities put out excellent products and deliver essential services

to make everyone's life as simple, safe, and enjoyable as possible. And they do this with great efficiency. Thousands of employees across this province offer an amazing array of municipal services under the leadership of hundreds of men and women who, for the most part, volunteer their time as elected officials.

We don't often think of municipalities as complex organizations. Yet, there are few corporations around the world that have such a diverse and extensive range of responsibilities with a comparable level of accountability. None of these companies operate with such restricted revenue streams. Private sector companies have established themselves in niche markets and are managed by boards of directors and Chief Executive Officers who have the ability to focus their expertise on specific products. And when a product line is no longer profitable, they have the ability to take it off the market, diversify, or shut down a plant. No town has the luxury of getting out of water production, waste treatment or street maintenance because it has become too costly. They must carry on with their responsibility.

Most citizens take municipal services for granted. People generally forget about the complexity of these operations. Few understand the cost of providing such services and fewer yet appreciate the criti-

cal need for capital investment in municipal infrastructure.

The last fifteen years have been very lean for municipalities, as they have seen a significant share of provincial assistance eroded for the good of the Province.

During the same period, municipalities have absorbed a greater share of responsibility for housing, health facilities, and social programs. In many instances, municipalities have managed to balance their budget and to minimize the full impact of their infrastructure requirements only by postponing much needed work on their inventory of pipes, pavement and equipment. This can not continue.

From water plants to cemeteries, from economic development to housing, from sidewalks to airports, villages, towns and cities are expected to be the economic engines of the Province. For this, they must remain competitive within themselves and with other centres in neighbouring provinces.

Municipal governments demand and deserve a meaningful, predictable, and sustainable share of Provincial revenues. Property assessment alone can not sustain the cost of providing all municipal services.



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Women's Participation a SUMA Interest

Across the Canadian political landscape, women are beginning to hold significant positions of power. However, women still only hold 15% of elected seats on Saskatchewan municipal councils. SUMA is concerned that this lack of elected women represents a demographic deficit, as a large proportion of the Saskatchewan population remains underrepresented. To raise awareness of women's issues, provide information and encourage women to participate in municipal elections this fall, SUMA and the Business and Professional Women's (BPW) Club of Saskatchewan hosted the "Increasing Women's Participation in Politics Luncheon" on August 24 in Regina.

Though women are underrepresented on municipal council, they find other ways to share their leadership. Across the province, women's participation on municipal commissions and committees is quite high. "I hope that the

members of recreation boards and economic development committees will view municipal elections as a natural progression of leadership," said SUMA Director Dawn Luhning, the first female Councillor to be elected for Moose Jaw in 12 years. As well, many women hold management positions in city halls and town offices. However, statistics can be deceiving. According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, women hold 539 of Saskatchewan's 803 municipal Chief Administrative Officer positions; for many small communities and rural municipalities, levels of responsibility in these positions vary, and the work may not be full-time.

Women face barriers upon entering political domains including family responsibilities, discrimination and the perception that they can more effectively promote change through volunteer organizations. The most commonly cited barrier is a lack of information about how to get involved in politics. It was to

address this need that SUMA and BPW Saskatchewan are hosted the luncheon, along with the aim to encourage women to run for municipal council.

The keynote speaker for the event was the Honourable Joan Beatty, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. She shared her political experiences with the audience. For Minister Beatty, stepping into the public realm was an extension of the high level of community service in which she was already heavily involved. She noted to participants that circumstances will never be ideal to run for office; if people are interested in participating, they just need to run.

Minister Beatty's presentation was followed by Lenore Swystun, former councillor for the City of Saskatoon. Ms. Swystun challenged the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to aim higher than its goal to reach 30% female representation by 2026.



The event wrapped up with an address from BPW Saskatchewan. A total of 51 elected officials, administrators and members of the public attended.

"In the end, we want Saskatchewan voters to go to the polls and face a selection of candidates that accurately represents our diverse population," Councillor Randy Goulden, Director for SUMA said. Participation in elections, let alone an election victory, contributes to a healthy democracy.

Got Your Construction Permit?

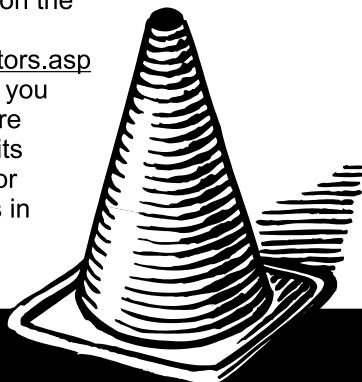


Saskatchewan Environment is reminding all waterworks owners, operators and permittees that The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2002, Section 21 requires construction permits to be issued for new or altered water and sewage works before any construction work begins.

Obtaining a permit ensures and provides certainty that the proposed improvements meet regulatory requirements before planning and construction begins. Obtaining a Permit to Construct works will help prevent costly modifications to the newly constructed, extended or altered works and will reduce the likelihood of compliance actions being imposed by Saskatchewan Environment.

Copies of the department's construction related application forms are available on the internet at:

<http://www.saskh2o.ca/foroperators.asp> under the "Forms" heading. If you are unsure whether work you are doing needs construction permits please call 787-6504 and ask for one of the Approvals Engineers in the Drinking Water Quality Section.



