



SUMA's Perspective on Budget 2010-11

On March 24th, the Saskatchewan government introduced its 2010-2011 provincial budget. While the province's tough line on cost controls may be needed to manage its fiscal difficulties, the challenges presented by its choices will be felt by municipalities for some time to come.

No one was surprised with the announcement that Municipal Operating Grant (MOG) will be held to the same level as last year. At SUMA's February convention, the Premier promised that the agreement his government made with the municipal sector will be restored in its next budget. With the prospect of receiving the full point of PST revenue in 2011-12, the municipal sector expects that this year, that promise will be kept.

Municipalities are vital engines of economic growth. Thriving urban communities are critical to attracting and retaining top talent. The province's inability to inject new money, even for one year, into municipal infrastructure, jeopardizes the viability of these communities and therefore the long-term economic health of Saskatchewan. The budget did include \$23.4 million for infrastructure, and another \$57 million was announced in the weeks preceding the budget. While these an-

nouncements are welcome, it is important to note that these funds were previously committed and represent the provincial share of federal infrastructure programs. Without reliable infrastructure, economic progress is constrained. With a significant municipal infrastructure deficit, even one year of inadequate funding can make the problem worse. In this next year, SUMA will hold the government accountable to its commitment to negotiate a Made in Saskatchewan program for funding municipal infrastructure. We will be looking to the province for a predictable and sustainable stream of funding.

As part of its budget austerity efforts, the government announced significant cuts to Enterprise Saskatchewan. These cutbacks, when passed on to the newly formed Enterprise regions, will result in reductions of 25% to each region. As the government's flagship initiative following the last election, the drastic reduction in regional economic development funding is troubling. While the full impact of this reduction is still unclear, concern has been raised that municipal members will be the primary target to help offset budget losses for these regions.

Likewise, cutbacks to the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency (SAMA) have threatened to create operational difficulties and present a challenge to the organization's long-term viability. With an unexpected cut of \$1.1 million, SAMA's total budget will actually be \$2.2 million less than requested. As with the Enterprise regions cutbacks, the impact of the SAMA reduction is still unclear. However, the net impact on SAMA's ability to deliver services and respond to new programming and service demands may be significant.

Although details are still emerging, some government programs that involve or impact our communities have been reduced or closed. To date, SUMA is aware that

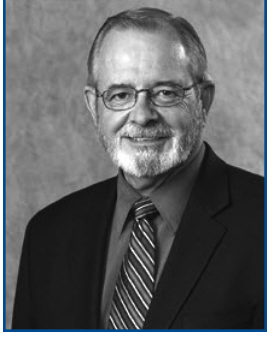
the Dutch Elm Disease program and the West Nile Virus program have been eliminated. SUMA will continue to work to identify other programs and services that have been reduced or eliminated as part of the budget. Members are encouraged to contact SUMA if they have any related questions or concerns.

The above mentioned budget and program cutbacks evoke the spectre of downloading. As the order of government closest to the citizens, municipalities are often called on to 'fill the gap' when other orders cut funding. Whether it's providing temporary operational funding support to Enterprise regions, or funding third-party agencies to deliver key health and environmental programs, the expectation that municipalities will be there to provide support comes with a price tag. The current government has strongly and repeatedly opposed the downloading of responsibility without adequate funding to support it. The province must identify a plan to ensure that the gaps created by its funding cuts can be filled without municipal contributions. Any agreement between the province and the municipal sector on new municipal responsibilities would be contingent on new funding arrangements, a discussion which to date has not taken place.

Ultimately, while Saskatchewan's municipalities face a series of unanswered questions from this budget, the foundation of our provincial economy remains quite strong. If there is a lesson to be learned by the government through this budget, perhaps it is that municipal councillors are also community leaders, and as such most every decision the province makes is important to them. Through a more consistent and engaged consultation process, the province can ensure the municipal voice is heard, thereby improving its decision-making. SUMA stands ready to participate in that process, continuing to preserve and defend the interests of urban municipalities.

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Spring is just around the corner and soon the hot Saskatchewan summer will be upon us. I am always amazed at how quickly time passes. As I compose this message for the Urban Voice, I realized that it has been over a month now that another successful convention was hosted in Regina. Every year this event gets better and I know from the overwhelming positive feedback from members that I am not the only one who has made this observation.

The 2010 convention offered so much in the way of educational opportunities, informative speakers, events to interact with colleagues from around the province and access to provincial MLAs and cabinet ministers. In addition, we broke a record in trade show displays, companies were knocking at our door to get access hours before the doors opened – these companies know where the action is. Our conventions are exciting, informative and extremely well organized. This is all accomplished through the hard work of our convention co-ordinator and the entire SUMA staff. All members should be grateful for their dedication and hard work.

As this convention followed the 2009 municipal elections, the selection of a new executive was required. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the members who supported my re-election to the office of President. Since 2007, I have enjoyed my time as President, advocating on behalf of urban municipalities in Saskatchewan. I look forward to continuing in this role over the next term. I would like to welcome Mayor Rolly Zimmer to the executive committee as the newly elected Vice-President of Towns and also acknowledge the contributions made by Mayor Renaud Bissonnette during his time on the executive.

The first meeting of the new board took place at the end of March. Our meeting was successful, with much of the discussion focused on the impacts of the 2010 provincial budget on municipalities. In April, the board will engage in a strategic planning session. The intent of this session is to identify SUMA's priorities for the next three years and develop strategies to achieve them. Information on the session outcomes will be communicated to the membership within the next few months.

As the President it is my duty to represent all urban municipalities. Over the next three years I will continue to work on your behalf to advance the interests of our cities, towns, villages and resort villages. If at any time you want to discuss an issue, please feel free to contact me.

