

Budget is in the eye of the beholder

Silk purse or sow's ear? Did the recent Provincial Budget truly offer "an unprecedented increase in the level of revenue sharing for Saskatchewan municipalities," as Government Relations Minister Harry Van Mulligen claims? Or did it result, for some municipalities, in less funding than received last year? Both perspectives hold some truth, depending on your vantage point.

Only 53% of new Revenue Sharing program dollars came to cities, towns and villages this year, with the rest of the \$30 million increase going to rural and northern municipalities. This is an "historical" but otherwise arbitrary split which doesn't reflect the fact that urban residents comprise 75% of the provincial population.

As one of several Provincial policy decisions, the urban/rural split in Revenue Sharing funding has been largely overlooked this year because of the overall size of the urban revenue sharing increase. The \$15.9 million boost was indeed twice as much as other increases to the urban program base received in recent years (not adjusted for inflation). Amounting to a 31 per cent increase overall, adjustments

made for 2006 census shifts made the increase 33% for the cities pool and only 27% for towns and villages.

Cities pool

The distribution of the cities pool itself was subject to another Cabinet decision. Most city mayors and managers had expected that the two-tier per capita system established in recent years for cities would remain in place during this "interim" year, leading to a longer-term funding formula for future years. But Cabinet decided to direct a portion of the increased revenue sharing dollars to lifting the cities of Saskatoon and Regina to the same per capita grant level as other cities. As a result, those two cities will see an increase of more than 40 per cent this year, while other cities will experience average increases of only 17 per cent, varying from 9 to 21 per cent depending on population changes tracked by the new census.

This particular disappointment—that a Regina and Saskatoon boost came at the relative expense of other cities instead of as bonus dollars from the Province—was deepened when comparisons were made with the total funding actually received last year. Half

of last year's increases, in March 2006, were said to be late 2005 payments and were not added to the program base. Only the other half of increases received for 2006, from the 2006-07 Provincial Budget, were added to the base. Because some cities and other municipalities used the full (double) revenue sharing increases in their 2006 operational budgets



President Allan Earle had mixed feelings about the Provincial Budget.

to limit property tax increases in that year, this year's increase can look, in comparison, like an actual decrease, especially with census number changes.

Towns and villages pool

Although the distribution of Revenue Sharing dollars to cities was announced on Budget day, it remained unknown for at least three

Continued on Page 3...

Inside this issue

It's the Budget Issue and on pages 1 and 3, you will find in-depth analysis of what the Provincial Budget means for your community.

Saskatoon shone on JUNO weekend.

SUMA Director Randy Goulden and Laurent Mougeot took part in an international development project in Namibia.

Urban municipalities are important stakeholders in the Transportation for Economic Advantage Strategy. Porky Porter shares some information.

f TILMA

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SUMA rallies with Save Our Schools

On a bitterly cold afternoon on March 23, approximately 250 residents from across the province rallied on the front steps of the Saskatchewan Legislature to convince the provincial government to halt the possible closure of 50 schools.

Rally organizers invited parents and students to speak to those in attendance about the impact these closures will have on their lives and the communities they live in. In addition, organizers invited the Minister of Learning, and the education critic for the official opposition to address supporters.

SUMA's Vice-President of Towns, Renaud Bissonnette was in attendance and took the opportunity to communicate to the rally



The possibility of school closures is an issue dear to VP Renaud Bissonnette and many SUMA members

SUMA's support for their efforts, "SUMA is asking for a minimum one year moratorium to review the

possibility of maintaining some of the schools for closure and that school boards consider the out-

look for economic and population growth when addressing school closures" said Bissonnette.

At the quarterly board meeting in March, the SUMA board overwhelmingly supported the minimum one year moratorium. Board members believe that many of these communities that are facing possible school closure are on the verge of benefiting from an economic boom. Urban municipalities have been working for years to create economic growth in many of these communities and the possibility of a school closure is a huge blow to that progress. Saskatchewan's towns and villages are looking to school boards to consider the impact these closures will have on the tremendous progress already made.

President's *Voice*



I don't know that I can top the excitement of Laurent's journey to Africa (see the Executive Director's message), but the release of the Provincial and Federal budgets in the same week sent SUMA into a flurry of activity.

In the Provincial budget, Minister Van Mulligen announced a \$15.9 million increase for urban Revenue Sharing and a \$20 million increase to the Building Communities program. We have been asking for an additional \$40 million for Revenue Sharing and an extra \$40 million for infrastructure funding. We appreciate the increases, although they do not reflect our need for a long-term, predictable strategy for an alternative municipal revenue source.

The Federal Budget was also met with mixed reviews from many, including my own. It was great to see a commitment to the Fuel tax until 2012, however the 5 cents per liter does not include an escalator clause and the program has still not been "cast in stone" making its removal still a possibility in the future. They also announced the new Building Canada Fund, which is essentially rolling all the infrastructure money we receive now into one large fund with a bit of an increase. We still don't know all the details on this program yet nor do we fully know how much

money is in it for Saskatchewan, but we'll let you know as soon as we know. Finally, I was at first quite happy to see natural resources removed from the Equalization Formula, until I read the fine print. It appears that Saskatchewan has been "capped" at a rate to ensure that we aren't higher than Ontario. By rights, we should be receiving some \$800 Million more per year. Myself and the SUMA Board feel that this is still an unfair deal for our province and are continuing to urge the Prime Minister to make good on his election promise. As you know, the Premier has pledged that one-third of any equalization money will go to relieving the Education Tax on property.