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UMAAS Editorial

by Rodney Audette, Zone 1 Director

The summer has quickly come and gone and everyone has used up the majority of their annual holidays. Now we administrators must prepare ourselves for a busy fall with upcoming municipal elections and the normal regular agendas of municipal administration.

As I contemplated the topic for this editorial, several possibilities ran through my mind - the price of gas, upcoming elections, daylight savings time, the Roughriders and employee recruitment/retention first came to mind. I have chosen the latter as the Roughriders have enough critics and, well I am writing this at 8:00 pm out on my patio and it is too dark to sit outside and see what I am writing down. (YES a little play on the old daylight savings issue!)

This issue of employee recruitment/retention is more important today than ever before. The lack of well-trained and educated labour resources have put a strain on a municipality's ability to recruit suitable candidates for public works, recreational and administrative managerial positions. Over and above are the financial costs that are tied to recruiting people to move to your community.

Recruitment is no longer the practice of putting a "help wanted" sign in the window; prospective employees must now be courted to your community and your council has to, in a sense, sell your community to entice new personnel to apply for positions.

When advertising for employment opportunities one has to take into consideration the material you are sending out. First, the scale

of the advertisement should reflect proportionally to the position that needs to be filled and how far reaching the recruitment campaign should be.

Secondly, one has to consider the logistical area to be covered when advertising an employment opportunity. Would it be effective to concentrate advertising in areas of low employment or in areas where there are, perhaps, a half of dozen or more advertisements for similar positions? Some homework should be done to find the best potential employee pool.

However, the key element not to be overlooked is salesmanship. Not only do you have to emphasize the position you are trying to fill, but also the positives of the community and what it can offer candidates and their families. Although sometimes it is difficult and

perhaps expensive to convey all the necessary information, it is still important to do.

Employer flexibility is also key in recruiting personnel. Employers have to work hard to accommodate the needs of personnel that are relocating. Moving costs, housing availability, the time of year (those with children are sometimes not willing to consider immediate moves if the school year is split) and the community's ability to welcome new residents are important factors.

The processes of employment recruitment have become more refined as employers try to find innovative solutions to fill vacant positions. Remember where it starts, though - page 1 of the Careers Section of the paper. Make sure all your homework is done and you will get positive results.

Lessons from *Cars*

by Brittany Staines, Communications Coordinator

Disney/Pixar's summer blockbuster, *Cars*, is more than a terrific family movie; it also contains lessons pertinent to the challenges Saskatchewan municipalities face.

Lightning McQueen is a young hotrod challenging for the Piston Cup. En route to a race in California, he unrolls from the semi transporting him and a series of wrong turns takes him to the struggling community of Radiator Springs. As McQueen panics, he does a lot of damage to the community's Main Street and local infrastructure until the Sheriff apprehends him and locks him up in the Municipal Impound.

Though the town leader, Doc Hudson, wants to banish the racecar from the community, Sally Porsche convinces Doc to sentence Lightning McQueen to community service. Before McQueen can be released to attend his race, he must tow Bessie, the paving machine, to repair Main Street. Through his labours, McQueen discovers community values, loyalty and the wonder of rural life.

Saskatchewan's cities, towns and villages can draw great wisdom from the themes represented in *Cars*.

Building success requires teamwork. In his quest for undivided glory, Lightning McQueen makes the early mistake of wanting to work alone. During his stay in Radiator Springs, he learns the value of teamwork as residents cooperate to rejuvenate their town. In Saskatchewan, Mayors need strong Councils, and Councils need strong volunteers in their community to build projects and opportunities. Communities that coordinate their efforts within a broader area (à la Clearing the Path) will excel.

Do not overlook the natural and man-made beauty of your surroundings. Sally Porsche was a big-shot in Los Angeles, but the big-city pressure caused her to crack. Needing an escape, she went for a drive and found Radiator Springs. She fell in love with the countryside and the community that embraced her. As the Town of Moosomin braces itself for the rerouting of the Trans-Canada highway, perhaps they will relate to Sally's regret that travelers opt to save ten minutes of driving time on the new Interstate instead of visiting Radiator Springs on Route 66.

Sally makes it her mission to bring Radiator Springs back to its glory days. It turns out that the town, with its fluorescent light signs, is so outdated that it is able to capitalize

on its vintage look. Moose Jaw, too, has benefited from the preservation of its history. Surrounding Moose Jaw are beautiful RMs. A little further, one will find enviable lakes and parks. Because our surroundings in Saskatchewan are familiar does not mean they are uninteresting.

Embrace your locals; they make the community. Before he ends up in Radiator Springs, Lightning McQueen's main fan base consists of rusty, folksy cars with whom he is embarrassed to be associated. The residents of Radiator Springs are much the same, but as McQueen cultivates relationships, he is overwhelmed by their generosity and loyalty such that he chooses to share the limelight with them. In Saskatchewan, our intentions are good and we help each other out. The residents make our communities tick.

Communities need young and old leaders; cultivate both. In the Radiator Springs courtroom, Doc Hudson and Lightning McQueen epitomize a familiar generational gap. In his inability to relate to the youngster, Doc wants to dismiss McQueen until Sally convinces him to sentence McQueen to community service. During McQueen's stay, he discovers Doc was a racing legend. Through a mentor-protégé relationship, they

work together to dominate the racing circuit and lead the community of Radiator Springs.