President Allan Earle



Over the next few months SUMA, along with representatives from municipalities from all over the province, will become increasingly engaged in formulating a long term infrastructure funding strategy for the municipal sector. Our target for finalizing this work is fall of 2010.

The parties have already shared some of their respective expectations from the new program. These include:

- A sustainable funding program for sustainable projects;
- Increased public accountability;
- A program which is less dependent on federal investment strategies and more adapted to local priorities;
- Contributions which are not tied to municipal contributions; and
- More per capita contributions than competitive programs.

As our discussions with the Ministry are getting deeper into research and policy development, it is interesting to note some of the principles which have been introduced in similar programs across the nation. I certainly expect that these statements are likely to surface during our meetings at the various MSSP tables.

Of course, given the shared interests in growth opportunities and quality of life, all orders of government must be prepared to share funding responsibilities where circumstances warrant. The difficult questions will be staged around a number of key points which will affect the final distribution of the fiscal responsibilities between municipal, provincial and private interests.

It is becoming more generally expected that users of services and developers must pay the infrastructure costs attributable to them. While numerous municipalities have adopted full (or near) cost recovery levies for service expansion and operations, this concept may challenge many smaller municipalities where the rate structure of user fees and development levies are not reflective of the actual costs. Shared best practices from other urban centres should be investigated by those municipalities.

CEO Laurent Mougeot

Another common argument is that municipalities must be more accepting of the fact that long term borrowing to finance capital work is an essential part of the infrastructure management strategy – if the life span of infrastructure exceeds that of one generation, is it fair to place the entire burden on the back of current taxpayers? The flip side is that financing costs draw significant dollars away from buying pavement and concrete. Most municipalities wish to maintain a healthy debt load, preferably on their way to being debt free.

As demonstrated in the Gas Tax program and other recent federal funding streams for municipal infrastructure, the protection of public health and the environment is becoming a pre-requisite for qualifying for such grants.

As stated by northern municipalities here and in other provinces, new funding infrastructure programs must also take into consideration regional differences and geography. Burying water and sewer lines in bed rock costs more than digging through clay or silt.

The regional potential of projects is also likely to receive additional attention, as a means to improve efficiencies, quality and sustainability. Where more than one community can cooperate on a project, it is likely that these options will be required to receive more scrutiny than in the past.

From a municipal perspective, Canadian municipalities have been united on this: the costs of new regulation must not outweigh its benefits and financial assistance must accompany new legislation.

More challenging for the developers and land buyers, the concept that "growth must pay for growth" is also one which is being entrenched in best practices by many municipalities which are tackling growth related infrastructure projects.

Over the next few months, the municipal sector and the province will have a chance to weigh the public-policy considerations around these concepts with the objective of developing our own set of guiding principles. For sure, one of the key questions will be how can we ultimately satisfy residents, developers and provincial taxpayers by providing good value for the funds invested in our local infrastructure.

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Partners' Program – A Big Hit!

"I congratulate the organizers for this event, everyone was friendly and courteous. I will definitely be looking forward to the 2011 program with great enthusiasm!" This is just one of the many rave reviews the 2010 Partners' Program received.

The program was held over two days and started each morning at the Regina Inn.

The program kicked off with the musical entertainment of Cecile Denis who plays the Celtic Harp followed by breakfast and a little shopping at Sisters Glass.

The first event took the group to the Legislative Building for a tour and to hear MLA Deb Higgins speak on what it is like to be a woman in politics. The afternoon was followed with a session on "Revamping the Old You" and a behind the scenes tour of Sysco Foods. Those that participated in the Sysco Foods tour raved about it. The biggest disappointment was that more were

not able to participate in the tour because of the limited number of spaces available.

The second day had part of the group going to Lajord Hutterite Colony to tour the colony, participate in a craft and have a home cooked meal. The other part of the group took part in an interactive Belly Dancing class with Linda Lablonski. Many commented that they could not wait to find a class in their home towns so they could continue with what they had learned.

The afternoon had the group once again split with the choice of two sessions. One group sat in on the "Revamp your Home" presentation followed by a shopping tour to some of Regina's finest home decor shops. The other group took a behind the scenes tour of CTV Regina to see what goes on in the news room.

Many exclaimed that this was the best partners' program to date and were looking forward to returning in 2011!

2010 President's Banquet Award Recipients



Front Row (left to right) Fyfe, Richard, Earl Grey; Hadubiak, Eleanor, Buchanan; Unchulenko, Robert, Esterhazy; Uhlow, Deborah, Kamsack; SUMA President Allan Earle; Skikewich, Carla, Yorkton; Kuzyk, John, Hafford; Goulden, Randy, Yorkton; Ivanochko, Richard, Yorkton; Hammett, Garry, Bienfait.
Second Row (left to right) Puffalt, Bob, Wolseley; Garrett, Robert, Radville; Lanning, Maxine, Porcupine Plain; Signarowski, Gloria, Yorkton; Hornung, Ken, Earl Grey; Schmidt, Alvin, Earl Grey; Hahn, Dianne, Swift Current; Woloshyn, Darlene, White City; Zsombor, Ed, Pilot Butte; Ziprick, Tom, Allan.
Third Row (left to right) Koch, Russell, Humboldt; Tkachuk, Don, Hafford; Budvarson, Darryl, Swift Current; Smith, Ronald, Kyle; Mack, Norm, Estevan; Edwards, Larry, Wawota; Senft, Alvin, Lipton; Aldous, Stan, Balcarres; Bieber, Blair, Yorkton; McFarlane, Jack, Carnduff.
Absent: Bender, Arthur, Swift Current; Bosch, Dave, Martensville; Burns, Ben, Estevan; Currie, Pam, Estevan; Deadlock, Michael, Estevan; Denys, Rob, Estevan; Eben, Glenda, Swift Current; Halyk, Rod, Humboldt; Mack, Norm, Estevan; Macknak, Larrie, Dysart; Niles, Carla, Estevan; Rudd, Darcy, Swift Current; Stadnyk, Lloyd, Humboldt; Sutter, Kevin, Estevan; Tyler, Bob, Biggar; Wilkie, Larry, Unity; Doherty, Jim, Carrot River; Duncan, Robert, Kisbey; Loustel, Terry, Buena Vista.