Following Budget Day, the SUMA Board of Directors held its quarterly meeting in Regina. We conducted an engaging discussion on the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA), and ultimately opposed this arrangement being extended to Saskatchewan from BC and Alberta. TILMA was negotiated between the two provinces without consultation with the municipal sector. It's not that the Board of Directors opposes the goals of trade expansion, it's that we are concerned for municipalities' local autonomy. If the province is to consider joining this agreement, we insist on being at the table, representing the interests of our stakeholders.

The SUMA Board of Directors will meet once again on the last weekend of April for a strategic planning session. This is a standard practice at the beginning of the three-year SUMA term that enables us to set direction and refocus. We are in a period of constant change, but with change comes opportunity. We embrace the challenges that lie ahead.

Mayor Allan Earle
SUMA President

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Executive Director's *Voice*

Saskatchewan has had a long history of contributing to international projects through FCM. In the early 1990s, the city Swift Current and SUMA participated on a number of missions in Africa. Everyone will also remember the great contributions of our dear colleague, the late Mike Badham, on the international scene.

In February, Councillor Randy Goulden, East Central Director for SUMA, and I had the opportunity to participate on FCM's most recent mission to Namibia. Intended to conclude approximately 13 years of municipal exchange programs between Canadian municipalities and Namibian local governments, this year's two-week mission delivered an updated strategic plan for the local administrators' association and a joint conference focussing on best practices in municipal governments. Randy has prepared a separate article outlining some of the key elements of the conference. You will find this on page 5.

My experience with ALAN, the Association of Local Authorities Namibia, was invaluable. It was interesting to compare notes with the employees and elected officials of ALAN on the challenges their association is facing. Much like SUMA, the association represents a broad spectrum of local governments, each with their own level of expectations and needs. The mayors of the larger urban centres have their own caucus to focus on issues that are more predominant in their municipalities. The association carries the voice of all local governments to the federal authorities (although there are regional entities, Namibia's local authorities mostly enjoy a direct relationship with their federal government).

ALAN is a dynamic, and to some extent is a self sustaining organization financed through membership levies. SUMA and ALAN have discussed means of increasing capacity by introducing corporate services to benefit members and generate additional revenues for the association. On the policy side, ALAN plays an advocacy role on behalf of local authorities. While many of the areas of interest are similar to SUMA's members, ALAN also works with its membership to address many pressing socio-economic problems, given the expanded role of Namibian local authorities in this sector. HIV related issues continue to pose significant challenges for local communities, and the great majority of initiatives in this area rest on the back of local authorities and NGOs. Of course, sustainable development, economic growth and financial stability (capacity) are predominant topics.

ALAN recently launched a website (www.alan.org.na) on which it describes its goals as "to protect, safeguard and enhance the image, interests, rights and privileges of Local Authorities by such means, as may be Constitutional".

Namibian elected officials and local administrators are fuelled very much by the same interests and passion as Saskatchewan officials do in delivering excellent governance to the residents of local communities. In terms of leadership and excellence, Randy and I saw many examples of programs which have significant relevancy for our communities. The capital city's water treatment plant has been attracting international attention



Laurent and Councillor Goulden make new friends in Katakura

by having successfully implemented a full and complete used water recycling program based on ozone and active carbon treatment. In North America, we treat water as a resource to be expended. I think Windhoek has a much healthier attitude toward the resource where water has a life cycle that sees all consumed water treated and returned to the system. I would not be surprised that within 10 years, many more communities in developed countries will consider this as a viable and sustainable solution to drinking water solutions.

We also saw a very active and prosperous business incubator centre targeting young entrepreneurs in Windhoek. This business centre is leading the way in attracting and developing small and medium businesses to create jobs and further expand economic development. We hope to share some of this knowledge with interested agencies across the province.

In conclusion, municipalities of Namibia respond very well to similar challenges that we face here in Saskatchewan. They are also called on to play a huge role in socio-economic problems. It made me grateful for the level of support we receive from other orders of government in addressing these issues.

Laurent Mougeot

Budget continued...

weeks what the distribution within the towns and villages pool would look like. SUMA continued to recommend, based on membership consultations over the last five years, a straightforward per capita distribution (with a small base grant) for all towns and villages. This would provide more transparency, predictability and, in most eyes, greater equity.

The good news in the Budget was that this year's revenue sharing increase would finally be sufficient to shift to a per capita distribution without any towns or villages suffering a grant decrease. This protection was one of the principles recognized by the department on Budget day, but there remained differences about how other "equity" issues should be addressed. The Minister apparently favours a return to some form of equalization formula.

The original Revenue Sharing formula, almost 30 years ago, did include some equalization provisions, and new models described by Government Relations would be similar. But few might be able to understand or support adjustments to "weight" (artificially raise or lower) population numbers based on variations below or above average property assessments. Similarly, other adjustments based on lower or higher than average mill rates, would raise the issue of whether those councils holding the line on property tax increases should be penalized with lower grants because they didn't display enough local "effort" to raise revenues.

SUMA President Allan Earle wrote to each member of Cabinet to encourage them to achieve the "win-win" option that SUMA members had been supporting for five years. At the time of publication, SUMA was still awaiting a response.

Meanwhile city mayors were planning to meet with the Minister to discuss their lower than expected Revenue Sharing grants this year.

Other Budget outcomes

Another \$9 million in Provincial commitments is being added to cost-shared Federal-Provincial programs like the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Program and the Urban Development Agreement, but any new Federal criteria for these programs under a new "Building Canada" umbrella remain unclear. The Province's own "Building Communities" commitment will rise to \$40 million this year (and next year when it expires), with the money designated for larger "regionally sustainable" projects.

The Budget promised that the 8% school tax rebates of the last two years would at least be retained if not increased to 10% pending implementation of Federal

Budget transfers to the provinces—drawing upon 30% of the one-time \$226 million revenue boost from the Federal equalization program. It is not evident how this funding is sustainable or how it will move the Province significantly closer to at least 60% Provincial funding for K-12 education, as recommended by the Education Tax Coalition.