The initial conflict between Doc and McQueen calls to mind some young leaders' quests to obtain skateboarding facilities. Some older residents struggle to overcome their prejudices when, instead, the youth should be applauded for working for facilities that promote positive physical activity. In return, youth should learn from the wisdom of their elders. In a relationship of mentorship, the young and old will help the community achieve its potential.

At the end of *Cars*, Lightning McQueen achieves great fame and admiration in the world of racing with the help of a Radiator Springs pit crew. He remains loyal to those that helped him out and establishes his headquarters in Radiator Springs, putting the town back on the map.

Cars contains valuable lessons that relate to tourism, revitalization, teamwork, loyalty and leadership. If you don't find the themes from *Cars* strikingly relevant to the situations that Saskatchewan communities face, this movie will at least entertain you and make you want to go for a drive.

Develop Your Skills as a Municipal Leader

Local municipal officials are called upon every day to lead. They lead their fellow council members and administrators, their ratepayers, committees, councils, boards, and associations. With a strong vision for their community, they understand their business, their local people and what they want their communities to achieve. There is no limit as to what a dedicated and experienced municipal leader can do for Saskatchewan.

The Municipal Leadership Development Program provides a way for all municipal officials to develop their skills and gain the tools required to meet their responsibilities head-on. With five modules, tailored to councillors, administrators, reeves, mayors, and senior municipal staff, the program is designed to strengthen local government leadership. Whether you are a newly elected councillor or a reeve who has served for 15 years, the MLDP

will benefit you. The MLDP modules were designed by municipal organizations in Saskatchewan, to ensure the program focuses on your issues and concerns. The small class size provides interactive sessions and gives each attendee ample opportunities to ask questions.

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Kristin Dowler
MLDP Program Administrator
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October 17	Module 5	Nipawin
October 18	Module 4	Saltcoats
November 22	Module 1	Regina *
November 23	Module 1	Saskatoon *
November 29	Module 2	Kerrobert
November 29	Module 3	Vibank
November 30	Module 2	Cudworth
December 5	Module 4	Warman
December 5	Module 5	Herbert
December 6	Module 2	Weyburn
December 6	Module 3	Hudson Bay
December 12	Module 5	Kipling
December 13	Module 4	Holdfast

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Attracting the International Smokestack

In the field of economic development, business retention and expansion is today's catch phrase. It revolves around the idea that municipalities and economic development organizations would be better served to invest their efforts in businesses that already exist, rather than trying to attract the elusive smokestack that will "solve all of a community's problems." That does not mean that one must give up on the smokestack...

Weyburn has always had a complicated relationship with its vacant mental hospital. Though it holds so many unhappy memories of imprisonment and mistreatment, the complex is truly an impressive facility. The tree-lined

lane befits a resort; an outsider would hardly guess the building makes the citizens of Weyburn uneasy. Still, nobody in the Opportunity City saw potential in the hospital for their own purposes. Sun Country Health Region relocated the last remaining services from the hospital in 2004. Over the last winter, the heat was shut off due to the million-dollar energy bill. Though the building requires significant investment in renovations, there was significant public outcry to save the facility nobody wanted.

On June 15, a major announcement was made regarding the future of the mental hospital – the Province was turning the facility over to the City to market as it saw



The mental hospital in Weyburn may be converted into sales offices, showrooms and a shipping distribution centre for Chinese goods.

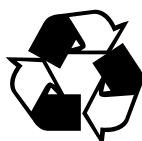
fit. The Weyburn City Council, led by Mayor Don Schlosser, the South East REDA and a group of committed volunteers were successful in their marketing efforts. A group of Chinese investors wants to purchase the building to convert the hospital into sales offices for shipping a wide range of products including clothing and furniture to North American retailers. In addition, part of the facility would be used for showrooms.

Mayor Schlosser visited China in late April to see first-hand the concept the investors have in mind for the facility. In China, as many as 300 manufacturers exhibit their products in one location for retailers who visit the facility on purchasing trips. Mayor Schlosser believes that the concept will work in Weyburn because Chinese products are so cost-competitive that North American retailers' are motivated to buy. Moreover, retailers' only other choice to view the products first-hand would be to travel to China. A journey to Weyburn would be much less expensive.

The Chinese investors respect the history of the mental hospital and are even considering restoring the exterior in its original historic style. If any changes are made, it may be an expansion to the already huge facility. At 500,000 square feet, the hospital is only a tenth the size of similar complexes in China. The operation could employ upwards of 600 people.

Mayor Schlosser indicates that the residents of Weyburn are highly receptive to the Chinese investment as the new operation will provide an enormous boost to the local economy.

The marketing of the Weyburn mental hospital represents a successful partnership between the city, economic development groups and the provincial government. Business retention and expansion is a worthwhile focus for many economic developers in Saskatchewan, but many will look with envy to Weyburn whose out-going mayor had his eye on a more ambitious prize.



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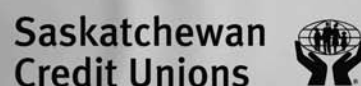
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Convention Update

As the date for SUMA's 102th annual convention fast approaches, we are constantly being reminded of the importance of finding new ways to sustain our urban municipalities.