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Brandt CEO Addresses Delegates on Saskatchewan Success

Saskatchewan's recent growth and success is due in part at least to the ongoing work of urban municipalities. Today, the province leads the nation in economic development, with increasing demand for commercial and residential building permits, a strong housing market and record breaking population growth. All of this has generated a tremendous amount of excitement for our future.

Therefore, it was important to the SUMA Board of Directors that for the 105th Annual Convention the topic of growth and success be a focal point. In particular, the Board was looking for an individual that embodies Saskatchewan's success. It is no surprise there-

fore that Gavin Semple, CEO of the Brandt Group of Companies – Saskatchewan's largest privately held company – was the choice as keynote speaker at convention.

Mr. Semple delivered a message that spoke of what individuals, municipalities and companies can achieve with a positive attitude and a lot of hard work. Delegates learnt how Semple started off as a Brandt sales agent, climbing the corporate ladder serving in various positions to eventually become majority shareholder in the company. Mr. Semple took what was a small Saskatchewan company manufacturing agricultural products and through vision and dedication transformed it in to an inter-

national company engaged in manufacturing agriculture and engineered products, selling heavy construction equipment and building railroad maintenance equipment.

Mr. Semple attributes his company's success to smart business practices, but also to the dedication of his employees. He suggested to delegates that the best investment any business can make is in its employees. It is vital that employees possess the necessary knowledge to stay ahead and help in advancing the goals of the company. To cement this position he told the story of how he was having a conversation with a colleague regarding the cost to train staff. He remembers asking the question, "What happens if we train staff and then they leave?" His colleague's response has since become part of Semple's philosophy, "What happens if we don't train them and they stay?"

SUMA delegates were very fortunate to have Mr. Semple at convention. His message was as inspiring as his story and that of Brandt. As we enter another decade, many of our communities and our businesses are poised for sustained growth and success. Hopefully Semple's message provided insight regarding the model to support that growth.



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Energy Efficiency = Reduced Energy Costs for Saskatchewan Rinks

SaskPower Eneraction heard your requests to make Saskatchewan ice rinks more energy efficient and affordable to operate; and we are acting! Over the next 5 years, rinks in the province will have the opportunity to participate in SaskPower Eneraction's Municipal Ice Rink Program (MIRP). By mid-2010, we expect that 12 rinks will have an on-going energy efficiency improvement solution in place and be retrofitted with cost-effective, energy-efficient equipment. Once those rinks are completed we will move across the province providing interested rinks with the same solution tailored to meet their needs. Rinks with artificial ice will be selected based on those that express interest at www.saskpower.com/rinks.

We realize the money is tight at most of the rinks in the province, so how will rinks afford to pay for this program?

By making these energy efficient improvements to your rink's operations and equipment you can expect to save between 40%-60% in both electricity and natural gas costs. The on-going energy efficiency improvement solution will help secure financing and clearly measure the energy savings achieved. These savings will be used to pay for the improvements, thereby enabling rinks to make cost-effective improvements today since they will pay for themselves. Once the improvements are paid off, the energy savings go straight to the facility's bottom line.

Replacing your old, inefficient equipment is not the whole picture when trying to lower your energy bills. That's why the on-going energy efficiency improvement solution will provide your facility operators with training on how to run the rink as efficiently as possible with a combination of real-time data and detailed reports telling them how well they are doing compared to past performance and other similar facilities. In addition, there will be regional education and training workshops for all rink operators to participate in.

So how does MIRP help us make facility improvements?

As part of MIRP, we will do a facility assessment to identify what upgrades and improvements are needed. This includes a baseline study that compares the energy usage of your rink in past periods and to other similar rinks. This study shows us the efficiency of your operations and equipment, as well as what the energy saving opportunities are for your specific rink.

Based on this study, MIRP will provide recommendations of cost-effective improvements taking into account all applicable grants or subsidies and calculating the value of the expected energy savings. Based on this information, you, the municipality, decide what improvements to make.

Once the municipality decides what improvements to make, MIRP helps you implement them. MIRP will provide project management, grant/funding application assistance, financing/loan application assistance, commissioning and verification, education and training, and on-going reporting.