Additional money for the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency (SAMA) should mean no increase in municipal requisitions for several years. Some of the new funding is to come from school boards out of their Foundation Operating Grant allocations. The Province did not follow the recommendation of SUMA to limit the collective contributions from municipal and school boards to no more than 40% of SAMA funding.

Revenue Sharing reconceived

For most of the last 20 years, urban municipalities in Saskatchewan have been focused on getting the Province to make good on its historic, legislated commitment to share revenues from four growing Provincial tax bases: corporate and personal incomes taxes, sales taxes and vehicle gas taxes. Each and every year, for more than two decades, Provincial governments have passed formal amendments, "notwithstanding" the legislation, in order to limit cities, towns and villages to an arbitrary increase—or decrease—in funding.

The Province has continued to provide "interim" funding increases almost every year since 2001, to gradually start to close the gap between legislated expectations and actual practice. But a more fundamental shift has also taken place, reflected in the new Urban Agenda (Municipal Sector Strategic Plan) process established to develop a longer-term funding plan by October 2007. This new exercise is based on a not so subtle shift from revenue sharing to cost sharing.

Cost sharing

The first crucial step is to come up with a "gap analysis" based on a rough assessment of how much of an interest the Province really has in key municipal services (say 25%, 50%, or 75%). A dollar total could be calculated to match the appropriate portion of municipal expenditures. This amount would then replace the gap based on historical commitment.

The second step is to track "cost drivers" that push municipal service costs upward, including inflation costs if not growing public demands. These types of measures might provide an es-

calator to apply to funding levels without rechecking the gap analysis every year.

These types of efforts, worthy enough in their own right, are a long way from pegging municipal funding to the rise (or fall) in Provincial revenues. It certainly looks to be more "conditional," although Government Relations officials say they don't want to undercut the unconditional nature of the Revenue Sharing program.

It also looks to be much like the type of analysis that Treasury Board applies to cost expenditures by Provincial departments, agencies, and even "third party" groups. The difference with municipalities is that they are democratically elected and accountable orders of government—the order which got shortchanged under the Constitution and now remains dependent on the good graces of provincial (and sometimes federal) governments.

New realities

At one time, Saskatchewan led the country in recognizing that property taxes were insufficient to support municipal services and that municipalities deserved a defined share of Provincial revenues. Recent efforts appear to be moving all parties away from revenue sharing and closer to a more closely scrutinized form of cost sharing. Blame the auditors, if you like, but don't call it revenue sharing among two (or three) orders of government based on mutual recognition of shared accountability. If the latest theories call for funding to be moved down to the level of greatest accountability, it looks like that funding is about to arrive with a lot more scrutineers in tow.

Whether or not you think that type of change to be a good thing, it appears to be the new reality.

Year of the Creative Person

Coming to the Urban Voice is a special feature on the ways Saskatchewan communities that celebrate the artists, musicians, writers and other creative people that add culture to our cities towns and villages. So far, we know of:
Regina's Cathedral Village Arts Festival, May 21-26
Moose Jaw's Prairie Arts Festival, June 28-30
Rouleau's Old Tyme Fair, August

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Saskatoon dazzles at the JUNOs

with contributions from Councillors Bev Dubois and Tiffany Paulsen

When Nelly Furtado floated down to the stage to open the 36th annual JUNO Awards, it marked the beginning of the end for the host committee of sixteen dedicated volunteers who oversaw the process of attracting, organizing and hosting a major Canadian event. The JUNOs weekend took place from March 30 to April 1 and enabled the city to market itself to the rest of Canada. Along the way, the organizers learned about the Saskatoon's unique identity as a major urban Canadian centre.

For the City of Saskatoon, hosting the JUNOs was a four-year journey that began in co-operation with Regina, Prince Albert and Moose Jaw. A group of volunteers from each community got together to attempt to sweep the major music award events of 2007. In May 2005, representatives from the four communities went to the JUNOs in Winnipeg to showcase Saskatchewan to the music industry. As the result of their success, Moose Jaw land-

on behalf of the City were multifaceted.

In the City Transit department, Park 'n' Ride routes were planned from malls to the Credit Union Centre for the Awards show. The Infrastructure Services department was involved in beautifying the city as much as possible, given the time of year. After the winter, street sweeping was an important activity. As well, they developed contingency plans for logistics in different types of weather scenarios. Security was an important service for protecting Canada's musical celebrities. Not only were 15 police officers required to provide security for CTV's red carpet event, but with so many visitors to the city they naturally had to increase their patrolling. Finally, many behind-the-scenes services were provided to meet the needs of the visitors including traffic control, private parking and security. Similar services are available for other events, but because they tended to be smaller in scope, only

Well before the JUNO weekend, the Host Committee called on the business community to get involved. There were many ways that local businesses could participate. Through Saskatoon Unplugged, local enterprises were encouraged to hire Saskatchewan musicians to perform in their places of business to showcase the

the events of the JUNO weekend. As an active member of the community, she has attended many events and galas that have come to Saskatoon, but for the JUNOs, she feels the city outdid all other efforts. The Saturday evening gala was the classiest event she has ever attended in Saskatoon. On Sunday, she was in awe of

Quote

"What is special about the people in Saskatoon, and I think it goes for people in Saskatchewan in general, is that nobody wants anything. They are happy to come out and give support without expecting anything in return."

- Mitch Riabko



Saskatoon was flooded with representatives from the music industry, including Canadian Idol judge Zack Werener, shown with Councillor Bev Dubois

ed the Western Canadian Music Awards, Regina got the Canadian Country Music Awards, Prince Albert got the National Aboriginal Music Awards and Saskatoon scored the crown jewel event of the Canadian recording industry – the JUNO Awards.