The convention theme *Bold Leadership, Sustainable Communities* is another way of saying municipalities need strong leaders to tackle changes in government, the environment and society that impact their municipalities.

The convention forums, education sessions and discussions will provide your council with valuable tools.

Registration forms will be sent out in November – log onto the SUMA website at www.suma.org for more details!

Municipal Marketplace Trade Show

The Municipal Marketplace at the 2007 Convention will host over 160 booths with products and services to sustain your municipality and build on future growth.

Delegates have indicated they consider the tradeshow a major component of the convention. In return, the trade show exhibitors underwrite a major portion of convention expenses, which allows us to keep our registration

fees as low as they are. We recommend that you take the time to attend the trade show while you are at convention.

Booths will encompass the ground level of TCU Place in three separate and distinct areas; the new Grand Gallery, Regal A & B, then flowing into the back stage area. Continental breakfast in the tradeshow starts your day, followed by coffee breaks, lengthened lunch and dedicated tradeshow time on Monday allowing ample time for leisurely viewing and discussion with product providers.

What's new in 2007? SUMA has opened the door to product sales on the show floor. View the product, test the product on-site, save on shipping costs by taking it home with you after convention.

Viva Las Vegas

Ever wanted to take in the sights and sounds of Vegas? Join us on Sunday February 4th for great food, live music, casino tables and more. It's the atmosphere that only Las Vegas can provide. You won't want to miss performances by Elvis, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and more.....plus some lucky delegate could win a trip for two to visit Las Vegas in person.

Self-Insurance Update

SUMA has noted with interest the advantages our sister organizations have been able to offer their members through self-insurance programs for property and liability insurance. Even with the hardened market and the aftermath of increased pricing following 9/11, many of these programs were able to soften the impact of premium increases.

This spring, our actuarial firm noted that additional information was required. A separate questionnaire was sent out with a return date of July 31, 2006. The data has now been received and is currently being input for use in the feasibility study. We would like to thank all of the municipalities that completed the questionnaire. Member participation is a major key in establishing a successful self-insured program. So far 70% of the SUMA membership

has submitted data for analysis. All information will be kept confidential.

If you didn't receive the questionnaire that was included with the June edition of the Urban Voice please contact the SUMA office at (306) 525-4398 and another form can be faxed or mailed to you. The information requested may be obtained directly from your insurance broker.

Members of the Task Force on Self-Insurance include: Mayor Allan Earle, Vice President for Towns; Mayor Barry Gunther, Vice President for Villages; Councillor Al Heron of Eston; Councillor Donna Smith of Outlook; Michael Hotsko, UMAAS Executive and Doug Brown, Risk Manager, Regina.

Council and Group Benefits

More than 125 municipalities are providing group benefits for their elected officials. Is yours one of them? Do your elected officials have the group benefits they need? Will the needs of your council change with the upcoming elections?

When a person is elected to council they may not have benefits either because they are self employed or because their employer does not provide them. Making them available to council members can be a very attractive bonus. Members of council can either pay the premiums to the municipality themselves or premiums may be paid as part of a council member's compensation.

SUMA has a program of benefits for elected officials. Insurance coverage is in place 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and Health, Dental and Vision Care can also include family members. SUMA offers a broad selection of benefits for council to choose from:

- \$10,000 Group Term Life Insurance
- \$10,000 Accidental Death, Disease & Dismemberment Insurance
- Dental Care – 3 different Plans
- Extended Health Care – 2 different Plans
- Vision Care
- Optional Group Term Life Insurance for council member, spouse and dependent children
- Optional Accidental Death,

Disease & Dismemberment Insurance

Council, as a group, would choose which of these benefits they want. Life Insurance is compulsory but the other benefits are not. This is a group plan though, so all members of council would have to have the same benefits with the following exception: if council chooses Extended Health Care, Vision Care and/or Dental Care, any elected official who already has that coverage through another group plan can opt out of that coverage.

There are a couple of rules to keep in mind. Elected officials are only eligible for benefits if their employees also have group benefits. If council chooses Extended Health Care, Vision Care and/or Dental Care, the elected officials and employees must have the same Plan. Council cannot have a benefit that the employees do not have, however they do not have to have all the benefits that they provide for their employees. In other words, they can have fewer benefits than their employees but not more.

SUMA can provide your municipality with a price quote which would tell you exactly what a program of group benefits would cost for your council, there is no commitment to participate when requesting a quote. Please contact Shauna Brown at 306-525-4390 for more information.

CivicWeb

The Town of Porcupine Plain would like to thank iCompass Technologies for all the hard work and creativity in designing our new website. The staff at iCompass are exceptional – they are always courteous, accommodating and informative.

The Town of Porcupine Plain chose iCompass Technologies because of their unique web hosting qualities. One feature that was very important to us was having the ability to update the site "in house". We are able to ensure that the information on the website is as accurate and prompt as possible. The online training and technical support for the website are great resource tools for our staff.

To date, we have been receiving numerous compliments on the new site, particularly on the layout, events calendar and news pages. These compliments exemplify iCompass's abilities in being one of the best website hosts for municipal governments.

Again thank you iCompass for your dedication in making our website the best it can possibly be.

Alicia Kwasney
Administrator, Town of Porcupine Plain



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Reducing the costs and hassles in managing key administrative processes



Consensus-Building and Communications Mechanisms Key to Rural Economic Development

by Claude-Jean Harel



Quote

“Her valley of Saskatchewan alone, it has been scientifically computed, will support eight hundred millions.”