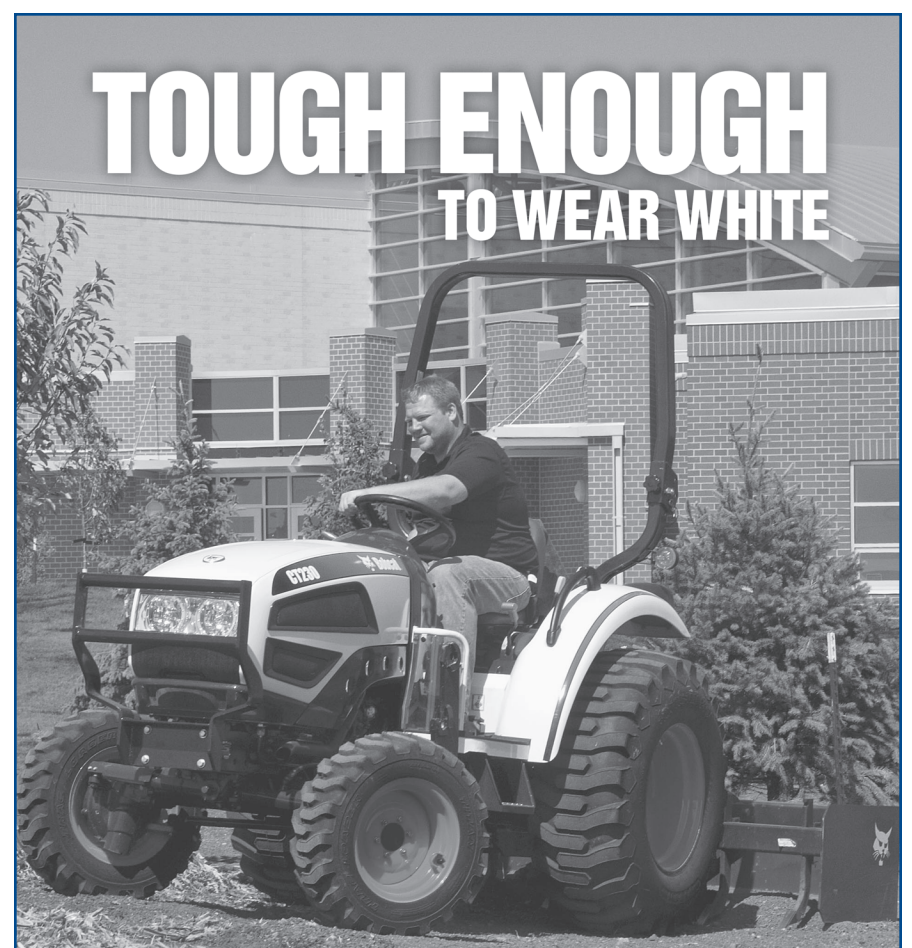
After your retrofit is complete MIRP will continue to provide monitoring of energy usage and work closely with your staff to ensure operation of your rink continues to be as efficient as possible. As new technologies become available MIRP will investigate them, assess their benefit and contact those rinks in which it would be cost-effective to implement.

As you see, the MIRP is a total package. The on-going energy efficiency improvement solution will remain in place for the long-term in order to ensure that you experience real energy savings, that the improvements are cost-effective and that your facility is designed to be as energy efficient as possible. This is accomplished within your existing budgets all the while ensuring that the service you provide your community is of top-quality and increasingly affordable.

How can my municipality's rink participate?

If you are interested in the MIRP please express interest by contacting the program manager using the customer inquiry form at www.saskpower.com/rinks ("Contact the Rink Program Manager") or by email directly at ktischler@saskpower.com.

By knowing the number of rinks that want to participate we may be able to secure better funding from Provincial and Federal government departments and programs. Together we can make your rink more energy efficient, cheaper to operate and sustainable for the future.



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Saskatchewan Legislative Interns Attend the SUMA Annual Convention

by
Craig Fink, Sheena Gordon, Elise Lonie, and Michael Selnes
 2010 Saskatchewan Legislative Interns

Thanks to the generosity of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, legislative interns from the Saskatchewan Legislative Internship Program (SLIP) attended the annual convention as observers for the ninth consecutive year. As always, it was a tremendous learning experience. Each year, the interns leave the convention with a greater understanding of the unique circumstances of individual municipalities across the province, as well as the overarching challenges that bind municipalities together as they search for broad solutions.

The Saskatchewan Legislative Internship Program is a joint program of the University of Regina, the University of Saskatchewan, and the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. Interns are paired with MLAs from both sides of the Legislative Assembly, spending three months with an opposition MLA, and three months with a government MLA. This year's interns are Craig Fink (who is paired with MLAs Warren McCall and Greg Ottenbreit), Sheena Gordon (David Forbes, Glen Hart), Elise Lonie (Tim McMillan, Judy Junor), and Mike Selnes (Randy Weekes, Sandra Morin).

Interns are given a variety of non-partisan tasks by their MLA mentors, including preparing briefing material, undertaking research, writing, and assisting with constituency matters. However, the primary goal of the intern is to learn. Interns attend many other conferences and events (including conferences held by SARM, SAHO, the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, the FSIN, as well as the conventions of the Saskatchewan Party and the New Democratic Party), and meet with everyone from the Provincial Ombudsman to the Chair The Public Service Commission. They are also planning to meet with mayors of several communities in Saskatchewan.

Interns also learn by travelling. There is so much to be learned by observing how communities meet the challenges of governance outside of Regina, and beyond the borders of Saskatchewan and Canada. In addition to extensive travel within the province (which takes interns from Estevan to the McArthur River Uranium Mine in northern Saskatchewan), interns undertake an out-of-province study trip each year to learn from the legislative and governmen-

tal processes in those locales, and to compare them to our home-grown traditions and institutions. Last year, interns travelled to Ottawa, London, and Berlin. This year, Ottawa remains a destination, with a side-trip to Toronto to meet their counterparts with the Ontario Legislative Internship Program and learn about Ontario's governmental and political systems. The 2010 international destination has not yet been confirmed.

This year's group of interns were present for the final three days of this year's SUMA convention, and attended many of the sessions and presentations, often splitting up to cover as much ground as possible. The breakout session "Learning to Govern: Leading your Municipality" was a particular highlight for intern Craig Fink, who noted that "municipalities have so many responsibilities, and resources are always too scarce to meet every need. It seems that strategic planning and strategic governance are crucial to make sure that resources are used as wisely as possible".

In another notable breakout session, "Roundtable Discussion: Challenges facing City Fire and Police Services", intern Sheena Gordon was impressed by the City of Moose Jaw's positive ticketing initiative, observing that "rewarding noble behaviour can establish trust and open a dialogue between police forces and the communities they serve, particularly the youth in those communities".

Other highlights included the Premier's Address, the Dialogue with Ministers, and the Bear Pit with Cabinet – it is always informative to observe government talking directly to stakeholders, particularly when the entire cabinet is at the same place at the same time.