The City of Saskatoon was a critical partner from the beginning in ensuring the success of the event. Not only did they back the JUNOs with a contribution of \$250,000, but the city employees worked hard to ensure the seamlessness of the event. Mitch Riabko is a Human Resource Consultant for the City of Saskatoon and was invited by City Manager Phil Richards to represent the municipality on the Host Committee, based on his involvement in the music industry. The services he coordinated

certain city departments might be involved. The JUNOs required a unique level of coordination and partnership between the City and the JUNOs Host Committee because of the broad implications for the community.

With the JUNO Awards came a tremendous opportunity for Saskatoon to market itself. According to Todd Brandt, 2007 JUNO Host Committee Co-Chair and President & CEO of Tourism Saskatoon, the event provided \$14 million of earned media exposure, not to mention the impressions of all the visitors that filled all the hotel rooms and enjoyed the city's hospitality. Saskatoon's goal was to present itself as an interesting, vibrant community with lots of culture and many things to see and do. The business community played an important role in shaping this image.

talents of local artists. The Best Dressed Store competition encouraged businesses to decorate with a theme of Canadian music. Finally, restaurants and retailers were encouraged to offer a "JUNO special" promotion to showcase their Saskatchewan products.

In hosting the JUNOs, residents and members of the organizing committee learned about their city's identity within Canada. Representatives from the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences and the recording industry were also pleasantly surprised by Saskatoon's capacity in terms of facilities. They knew in advance that Saskatchewan has a strong volunteer base, but they raved to Riabko about the generosity of the Saskatoon public. He learned that "what is special about the people in Saskatoon, and I think it goes for people in Saskatchewan in general, is that nobody wants anything. They are happy to come out and give support without expecting anything in return." Visitors found the residents to be friendly, helpful and outgoing – characteristics that added established important rapport between the community and the recording industry and raised Saskatoon to a maximum level of professionalism.

Councillor Bev Dubois, SUMA Director for Saskatoon attended all

the 4,000 people who braved the wind and cold to come out to the Credit Union Centre to see the stars on the red carpet event.

By all accounts, Saskatoon did the province proud. Tickets for the Awards gala sold out in 15 minutes – a JUNO record. The visitors to Saskatoon, including the CARAS representatives from Toronto, were impressed by the enthusiasm of the locals who made them feel so welcome. The broadcast showed off the city's professionalism. Even the residents of the friendly rival City of Regina couldn't help but feel proud to be associated with Saskatoon by virtue of being in the same province.

With the Brier, the Saskatchewan Centennial Gala and the Vanier Cup, Saskatoon is building quite a track record for hosting events. The success of the JUNOs will undoubtedly open further opportunities for Saskatoon. Councillor Dubois is sure the event will return to Saskatoon – maybe within five to 10 years. Todd Brandt hardly has time to reflect. Next month, Saskatoon will host 6,500 academics over eight days for the 2007 Congress of the Humanities & Social Sciences Federation of Canada – another event that will put Saskatoon on the map.



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SUMA... Working internationally

by Councillor Randy Goulden

Like our colleagues across Saskatchewan, our council spends a great deal of time thinking about the condition of local roads, sewers, policing and many other grassroots issues. In my recent work with the Urban Councils of Zimbabwe (UCAZ) and the Association of Local Authorities in Namibia (ALAN) many issues are the same. However, the urbanization is more rapid with a large chasm between rich and poor. Almost half the population of Sub-Saharan Africa lives on less than \$1 a day and the life expectancy is 47 years. Municipal governments in Africa are also responsible for primary education, health care and housing.

SUMA has had a strong presence in Africa working first with UCAZ. All the funding for the partnerships has been provided by the Canadian International Development Agency.

The Zimbabwe partnership had many successes, including:

- office computerization
- strategic business planning
- development of a newsletter - *UCAZ Urban Voice*
- SMART Program – involvement of civil society in local government

UCAZ and SUMA worked together in strengthening local authorities in Kenya. The work with UCAZ led to the partnerships in Namibia.

Namibia won its independence from South Africa in 1990. With a population of 2 million people Namibia is slightly larger than Alaska. It borders the Atlantic Ocean, Angola, Botswana, Zambia and South Africa.

The SUMA/ALAN partnership began in 2004 when Mike Badham and I participated in a Partners Conference. The MPP Partners Conference brought together Canadian Municipalities and organizations and Namibian Municipalities for review and update of the ten year municipal projects. The conference highlighted the need for SUMA and ALAN to work together on building the capacity of the Namibian local authority association. Very quickly we identified similar mandates and responsibilities representing our memberships and promoting effective local governance and service delivery for the benefit of all in local governance areas.

And so the work began....with a delegation of African and Canadian partners joining the 100th SUMA Centennial Convention in February 2005. Our Namibian guests may have arrived in Saskatoon to cold, windy weather but were overwhelmed by the warmth and hospitality of the Saskatchewan municipal sector. They returned to Namibia with a better understanding of the Canadian municipal system, the relationship between the Saskatchewan elected officials and municipal administrators, governance / decision making processes, including how SUMA organizes, debates and adopts resolution, relationships with other orders of government and services provided by local government.

We continued the work for the next two years, resulting in the strengthening and capacity building for ALAN including strategic business planning, mobilizing financial resources to ensure sustainability of the association, strengthening the

ALAN/NALAO partnership along with their external partners and launch of their website – www.alan.org.na

All the work culminated in a very successful Municipal Best Prac-

and elected officials to learn from others and find new perspectives and approaches to improve the way services are delivered and the way municipalities are managed in Canada.