*W.D. Lighthall
Songs of the Great Dominion
1889, xxii*

One of my most vivid impressions of west central Saskatchewan stems from an archaeological field survey with the Saskatchewan Archaeological Society to document tepee ring configurations on the north bank of the South Saskatchewan River, south of Eatonia. The abundance of archaeological sites in this part of the world attests to the level of sophistication in economic activities around bison resources prior to European settlement in the region. The ancient societies that earned their livelihood over this territory had well-established trade and communications networks that relied on a collective willingness to keep corridors open, and agreed to common rules of engagement and diplomacy.

communities also know that there is greater strength in numbers.

The West Central Municipal Association (WCMA) represents 90 members and usually manages to motivate around 60 people to come to its meetings. The area it covers encompasses a good chunk of the province from the South Saskatchewan River in the south; east to Outlook; Rosetown and Biggar to the north; and back northwestward to North Battleford and Lloydminster.

The WCMA is one of those organizations that have grown by osmosis, out of an expressed need to create a rural-based forum to develop aligned policies aiming to ensure the long-term sustainability of rural communities in the region,

of people who are involved in it. We have all sorts of governments coming together here: urban; rural; school divisions; health authorities and other bodies. The West Central Transportation Committee, for instance, plays an important role in our activities. We get committee reports at each meeting. We have a report from SUMA. We have an Education Committee dealing with school amalgamation. From these proceedings, concrete actions emerge.”

Severson and his counterparts know that rural sustainability can only be achieved through the kind of rural economic development that

distance to call to Luseland which is 15 miles away? We are getting gouged. With our committee we can talk to SaskTel and SaskTel Mobility and they listen to us.”

Severson’s view seems the voice of common sense when he states: “who knows better than us the issues on the ground.” He is right. His group has the best vantage point and the power of communication does indeed transcend distance and isolation.

The ability of these member communities and local government bodies to sustain dialogue across



resonates with local populations and authorities. When asked what he feels the greatest contribution of his WCMA organization is so far, he answers this:

“Really, it is the communication between the municipalities. We know what is going on. Basically, the problems that urban municipalities have are the same as those of rural municipalities. And keeping lines of communication open allows us to move forward as a region. Hey! people talk to us. We have had MLAs and representatives from crown corporations working with us try to figure out what we can do.”

Severson mentions as an example how with SaskTel and SaskTel Mobility, being able to speak with one voice about the telephone exchange issue gives all the more credibility to the WCMA position. “Would it not make more sense to have larger areas so we are not in long distance all the time here? Take a look at the size of Saskatoon where you have nearly 300 people in one exchange, and it goes from 20 miles south of Saskatoon to 20 miles north, east and west too. Why should I have to pay long

the region on crucial topics will inevitably allow them to articulate a vision about their journey toward sustainability together. It will allow them to explore their collective identity, and tap into it to articulate projects that resonate among them. This will impart a renewed sense of confidence and cohesion to how the member communities portray themselves to the outside world as an attractive destination for investment in new industrial and, generally, economic endeavours.

While the South Saskatchewan River valley is not likely to welcome the hundreds of millions projected by Montreal lawyer and author W.D. Lighthall back in 1889, it is not unrealistic for the communities established north of the South Saskatchewan today to hope for the kind of development that fosters economic successes and bright futures.

Claude-Jean Harel is the founder of The Great Excursions Company. He is also a regular contributor to CBC Radio and Television.



I’m always baffled at how little we invent beyond the tools themselves. The fundamental choices we make as communities are based on age-old principles: gathering support for successful survival strategies and desired outcomes. In that, rural communities today are no different. They seek the kind of economic development that will allow them to survive and maintain a quality of life that brings fulfillment. Rural

says Committee Rural Co-Chair Stew Severson, who is also the Reeve of the Rural Municipality of Mariposa #350.

“It started out as an urban group about 15 years ago. My counterpart is Alma Dube, the Mayor of Rosetown. At one point they figured they should invite RMs to join. I have a lot of respect for the organization and the quality

Tangible Capital Assets Reporting

In 2002, the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants - Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) released the report *Accounting for Infrastructure in the Public Sector*. A key recommendation from that report was that municipalities should record and report their capital assets in their financial statements, including information on the condition of those assets. After consultation with various stakeholders, PSAB approved revisions to Section PS 3150, Tangible Capital Assets, of the Public Sector Accounting handbook.

Currently, municipal governments in Canada are required to prepare their financial statements in accordance with accrual accounting principles. The current local government standards are based on a modified accrual

accounting approach. Those standards do not require capital expenditures to be recognized as assets and amortized over their expected useful lives. This creates a situation where municipal financial reports are not consistent when referring to tangible capital assets; therefore, change in the practice is needed. The approved change will have all levels of government use the same basis of accounting and thus, improving the comparability and consistency in financial reporting.

Municipalities invest significant dollars every year on tangible capital assets. PS 3150 will affect the way those tangible capital assets are reported by every municipality in Saskatchewan starting January 1, 2009. It should be noted that no change in financial statements will be required for 2006 – 2008; how-

ever, in 2007 and 2008 municipalities will need to disclose additional information related to capital assets.