In addition to those events, the voting on the resolutions gave the interns an inside look at how a large organization like SUMA makes internal decisions in an efficient and professional manner. Dissenters were given ample time to voice their disagreements, and occasionally amendments were made. Most importantly, it seemed as though different communities respected each others' needs, even if the priorities of the communities within SUMA vary

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Saskatchewan Legislative Interns...

widely. This year's legislative interns would like to thank SUMA (particularly Mr. Sean McEachern) for its openness and hospitality. The interns learned so much, and attending this fantastic

convention is an integral part of the internship experience.

If you know of a university student who might be interested in participating in the program or if you want more information, please contact Ken Pontikes, SLIP Director at kpp985@mail.usask.ca. The application form and other information about the program and the current interns can be found at www.legassembly.sk.ca/internship.

Thank you to all of our Sponsors

SUMA would like to acknowledge and thank all our sponsors who helped to make the 105th Annual Convention – Building Momentum a success. The following is the list of sponsors:

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South West Region
June 1 in Shaunavon

West Central Region
June 2 in Elrose

North West Region
June 3 in Blaine Lake

North East Region
June 4 in Melfort

Central Region
June 14 in Nokomis

East Central Region
June 15 in Saltcoats

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June 16 in Wolseley



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The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations (2007/08) require that all employers conduct an examination of the skills for each Operator permitted to operate Power Mobile Equipment. ATAP is conducting five regional 1-day train-the-trainer courses this spring:

Meadow Lake, Apr 6 / Melfort, Apr 8 / Kerrobert, Apr 13 / Yorkton, May 4 / Lumsden, May 5

More information and registration forms for the above training sessions can be obtained from our website. Each regional 1-day course is **\$350.00 per person**, plus GST (\$367.50), and includes training materials valued at \$100.00.

Registration forms and information may be found
online at our newly designed website: www.atap.ca

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Comprehensive and Cost-Effective Water & Wastewater



Intermunicipal Cooperation: Collaborating Efforts for Success

Submitted by: Dana V. Schmalz, MCDP

Local priorities dealing with sustainable development, economic development, utilities, or the delivery of services can easily be addressed through regional action. Approaching your neighboring municipality is not as difficult as it may seem; it is very similar to the way we approach our neighbors who live next door. However you choose to work together, collaborating efforts holds promise for benefiting municipalities by finding solutions to common problems. Intermunicipal cooperation is an effective way for municipalities to work together to tackle issues of mutual concern and issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries.

There are many similarities between the way we view the neighbors that live next door to us and our surrounding municipalities. You may not know your neighbor but there could be ample opportunities to collaborate efforts. For example, if you wanted to build a new fence in between your house and your neighbors then the first likely step would be to call them to discuss the opportunity to divide the expenses. Similar to municipalities, if there was a need to hire a bylaw enforcement officer for an area it would be a good idea to approach the neighboring municipality (ies) to share the services and divide the costs.

Regional partnerships are the most effective way for municipalities to succeed. Collaborating efforts increases the quality of the economic, political, social and environmental aspects of life. Some of the benefits of Intermunicipal Cooperation include:

Share knowledge. All communities are at different levels of development and can benefit from the assets and experience of one another. (i.e.) Relationships with particular developers or government organizations, successful grant proposals, etc.

- **Effectively deliver services.** Per-unit costs of delivering services decreases with intermunicipal cooperation. Lower costs allow for the delivery of more efficient and effective human services. Resources can be used more efficiently. (i.e.) Joint Economic Development Officer, Joint Building Inspector, Shared Planner, Sharing of Equipment, etc.
- **Focus on a regional level.** Economic and social developments



are increasingly regional rather than local. Instead of attracting people on a municipal level, focus on a regional level. A regional approach creates security as part of a larger body. It also allows for better opportunities for grant approvals and general success when taking on numerous initiatives. (i.e.) Tourist attractions, health, schools, recreational services.

- **Plan for growth.** Population is continuously changing which creates numerous challenges for municipalities. Challenges such as service provision and infrastructure development can be accommodated through cooperative approaches.
- **Consistent Planning.** Consistent land use and zoning bylaws reduce the ability of developers to play one municipality off of another. Consistency avoids confusion and opens up the door for better development opportunities.
- **Increase the quality of life.** Intermunicipal cooperation can increase morale and pool solutions to issues that communities are facing- enabling communities to better understand the problems they and their neighbors are facing and develop collective solutions. It allows for the spread of innovative ideas and expands service choices.
- **Strengthen.** Sharing of risk, control and benefits. Regional partnerships decrease the risk that a municipality would have when working on its own. The cost reduction in shared services allows for more

funding in other parts that are lacking. Authority is equally distributed for regional issues which allows for better individual governance at a municipal level. Overall, it creates a more efficient, effective and innovative municipality.

- **Ensure uniformity.** Intermunicipal cooperation ensures that doubling of services does not occur. It provides equally for the region as a whole while increasing the quantity and quality of services.

There are numerous ways for municipalities to cooperate. Depending on the group and their objectives the ways of cooperating may vary. Below is a list of potential regional opportunities for cooperating municipalities.