- Creates community linkages to



Councillor Goulden and Laurent Mougeot meet John Esterhuizen, Section Engineer of Water Resources in Windhoek

tices Workshop for Advancing Decentralization and Enhancing Local Government. All Canadian and Namibian partners gathered in Windhoek from February 26-28, 2007. The workshop produced the Windhoek Communiqué that was presented to the Minister of Regional Local Government, Housing and Rural Development, The Honorable J Pendeni. The Windhoek Communiqué is available on the ALAN website.

What has SUMA gained from the work and partnerships? The International programs address key factors motivating municipalities:

- Provides exceptional professional development opportunities for staff.
- Provides opportunities for staff

our municipalities.

- Facilitates business and trade.
- Enables participation in a Canadian and global municipal network.
- Helps develop appropriate local responses to borderless problems (SARS, HIV/AIDS).
- Builds social cohesion in our communities though increased global understanding.
- Contributes to building peace and goodwill in the world.

If you are interested in becoming involved in international work, visit www.fcm.ca.

My involvement has been very fulfilling and rewarding as we continue to work on international municipal development and capacity building.

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Transportation for Economic Advantage: Benefits for Municipalities

by Richard “Porky” Porter, Area Transportation Planning Committee Chair

Most people who live in Saskatchewan know we have per capita the most roads of any province in Canada - almost 190,000 km when you combine the grid road system and provincial highways. A network this large can be a blessing and a challenge. But we have an opportunity to realize the full benefits of this huge system with a new way of thinking about managing it at the municipal and provincial level.

On March 6th the province announced a \$5 billion, 10-year commitment to highways and transportation through a strategy called Transportation for Economic Advantage (TEA). I’m pretty familiar with TEA because I’ve been working with the department on this strategy as the Chair of the Area Transportation Planning Committee Chairperson’s Committee; the Chair of SARM’s Transportation Sub-Committee; and as a Reeve of the RM of Canwood. From these perspectives, I see a number of benefits.

To provide a bit of background, this strategy was formed in response to the changing needs of our economy and the state of provincial highways. Most of the province’s highway system was built in the 1960s and 70s to serve an agriculture-based economy. A lot has changed since then. The economy has diversified and expanded - mining, the oil and gas sector and manufacturing have grown. Nearly three-quarters of Saskatchewan’s economy is export-based. Agricultural commodities are being moved farther distances by road instead of rail. Commercial trucks are pounding out thin membrane surface (TMS) roads that were originally built for dust-free travel by local traffic.

TEA is based on the idea that the transportation network needs to be “realigned” to adjust to these changes. It doesn’t mean repaving all 26,000 kilometres of highways. It means identifying strategic transportation routes that will serve economic growth, attracting new business and ensuring our products get to markets across North America and around the world.

SUMA and SARM, First Nations, Area Transportation Planning Committees, industry and the federal government all have a role to play in making TEA a reality, whether it be by providing advice and guidance in determining priorities, through partnerships or financial participation.

There are six areas of investment: Rural Economic Corridors; Urban Connectors; International Gateways and Corridors; Regional Shortlines and Airports; First Nation Access Roads; and the Northern Economic Infrastructure Strategy.

The Urban Connector component is a plus for urban municipalities, providing a framework for provincial investment. Urban connectors are highways that flow in and out of urban centres. Our cities are the hubs for export trade, and seamless connections are needed to ensure continuity in the supply chain, improve inter-modal connections and support urban growth. Cooperation will be key to advancing progress on Urban Connectors, by setting aside traditional jurisdictional boundaries and developing meaningful partnerships and transparent relationships between different levels of government.

“Rural Economic Corridors” refers to a network of highways connecting to national and international trade routes. Right now there’s a core network of 8,150 km of primary weight highways, which grew last year to include another 1,200 km for nine months of the year. A

further 1,700 km has been identified for future primary weight expansion.

While the Highways and Transportation department was carrying out consultations to identify the network of Rural Economic Corridors, SUMA and SARM were working on Clearing the Path, our strategy to develop a seamless network of heavy haul corridors on the municipal system.

From the rural perspective, pretty much all the opportunities we have to grow our communities depend on being hooked up to export markets. With Transportation for Economic Advantage and the work we’ve done on Clearing the Path, there’s a real opportunity to integrate the provincial and municipal systems in a way that’s never been done before.

Another benefit to municipalities is the commitment to get real input at the local level. The province has created a Weight Advisory Committee, with representation from SUMA and SARM, Area Transportation Planning Committees and industry, to guide the development of the Rural Economic Corridor network.

For more information on the TEA strategy and how you can get involved, go to www.highways.gov.sk.ca or call the chair of your local Area Transportation Planning Committee.

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Waste electronics recycling now available

Waste electronics is a growing problem in Canada, and while they represent just a small percentage of the solid waste stream, unwanted computers, monitors, printers, televisions and laptops are taking up space in your landfill. Many of these items contain material that can be harmful to the environment.

A new program led by the electronics industry itself can help improve the local environment by diverting waste electronics from the landfill and utilizing local recycling solutions.

The Saskatchewan Waste Electronics Equipment Program (SWEEP) was launched in February. Under the program, consumers, business and organizations can take designated used electronic items to any SARCAN Depot for recycling. SARCAN Depots will also accept existing stockpiles of electronic waste but large waste generators should contact SARCAN directly to make an appointment and for shipping instructions.

Computer-related products that can be taken to SARCAN depots include desktop and notebook computers, monitors and desktop printers. "Multi-function" or "all-in-one" devices (i.e. print/fax/scan) are also accepted. The program includes televisions or any video display device with an imbedded television tuner, including CRT, flat panel (plasma or LCD) or rear projection technologies.

SWEEP expects that more than 1,000 tonnes (2.2 million pounds) of electronic waste will be diverted

from landfills each year. In just two months of operation the program has collected more than 200 tonnes (447 thousand pounds) of waste.