To assist this transition PSAB has approved Public Sector Guideline PSG-7, *Tangible Capital Assets of Local Governments*. It provides guidance on presenting information in notes or schedules related to tangible capital assets, and are applicable to fiscal years beginning on or after January 1, 2007. In addition, the Capital Asset Reporting subcommittee, comprised of representatives from SUMA, SARM, UMAAS, RMAA, various accounting/auditing firms and the provincial government will be working to develop documents that will assist municipalities through this process. Keep watching for updates as we move forward.

This new regulation represents a significant change in municipal financial reporting. Start early and become informed on what PS3150 requires. Should you be interested in reading more about the upcoming change, check out the following resources:

- Tangible Capital Asset Exposure Draft available at suma.org.
- CICA Research Study: Accounting for Infrastructure in the Public Sector.
- Government Accounting Standards – Helpful information on implementation currently underway in U.S. at www.gasb.org/rep-model/index.html.

Information for this article was taken from the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants and the Public Sector Accounting Board

City Mayors' Caucus: Impatience Over Funding May Prompt Action

City mayors are losing patience with the lack of long-term funding from the province and may soon become more publicly vocal if progress is not made in the weeks ahead.

Saskatchewan City Mayors and City Managers met on August 30th and 31st in Melfort. Among the highlights of their meeting were in-depth discussions on:

- Revenue sharing strategies
- Infrastructure needs over the next 10 years
- The process for reviewing amendments to the Cities Act
- Alternate revenue streams for municipalities
- Participation in the Provincial Urban Agenda discussions with Mike Harcourt and Provincial Departments.

In addition, Government Relations Minister Van Mulligen and senior officials from the depart-

ment spent most of Thursday morning with city mayors and managers discussing matters of mutual interests, including Revenue Sharing, infrastructure needs and comparative data from other provincial jurisdictions on alternate revenue streams.

The city mayors gave the Minister some five-year targets for additional Revenue Sharing and infrastructure funding and asked for a positive response before the end of September. A public campaign could quickly follow if action isn't taken to address the "fiscal imbalance" between provincial resources and municipal needs.

Sask Power President Pat Youzwa offered a luncheon presentation on the corporation's strategic direction with respect to capacity building and service delivery.

Advocacy Efforts Pay Dividends in Fighting Crystal Meth

Media coverage of Saskatchewan's Crystal Meth epidemic has somewhat decreased of late, however this drop in attention should not be construed as a dramatic reduction in the problem. Crystal Meth and many other dangerous drugs continue to be of major concern to our communities and SUMA is continuing to support all efforts to help fight substance abuse in Saskatchewan.

Great strides have been made since the Association began monitoring the situation in 2004, and SUMA members should feel confident and proud that their efforts have made a significant contribution in the ongoing battle against Meth. At the 2005 SUMA Convention, delegates passed three resolutions calling for action against this devastating drug.

Since that time, each resolution has been met with positive results. The Premier announced Project Hope, led by Minister Graham Addley. The Addley report contained recommendations for increased awareness, funding and treatment spaces. Later that year, SUMA supported both the Government and Opposition in their efforts to pass the *Youth Drug Detoxification and Stabilization Act of Saskatchewan*. Proclaimed on April 1, 2006, it was developed to provide families and care providers with options for accessing services on behalf of youth who are unwilling or unable to engage in voluntary service for severe substance abuse or substance dependence. The

Act is limited to situations where the youth is suffering from severe drug addiction or drug abuse and is at risk of serious harm or damage to himself or herself, or to another person.

The Province committed to a partnership between Saskatchewan Justice and the Meth Watch Coalition to prevent the use of common household products to produce meth, and to work with communities to begin implementation of the Meth Watch program. In addition, the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacists have worked diligently to have precursor ingredients moved "behind the counter."

Finally, at the Federal level, SUMA saw success when the Solicitor General announced that Crystal Meth would be reclassified so that those trafficking the substance could face the most severe penalties - 10 years to life in prison.

While SUMA can boast success in our efforts to date, we must remain cognizant of the problem and make every effort to support our law enforcement agencies. If you think that there is criminal activity happening in your community, stand up for what's right and call Saskatchewan Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS(8477) or your local RCMP detachment.



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Members' *voice*

Policy Analyst Cam Baker received a phone call from the Mayor of Choiceland indicating dissatisfaction with treatment and options provided from the Department of Highways and Transportation regarding the replacement of highway service information signs.

The Department, who requested that the signs be updated with costs to be covered by the municipality, stated that Choiceland must purchase the signs from the Department and have Department staff install them. The Mayor found the cost unreasonable and sought a price from a private supplier and proposed to have his public works staff install them for a significant saving. When he approached the Department staff with the proposal, he was told that Highways staff would promptly remove the signs if he used that option. When the Mayor suggested discussing the issue with the media, the Department staff agreed to allow Choiceland to use their public works staff but they would still be required to purchase the signs through the government.

The Mayor found the proposal reasonable, but felt that special

treatment for Choiceland would be inappropriate and requested action from SUMA. President Schlosser sent a letter to the Minister and received prompt replies from both the Department and the Leader of the Opposition.

Dear Minister Lautermilch:

"...SUMA finds this policy (of requiring municipalities to purchase and install signs through the Department) to be contentious as municipalities... are always looking to provide services to their citizens in the most cost efficient manner. While it is understood that there is a need for consistency in standards, SUMA contends that this policy places an unnecessary burden on our members.