- Water treatment, transmission and distribution
- Sanitary sewage collection, transmission and treatment
- Storm water management
- Solid waste management
- Garbage collection and or recycling
- Land use planning
- Road maintenance
- Infrastructure management
- By law enforcement
- Administrations/ governance
- Policing
- Fire and emergency services
- Recreation
- Economic development
- Property assessment
- Affordable and seniors housing
- Permits, inspections, etc
- High speed data transmission

No matter what form of cooperation municipalities undertake, regional partnerships are an excellent means towards success; they are the most effective way to improve municipalities and establish solutions for certain issues. Working together allows municipalities to create opportunities and benefits that are endless. Information included in this article is from the Municipal Capacity Development Program's **A Guide to Municipal Cooperation: Succeeding in Regional Partnerships**. To access the complete version of the Guide or the Quick Reference Guide please visit our website: www.municipalcapacity.ca Click on "Resource Materials" and then "Intermunicipal Cooperation"

Summary of Convention's Education Sessions

On the Sunday before Convention's official opening, SUMA hosts education sessions for members. These sessions are generally selected based on the priority issues identified by members throughout the previous year. This year at Convention, there were nine different topics presented, all of which were well attended by delegates. Below is a brief summary of each of these sessions. In some cases, presenters used PowerPoint slides to provide information. You can find these PowerPoint presentations on the SUMA website under Events, and Convention 2010.

Changes to Municipal Financial Statements

In preparation for the 2009 financial reporting period, this session served as a review for administrators of the changes to the financial statements that were presented at the October 2009 financial statement workshops. The session was a condensed version of the October presentation that focused on the necessary changes from the old system of financial reporting to the new system. Layne McFarlane, the lead presenter at the October sessions, was brought back to conduct this session and was made available to attendees to address any questions or concerns they had.

Environmental Liability for the Public Sector: Keeping Environmental Liability off the Ledger

Municipalities manage a wide spectrum of environmental exposures, including risks both common to any other business or corporation, and others specific to the public sector. A presentation from Kate Dodge of Aon Reed Stenhouse, looked at the regulatory and legal pressures driving municipal environmental liability, exactly what the new definitions of environmental liability include (i.e. where municipalities are often exposed to risk), and insurance based risk management solutions to protect municipalities.

Regional Waste Management: How are you taking out your garbage?

Blake Nesbitt from the Ministry of Environment and Grant See from the Association of Regional Waste Management Authorities of Saskatchewan shared their experience on regional waste management in Saskatchewan. Nesbitt updated delegates on the proposed results-based regulations and possible impacts on municipal landfills. Regional waste management is a good way for municipalities to share the costs and liabilities of operating a landfill. See echoed Nesbitt's analysis and shared his story of creating a new regional waste management authority. He encouraged municipal leaders to think 'regionally' and work with their neighbours for solutions.

Models for Delivering Health Care in Small Urban Centres

Many Saskatchewan communities struggle to keep local health care services at a level that matches the expectations of citizens. As communities grasp at ways to recruit and retain health care professionals, it may be time to look at how we provide local health services and what alternatives exist. SUMA brought together four different perspectives on a panel to allow for an open discussion on health care models. Dr. Phillip Fourie was there representing the Saskatchewan Medical Association; Donna Magnusson from Saskatchewan Health; Colleen McNichol on behalf of the Nurse Practitioners Association of Saskatchewan; and the session moderator, Dr. Tom McIntosh from the University of Regina. The consensus from amongst the panelists is that the days of one-doctor clinics are long gone. Today's clinics require at least three physicians to be viable, and sustainable clinics will likely be interdisciplinary. The nature of the new physician clinic model means more communities will need to look at the nurse practitioner model of local care. While this message was difficult for some participants to hear, it is clear that the way in which health care is delivered outside of major urban centres is continuing to evolve.

Dealing with Developers: What You Need to Know

Many communities around Saskatchewan benefit from our province's continued economic growth. Most noticeable is the increase in housing and commercial developments. This presentation, delivered by Martino Verhaeghe, Planning and Legislative Consultant with the Community Planning Branch of Municipal Affairs, focused on how municipalities can get the best deals from developers. The presentation identified the full scope of costs associated with growth, and the role of servicing agreements, contract zoning agreements, and discretionary use conditions. Through understanding the role and responsibilities of municipalities, participants were positioned to know what they can request from developers. Attendees seemed to enjoy the discussion, as feedback from the session was very positive.

Tax Collection and Enforcement

Many municipalities find it challenging to collect taxes levied on residents, but failing to do so creates an even bigger issue. Phil Boivin and Bryan Sych, Municipal Advisors from Municipal Affairs, focused their presentation on property title enforcement and talked about legislative provisions in the *Tax Enforcement Act*, the *Municipalities Act*, the *Cities Act* and the *Northern Municipalities Act*. Kim Anderson from Robertson Stromberg Pedersen LLP discussed the non-title tax enforcement, which is another method available and maybe preferable to title proceedings in some cases.

Strategies to Control Rodent Populations in Your Community

Travis Quirk, Pest Control Coordinator for PCAB, delivered this session focused on the concept of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). IPM involves multiple steps (all explored in the presentation) which include: inspection; identification; prevention; consultation; sanitation; evaluation; and monitoring. Quirk discussed a variety of different pests common to Saskatchewan, including gophers, mice, skunks, and rats. Delegates found the session to be informative, and particularly appreciated the multi-step approach of IPM as it could more easily be applied and understood in their communities.

Crime Prevention: Tools to Keep Your Community Safe

The safety and security of our communities is a priority to municipal councils and it is vital that they have access to the necessary tools and strategies to assist them in creating this environment. The crime prevention education session invited representatives from the RCMP's Community Policing, Drug and Organized Crime Awareness Service and Crime Stoppers to educate councils on what those tools and strategies are.

The first presentation from the Community Policing officer focused on the important indicators that determine whether an individual will become involved in criminal activity. The presentation provided information on how communities can create an environment that exists where individuals have access to activities, services and support to ensure criminal activity is discouraged. The second presentation was conducted by the Drug and Organized Crime Awareness officer. His presentation looked at the world of gangs, drugs and other organized crime activity. The presentation provided information on the signs to watch for with respect to gang activity, drug production and distribution and other organized crime that exists. The final presentation came from the Saskatchewan Crime Stoppers coordinator. The Crime Stoppers presentation spoke to the success of the program in Saskatchewan. In particular, the program has assisted in several crimes being solved, drugs seized and property recovered. The strength of the program rests in the anonymity of tipsters, and it is

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Summary of Convention's...

because of this anonymity that residents are encouraged to use Crime Stoppers as a tool to prevent and deter crime.