The key, however, to making a difference is making sure that all purchasers of electronics aware that there is a better place for their old laptop, printer, or computer than in your landfill.

To help inform consumers about this new program, SWEEP will provide brochures to your municipality at no cost to insert in your municipal mailings, or to distribute in any way you see fit.

A sample was inserted into this edition of the Urban Voice. Posters are also available.

The brochures can be ordered online by going to www.sweepit.ca and clicking on the "order more cards and posters" link, by e-mail at contact@sweepit.ca or by calling 1-888-350-655 (extension 200).

SWEEP is a non-profit product stewardship association whose members are the manufacturers, distributors, and retailers of electronics products. Its Board members include representatives from the electronics industry, retailers, municipal government, the Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council, and Saskatchewan Environment.

The program is funded through environmental handling fees paid by consumers on the purchase of new electronic equipment.

Grant funding available for municipalities

Planning a community improvement project? Sprucing up a playground? Landscaping a park? Repaving a street?

The Saskatchewan Scrap Tire Corporation (SSTC) has a Community Demonstration Grant Program that might be able to help.

Up to \$5,500 is available in matching funding for capital projects that make use of recycled tire products. Financial support may be obtained to help with the purchase, transportation and installation of such items.

The program is open to all municipalities, schools, non-profit

community groups, and First Nations and Metis settlements within the province.

Join the many Saskatchewan communities that have already benefited from this program.

The deadline for 2007 grant applications is May 30.

For more information on the Community Demonstration Grant Program, or to see the many types of products being made from recycled tires, visit the new and improved SSTC website at www.scraptire.sk.ca, or call the Scrap Tire office at (306) 721-8473.

Provincial Green Strategy needs municipalities

SUMA Vice-President Fred Clipsham told a media scrum at the launch of Sask. Green Strategy that the key roles for municipalities in any action plan are not fully acknowledged in the report released on Thursday, April 12.

The "final" Green Strategy (available at www.se.gov.sk.ca) is the Province's "first government-wide" report on "how we are delivering" on sustainability. This strategy will now evolve into another Sustainable Development Strategy for government departments and agencies by 2008 "with the support of the Minister's Council on Sustainability and Climate Change."

The initiatives listed under the Green Strategy include familiar federal-provincial infrastructure programs as part of a "community engagement" plan. The report also makes passing reference to waste recycling programs, some ongoing and one described as "as an interim measure (to) support municipal solid waste management improvements and address recycling program operating deficits in 2007."

A pre-Budget announcement on March 21 had pledged \$415,000 for "16 regional waste management authorities to assist with municipal recycling systems in smaller communities." This falls far short of a previous interim payment and of the amount needed to sustain municipal recycling until a Multi-Material Recycling Program is finally put in place.

In order to supplement earlier program announcements, the Green Strategy was accompanied by a list of further initiatives estimated to cost \$7.5 million. Most of these commitments focused on energy conservation and public "education and engagement."

As Councillor Clipsham reminded the media, municipal roles still need to be better defined and funded as part of implementing the Green Strategy. The good news about the latest strategy is that it raises expectations for all government agencies and not just for Sask. Environment department programs.

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AssetPLUS FAQ



VADIM Software is a SUMA Advantage partner that offers financial software for municipalities. Their newest product, AssetPLUS, helps municipalities report and track depreciation on Tangible Capital Assets. Here is more information.

Will this software meet my PSAB 3150 reporting needs for 2009?

Yes. In addition to standard depreciation reports built into the system, there is also integrated report generator that allows you to build your own report formats and reuse these. Specific depreciation reports for asset depreciation are included as part of the application and print on standard laser printers on 8 1/2" x 11" paper.

Consolidated financial statements can be done in your Municipal Finance software, using the built in financial statements

capability. AssetPLUS can provide the information for the financial statements by a General Ledger Journal Voucher upload or through built in Depreciation Reporting in summary.

How flexible is the application to meet my needs?

AssetPLUS's key design point is flexibility. Users can create and modify screen and report templates with ease. System administrators can modify templates to meet work flow needs. You can enter fields as a tentative and confirm later allowing you to create locations and estimate value and then return to enter actual values later. The design mode allows you to the flexibility to change titles, add fields and modify data sets.

How easy is it to enter data in the application?

Data entry is streamlined and only

has to be entered once in the central data base. This design allows everyone to see updates, changes and depreciation calculations live time by anyone using the system. Data entry options can be selected by users based on what is most productive. Data can be entered into drop down fields, into a tabular (spreadsheet) approach for faster entry or large data volumes, and there is also the ability to identify specific fields information as recurring for automatic input to each record. Larger files can be uploaded from Excel spreadsheets with full user control of the import process and layout. Once entered there are many ways to look up the information from the central data base.

Can I expand reporting capabilities?

If in the future you wish to expand the reporting capabilities the CartêGraph work manager

through CALLink is available and share the same database tables. AssetPLUS can also function as an asset repository for CartêGraph's WORKdirector application and by sharing these database tables allows an easy upgrade to an enterprise work and asset management. AssetPLUS is built to be integrated with work orders and asset tracking, as opposed to manual creation dual entry for work orders.

What types of depreciation will the report calculate?

Currently the depreciation is straight line for all assets. We are developing an update of the application with the full range of depreciation methods which we are working on in partnership with CartêGraph.

For more information, please contact Darrell Webster at 306-728-2923.

Welcome Lexcom!

SUMA Advantage welcomes Lexcom Systems Group Inc. to provide cutting edge Information Technology services to our members. Lexcom is one of Saskatchewan's largest growing technology services companies. Founded over 10 years ago, Lexcom's focus is on improving the way their customer's do business. The newest product that Lexcom offers is their SMARTServices program. SMARTServices customers enjoy the benefits of increased productivity and security with no daily IT worries.