"I am asking you to review this policy and make the appropriate changes that would allow municipalities, when required to replace signs, to purchase the signs from the supplier of their choice providing the signs meet the appropriate standards. In addition, SUMA is also requesting that municipalities be allowed to install the signs themselves, which would result in a significant cost savings."

Don Schlosser, SUMA President

Dear Mr. Schlosser:

"... I recognize the importance of cost efficiencies in the provision of public services, and understand the concern expressed by the Mayor Wayne Debler, Town of Choiceland. The department has started a review of the policy in this area and expects to propose changes over the winter.

"Our signing policy is designed to be equitable, requiring the department to pay for the cost and installation of community advance signs, while local communities are responsible for the costs and installation of the motorist service symbols on community advance signs..."

"I understand that my officials have made an offer to the Town of Choiceland to address this current issue. They will be in contact with Mayor Debler to ascertain the Town's decision regarding the offer..."

Eldon Lautermilch
Minister of Highways and Transportation

Dear Mr. Schlosser:

"... I am deeply concerned to hear examples of departments attempting to offload large costs on municipal governments - especially in instances such as this one where the municipal government had taken steps to reduce their cost substantially. Both levels of government should be working together to ensure that the costs borne by taxpayers are kept to a low level.

"I applaud the council of Choiceland for taking the initiative in finding ways to reduce the amount of taxpayers dollars required to provide for such services. I trust that they will continue to show such exemplary performance in the service of their community.

"I hope that in the future the Department of Highways and Transportation will change this policy in the interest of providing cost effective services to Saskatchewan citizens.

Brad Wall
Leader of the Official Opposition

Infrastructure Funding

Dear Minister Thomson:

"Much research has been done into the state of infrastructure in our province as well as nationally. Disasters such as North Battleford and Walkerton have highlighted the decrepit state of

our utilities and to a certain extent there is at least an awareness of the issues facing communities across our country within the walls of federal and provincial legislatures. This does not however mean that proper action has been taken to ensure that all members

of our society have access to safe and adequate drinking water. Many politicians would argue using such programs as fuel tax sharing and MRIF that they have addressed these issues but this couldn't be farther from the truth. The maximum that any MRIF grant is covering is 50% and because of the \$500,000 limit per project this is not even being achieved. The end result is that municipalities are accruing huge debt loads that will take decades to pay off.

"Recent research on the part of Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association found that within the province of Saskatchewan over 40% of recreational facilities are aging and are in need of large-scale renovation or replacement. As well, new facilities aimed at addressing population movement and relocation also need to be considered. A recent publication from SUMA outlined the expected infrastructure needs of Saskatchewan communities over the next 10 years in the range of \$410 per capita per year for cities up to as high as \$904 per capita per year for smaller communities. This was to replace and add infrastructure in the areas of transportation, environmental health, recreation and cultural facilities.

"Using the above numbers the question that needs to be answered at a federal and provincial level is where is this money coming from. Using current available population splits this would amount to \$640 million in 2007 alone. This amount tapers off with time, as it was felt that there was excessive catch-up required due to provincial and federal cut-backs dating back to the early 1990s. At a municipal level we cannot be expected to raise the patience of ratepayers... There is much talk from our governing bodies about the quality of life, especially with the provincial government promoting the quality of life in our province. This must be addressed and it will cost our communities billions of dollars. I must ask, are you willing to commit \$640 million a year to Saskatchewan communities? It only seems rational that as federal and provincial cut-backs are one of the key causes of this deficit that as your finances improve that you reverse the trend and start to bring this country back to where it belongs."

Wayne Piper
Councillor
Town of Osler

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New Energy Conservation Resource for Municipalities

The Saskatchewan Office of Energy Conservation (OEC) has launched the Municipal Energy Conservation website - www.municipalities.oec.ca. The site is designed specifically for municipalities, is operated by OEC and supports the Saskatchewan Municipal Energy Efficiency Initiative. This initiative is jointly promoted by SUMA, Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) and Saskatchewan Property Management (SPM) and is focused on lowering energy bills, thus enhancing overall savings to municipalities. Through special purchasing arrangements, municipalities can reduce the capital cost of specified energy-efficient equipment, allowing for replacement of their older, less-efficient equipment.

The new site provides municipal administrators with information on cost-effective, energy-saving opportunities and potential resource options. To take full advantage of the site's information, municipali-

ties can follow these three simple steps:

- 1) Arrange to have your offices and facilities visited by an OEC representative who will take stock of your current lighting fixtures and recommend ways to retrofit for potential cost savings.
- 2) Receive a discount on the retrofits by purchasing them through the Saskatchewan Property Management's (SPM) bulk lighting purchase program and have the retrofits installed.
- 3) Then log on to www.municipalities.oec.ca to keep track of how much you are saving and for other energy-saving tips. It's that easy!

The site also provides useful tools such as reports tailored to the operation of individual municipalities visited by OEC and an energy cost tracking mechanism. All rural and urban municipalities in Saskatchewan can have access to the system simply by signing up at www.municipalities.oec.ca.