Ready for Change: How Adaptable is Your Municipality to Climate Change

Climate change impacts Saskatchewan, and the pace is expected to accelerate. This will affect many aspects of municipal management, especially water-related infrastructure. Winters will

be warmer, summers drier and severe weather events more frequent. This education session involved two presentations: Norm Henderson from the Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative (PARC); and Jeremy Pittman from the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (SWA). Henderson's presentation discussed the role of PARC, and looked at various climate change models for Saskatchewan to highlight the potential impact. Pittman's presentation talked about the actions that SWA is taking now to ensure appropriate adaptation for climate change, and also looked at potential strategies to consider now and in the future.

Report from SUMA's Sectors

SUMA's membership is sub-divided into four sectors, representing the various types of municipalities that form part of the association. There is a City Sector for our 15 cities, a Towns Sector for our 145 towns, Villages Sector for the 243 villages and the 34 resort villages, and finally the Northern Sector for our 23 northern municipal members. During convention, each sector holds a meeting to discuss issues of mutual interest. Each meeting this year included discussion around the province's proposed freezing of Municipal Operating Grants (MOG), an update on the Municipal Sector Strategic Plan (MSSP) and conversation on the province's proposed Fire Safety Act. Below are some of the highlights from these meetings:

City Sector

The City Sector meeting was facilitated by SUMA's Vice-President of Cities Councillor Fred Clipsham who was once again elected to another three year term as VP by city sector delegates. Around the MSSP, there was some discussion about the need to strengthen communications between the administrative and elected groups with respect to setting direction for the work plans. Multiple cities identified concerns with the proposed Fire Safety Act, and particularly with the many details being left for as yet unseen regulations.

The meeting also discussed SUMA resolution #2 regarding a uniform rate for annexation. Discussion focused on how the resolution could be amended to better capture the interests of urban municipalities. The final item of discussion was the province's announcement of the move to a four-year election cycle for urban municipalities. Generally this announcement was well received as it reflects the call from SUMA and cities.

Town Sector

This year's Town Sector reviewed a number of projects and initiatives that SUMA has been engaged in over the past year. Of particular interest was discussion on the new provincial public safety telecommunications system (PPSTN) and the introduction of the new Fire Safety Act. In addition, information was shared on the municipal bridge funding program and the role SUMA is playing on the Environment Regulatory Review.

A number of individuals voiced their concern with the introduction of the new Fire Safety Act and requested further information. Those communities expressing concern in this matter were reassured that SUMA is working to protect the interests of all urban municipalities. Direction was given by delegates to SUMA to explore the option of providing engineering services to municipalities and creating a knowledge management centre on best practices which could be accessible to all members. SUMA was also asked to investigate the matter of property tax discounts being offered by municipalities and the unfair balance that exists throughout the province.

Closing out the session was a SAMA report by Sharon Armstrong, SAMA board member and Mayor of Wynyard. In addition, the results of the Vice-President Towns election were announced with the new Vice President representing Towns being Mayor Rolly Zimmer from Tisdale.

Village Sector

Chaired by Barry Gunther, the Vice-President of Villages and Resort Villages, delegates from villages and resort villages gathered once again to hear and discuss the concerns of their colleagues at the Village Sector meeting.

VP Gunther informed delegates about the New Horizons for Seniors Program, a federal government grant accessible to municipalities designed to improve quality of life for seniors. VP Gunther also discussed other topics, such as the environmental regulatory review, multi-material recycling program and the PPSTN.

Following the presentation, several delegates had questions regarding the PPSTN. They expressed the need for the provincial government to clarify program requirements, equipment available and implementation timeline.

Other delegates voiced their concerns with 'one size fits all' regulatory approach taken by the provincial government and the lack of understanding of small communities. Several examples were given to show that provincial representatives are often unaware of small community capacity. Delegates want to see the provincial government pay more attention to their ability to comply with the rules, and design grant programs and regulations that best suit the needs.

The sector meeting also discussed regulations related to solid waste management and the need to have flexibility for different municipalities. Several delegates expressed interest in exploring regional waste management but were unable to join in because of high start up costs. Many also felt that stricter environmental regulations would only create more financial burdens on an already stressed village sector.

Northern Sector

The first item of business was the election of the Northern Regional Director. The successful candidate was Mayor Bruce Fidler of Creighton, who will serve on the SUMA board for the next three years. During the open dialogue portion of the meeting, two key issues were raised by delegates: drug abuse and crime rates; and transportation issues in the north. Delegates also expressed the need for the Regional Director to be a conduit of information from northern municipalities to SUMA and from SUMA to northern municipalities.

Provincial Cabinet has Strong Showing at SUMA Convention

SUMA delegates were very happy to see a strong turnout from Premier Brad Wall and his Cabinet during Convention. The provincial government featured prominently on each day of Convention. On Monday, Premier Wall attended Convention and delivered his annual address to delegates. A key highlight of the Premier's address included his re-affirmation of the promise to restore the MOG agreement and achieve the equivalent of a full one point of PST funding for municipalities before the next election. The Premier also announced that his government would support the SUMA request to extend urban municipal council terms to a four-year mandate.

On Tuesday, Municipal Affairs Minister Jeremy Harrison addressed delegates. In addition to providing more detail on the four-year election cycle, Minister Harrison talked about the government's continued commitment to funding municipal infrastructure, and the numerous partnerships ongoing between the province and the municipal sector.