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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.

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Administrator, Town of Porcupine Plain



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Saskatchewan Crime Stoppers feature

The following are some of the Unsolved Crimes currently posted on the Saskatchewan Crime Stoppers website. You can view these stories at www.saskcrimestoppers.com. If you have any information about these crimes, please contact Saskatchewan Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS(8477); or you can leave a Tip online using the "Submit a Tip" feature found on the website. Remember, Saskatchewan Crime Stoppers is totally anonymous and your information could be worth a reward of up to \$2000.00!

SaskPower property damaged

Police indicate that sometime between the evening of Tuesday March 27th and the following day, a SaskPower reactor box was shot at with a high-powered rifle. This caused the reactor box to fail and resulted in approximately \$10,000.00 in damages. The reactor is located approximately four and a half miles south of the Town of Bellegarde.

Department of Highways break-in

Police report that sometime between February 9th and 13th a Saskatchewan Department of Highways trailer parked on Grid Road 642 near Bethune was broken into. The trailer had been moved to Yorkton after the 13th and it was there that employees realized the trailer had been broken into.

Stolen from the trailer was: 4 first aid kits, 2 welding masks, 2 transits, 3 transit legs and 3 sets of extendable survey sticks. Department of Highways estimates the cost of this missing equipment to be about \$3000.00.

School vandalized

Saskatchewan Crime Stoppers is asking for the public's help in identifying the culprits that spray painted graffiti on the walls of the Christopher Lake School. Prince Albert Rural RCMP state that this incident occurred sometime between April 5th and 6th.

Cash and cheques missing

Saskatchewan Crime Stoppers would like your assistance with a theft from the Herbert Co-op on March 25th.

Morse RCMP report that two unidentified males entered the Herbert Co-op three times on the 25th of March. The third time the men entered the store the younger of the two men distracted one of the clerks while the other man entered and exited the store. It was later discovered that an undisclosed amount of cash and cheques were gone.

Dodge vs. Chevy - Dodge wins!

Martensville RCMP and Saskatchewan Crime Stoppers are asking for your help in locating the driver of a Dodge truck that was involved in a hit and run on Thursday March 15th.

Police state that at 10:30 AM on the 15th, a newer, white Dodge 4x4 extended cab was travelling

west bound on 4th St South when the driver lost control and slid into the front end a 1993 Chev pick up. A witness to the incident stated that the Dodge had a white water tank in the box of the truck. The witness also noticed that it was a male driver, with a female passenger and a small child in the Dodge.

Rock thrown through window

Melfort RCMP are asking for the public's help in identifying who threw a rock through the front window of a house in the 200 block of Stovel Ave. W in Melfort. Police indicate that sometime during the early hours of Thursday April 5th, unknown suspect(s) threw a rock through the window of the house and then fled on foot.

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TILMA: Municipal concerns

In 1994, Canada's provincial, territorial and federal governments recognized a need to reduce and eliminate barriers to the movement of goods, services, investments and people within Canada to develop a stable domestic market. The result was the creation and signing of the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT). A section within the AIT allows for the creation of additional bilateral or multilateral agreements that enhance trade and labour mobility.

In April 2006, the Governments of Alberta and British Columbia took advantage of this opportunity and signed the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA). Under the authority of the Agreement on Internal Trade, TILMA will liberalize trade, investment and labour mobility beyond the level required by the AIT between the two provinces.

TILMA came into effect on April 1, 2007 and will only affect provincial government measures pertaining to trade, investment and labour mobility. However, the agreement is scheduled to be fully implemented by April 1, 2009 at which time will extend to all municipalities, school boards, publicly funded academic, health and social service entities, financial institutions, financial services and Crown Corporations. During this two year period, the governments of Alberta and British Columbia will be consulting with these organizations to negotiate any required special provisions or exclusions.

As the debate builds around the implementation of TILMA, several organizations including the Fraser Institute, the Conference Board of Canada, the Canada West Foundation, The Council of Canadians and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives are providing their take on the merits and pitfalls of TILMA. Most of these observations fall within the scope of the provincial government, although a few have addressed the implications for municipal governments.

As the full implementation of TILMA will not occur until 2009, it is unclear at this time what impact this agreement will have on the urban municipalities of Alberta and British Columbia. Any suggestion of a specific outcome is solely based on speculation and interpretation of the agreement. However, these observations are extremely helpful in determining the positive and negative implications for Saskatchewan's urban municipalities.

Supporters of TILMA believe that this agreement will increase economic productivity and efficiency, create new investment and provide businesses the opportunity to bid on projects across the border with free access to compete and succeed in that market. In addition, TILMA will create a harmonized regime of business regulation that will make it easier for companies to operate and invest in both provinces, freer movement of skilled workers, and greater competition in government procurement leading to lower costs for taxpayers in both provinces.

Opponents to the agreement are concerned that TILMA would threaten a government's ability to offer support to struggling regions, that it provides too great authority to the arbitration panel to impose fines on government bodies and that provinces would be required to harmonize regulations leading to potentially weaker legislation. Even greater concern is the possibility that environmental protection policy would be at risk to challenges from business.

Within the context of municipalities, TILMA could have some far reaching implications, despite the currently stated protections and limitations. Some possible scenarios that could occur include challenges to:

- land use restrictions
- controls on pesticide use
- rules applying to signage
- business subsidies/grants to encourage development in certain locations within municipal boundaries
- housing standards and purchasing programs that favour local or regional suppliers and contractors.

In addition, TILMA could hinder a municipality's ability to introduce any new bylaws or regulations that may infringe upon the principles of this agreement.