The developments of the Municipal Energy Conservation website and related initiatives have been supported by the Government of

Saskatchewan, the Office of Energy Conservation and the Saskatchewan Research Council. For more information, visit www.municipalities.oec.ca.

Quote

"The launch of the Municipal Energy Conservation website will provide additional tools for our members to take full advantage of the opportunities to upgrade their energy-using equipment and to overcome obstacles to upgrading their facilities."

*Laurent Mougeot
SUMA Executive Director*

Contact one of the OEC representatives below to arrange an assessment visit:

Davidson and North Regions:
Darlene Dyck
Energy Conservation Coordinator
Office of Energy Conservation
Phone: (306) 964-1517
Email: dyck@src.sk.ca

Davidson and South Regions:
Rebecca Fiissel
Energy Consultant
Office of Energy Conservation
Phone: (306) 787-9381
Email: fiissel@src.sk.ca

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SaskWater-Echo Regional Wastewater Project Moving Forward

In November 2005, SaskWater and the Town of Fort Qu'Appelle announced their agreement to replace the community's aging and overburdened wastewater treatment system. Major construction on the \$5.8 million SaskWater-Echo Regional Wastewater project began in spring 2006, with the system expected to be operational by the end of the calendar year.

Built in the early 1980s, Fort Qu'Appelle's existing wastewater treatment system was no longer deemed acceptable by environmental standards. The system, composed of aeration, clarification, alum addition, chlorine disinfection, and de-chlorination, discharged treated effluent into the Qu'Appelle River. Despite making several improvements to respond to increasingly stringent regulations and the community's growth, the system continued to experience unacceptable variations in effluent quality. As well, the Qu'Appelle Valley watershed had been designated a 'sensitive area', which prompted municipal leaders to search for a "big picture" solution.

"The project was welcome news for the community as its current system has reached the end of its life expectancy," Fort Qu'Appelle Mayor Ron Osika said. "Instead of the town making the necessary investments in infrastructure, SaskWater will be assuming that responsibility. The agreement also relieves the town of many of the liability issues associated with operating a wastewater management system." The town is supporting the project by contributing a \$1.7 million Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program grant towards the cost of the new system.

With the community's success depending on the health of the local ecosystem, it was imperative for the wastewater treatment solution to be environmentally-sustainable.



Ron Osika, Mayor of Fort Qu'Appelle

After investigating several alternatives, SaskWater concluded that an evaporation pond was the optimal method for disposing effluent. This zero discharge solution will ensure no treated effluent is directly released into the lake system, preserving the ecological health of the valley.

The new system includes an aerated holding pond serving as the central collection point

for all of the town's wastewater, and a new transfer pump station constructed adjacent to the holding pond that will pump the wastewater out of the valley to a new sewage lagoon. A sewage forcemain crossing both the Qu'Appelle River and Highway 56 will transfer wastewater to the new lagoon, located north of the community on a section of land purchased by SaskWater. The lagoon, which will consist of a primary treatment cell and a secondary evaporation cell, is designed to provide an effective treatment area, sustainable storage volume, and limited operation and maintenance. The primary cell is sized based on an annual community growth rate of two percent for twenty years.

As of August, SaskWater has completed construction of the holding pond, which is currently being used to provide support to the existing treatment system until the final project is complete. The foundation for the transfer pump station is complete, with framing and equipment installation currently underway. The 4km sewage forcemain is 25% complete and construction of the lagoon is scheduled to start by the end of the summer.

Once the system is running, SaskWater's certified operators and engineers will be responsible for its ongoing operation and maintenance, and ensuring compliance with Saskatchewan Environment's regulations. The company will also maintain a comprehensive environmental monitoring program of the system as part of its ongoing dedication to meeting Fort Qu'Appelle's unique needs.

SaskWater provides competitively-priced, customer-focussed, quality water and wastewater services.



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Welcome Associate Members

SUMA is pleased to announce that the following organizations are SUMA Associate Members for 2006.

To become a SUMA Associate Member, a non-profit, non-commercial volunteer oriented organization must have a direct relationship with urban municipal governments. The purpose of this membership is to foster better understanding between the members and the interests represented by these organizations. We encourage you to find out more about these members. Links to their websites are found at suma.org.

- Association of Professional Engineers & Geoscientists of Saskatchewan
- Consulting Engineers of Saskatchewan
- Ducks Unlimited Canada
- Museums Association of Saskatchewan
- Roadbuilders and Heavy Construction Association of Saskatchewan
- Saskatchewan Arts Board
- Saskatchewan Assessment Appraisers' Association
- Saskatchewan Association for Resource Recovery Corporation
- Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police
- Saskatchewan Association of City Clerks
- Saskatchewan Association of Police Affiliated Victim Services
- Saskatchewan Association of Recreation Professionals
- Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres
- Saskatchewan Conservation & Development Association Inc.
- Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association Inc.
- Saskatchewan Emergency Medical Services Association
- Saskatchewan Emergency Planners Association
- Saskatchewan Federation of Police Officers
- Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation
- Saskatchewan Home Builders Association
- Saskatchewan Hotel & Hospitality Association
- Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy
- Saskatchewan Land Surveyors Association
- Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association
- Saskatchewan Volunteer Firefighters Association Inc.
- Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council
- SaskCulture Inc.
- SaskSport Inc.
- Urban Municipal Administrators Association of Saskatchewan
- West Yellowhead Waste Resource Authority