The governments of Alberta and British Columbia have assured their respective municipal associations that these scenarios would not occur under TILMA. However, should an individual or business choose to challenge these measures, the

provinces have the right to jointly declare their interpretation of the agreement to make their intent clear.¹

At the March 2007 SUMA Board of Directors meeting a motion was passed opposing Saskatchewan's involvement in the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement. However, should the Province of Saskatchewan choose to begin negotiations with Alberta and British Columbia to join this agreement, Saskatchewan's urban municipalities should be fully engaged at the negotiation table beside the Province of Saskatchewan. It is the position of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association that our cities, towns and villages are governed by Mayors and Councillors who are duly elected by the citizens of their communities and, therefore should be treated as an autonomous order of government. Since urban municipalities will be affected by this agreement, then as an order of government we should be included in the negotiations, not simply consulted after the fact, as is happening in Alberta and British Columbia. Saskatchewan has made a similar consultation pledge – if it decides “to keep open the option of accession to TILMA.”²

If the Province of Saskatchewan does not support municipalities being a part of the negotiations, then the cities, towns and villages in Saskatchewan should strongly demand a complete exemption from this agreement.

¹Letter to UBCM, AUMA and AAMDC from the Governments of British Columbia and Alberta, available at http://www.gov.bc.ca/ecdev/down/joint_municipal_letter_nosig_signed.pdf

²Letter to Town of Meadow Lake from Minister Harry Van Mulligen: March 20, 2007.

Saskatchewan Publications Centre

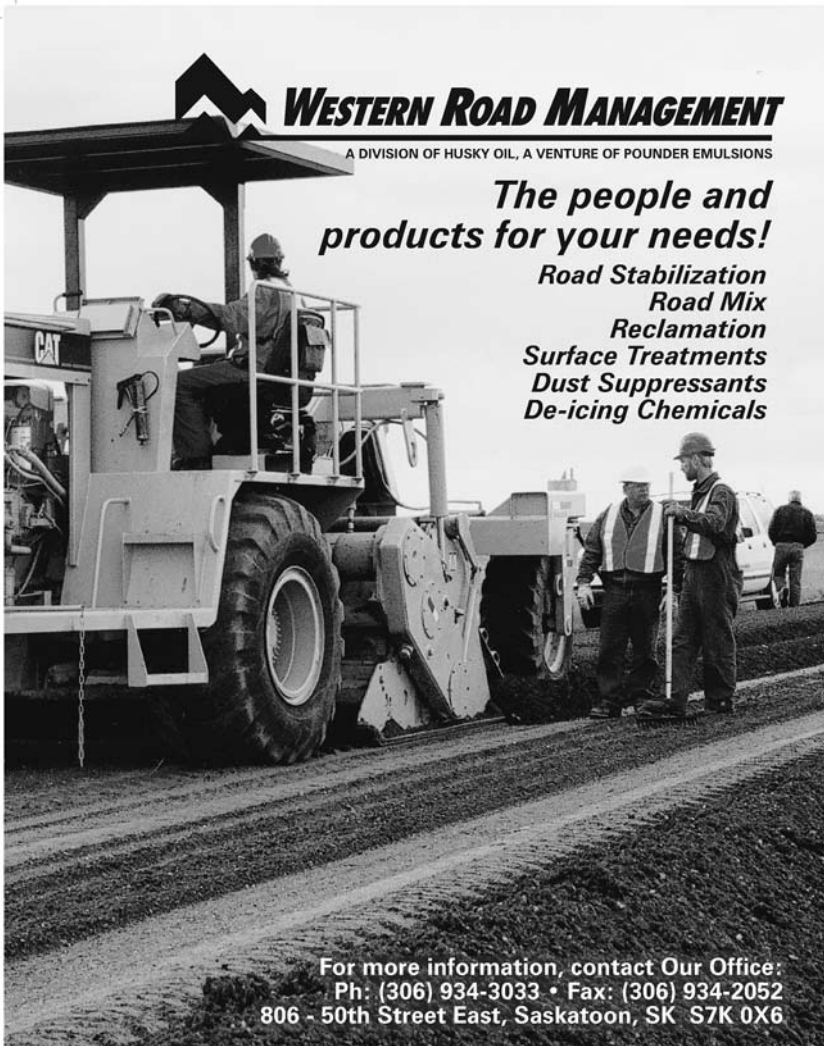
Governments throughout Canada have, in the last few years, been attempting to be more transparent to give their citizens the ability to quickly and efficiently access information on policies, programs and services. The government of this province is undertaking just such a program, Saskatchewan Publications Centre, spearheaded by the Queen's Printer for Saskatchewan.

Over the last year discussions were held to develop a common “storefront” for public access to all government publications. Given the experience of the Queen's Printer, it was chosen to lead the new initiative. In the succeeding year 37 government departments, crown corporations and agencies have signed on to the centre as well as 9 non-government organizations.

With the provincial agencies continuing to increase their participation in Publications Centre, consideration was given to expanding the list of partners in the

information catalogue. Letters were sent to towns and villages in Saskatchewan inviting the municipal governments to list any bylaws or publications such as local histories or brochures on the Publications Centre website. Thus far several communities have replied listing their bylaws or indicating that they intend to place them on the site. One respondent indicated that this Centre was a wonderful tool to allow her council to research legislation in other jurisdictions and that she was more than willing to share any bylaws, regulations, forms or studies with any other municipality in the province.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the participation of your municipality in Publications Centre. Please contact Marilyn Lustig-McEwen, Queen's Printer for Saskatchewan at 787-9345 or Justin Butler, Editor of Publications Centre at 787-6948. To review the contents of Saskatchewan Publications Centre please visit www.publications.gov.sk.ca.



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