Wednesdays at SUMA Conventions is always a banner day for provincial involvement. With the scheduled Bearpit session, the Premier and every member of Cabinet (except Energy and Resources Minister Bill Boyd) were in attendance. Prior to the Bearpit, delegates had an opportunity for a focused question and answer session with several Ministers from portfolios of key interest to municipalities. This year, these dialogue sessions involved: Minister Harrison; Minister Jim Reiter of Highways and Infrastructure; Minister Nancy Heppner of Environment; Minister Ken Cheveldayoff of Enterprise; Minister Rob Norris of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour; Minister Yogi Huyghebaert of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing; and Minister Don Morgan of Justice.

Major themes from each dialogue session included:

Municipal Affairs: MOG, and in particular the distribution amongst the different pools; the challenge of per capita funding for resort villages; and the March 31, 2011, federal government deadline for Infrastructure Stimulus Funding projects;

Highways and Infrastructure: Key topic was the Urban Highway Connector Program; many members expressed concerns with this program;

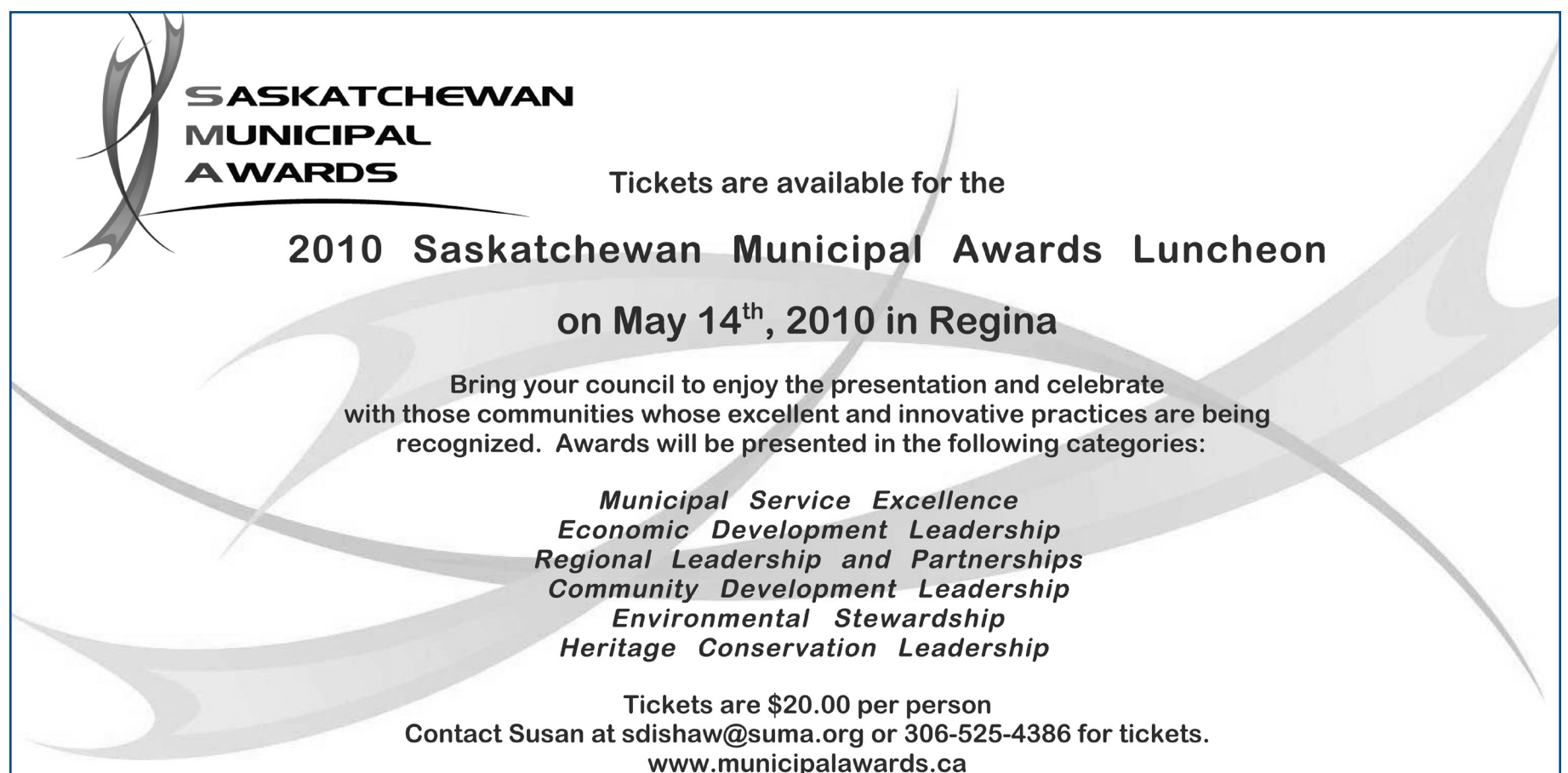
Environment: Delegates raised concerns about the impact of Environment's results-based regulatory model on smaller communities. The development of a Multi-Material Recycling Program was also identified as a key priority amongst delegates;

Enterprise: Questions focused on regional concerns, support for consulting services and collaboration, immigration, and growth-related challenges;

Advanced Education, Employment and Labour: Apprenticeship opportunities and affordable housing for students were issues raised by delegates. Other concerns included: the certification process for foreign doctors; succession planning; and nursing shortages; and

Corrections, Public Safety and Policing & Justice: Many delegates expressed frustration with the justice system, and called on the province to encourage the federal government to amend the Youth Justice Act. On policing, the longstanding irritant of fine revenue hold back, the reluctance of RCMP officers to enforce municipal bylaws, and the cost of policing were all discussed.

Many of the questions during the Bearpit session focused on the issue of health care, specifically the delivery of primary care outside of Saskatchewan's major cities. Delegates expressed considerable frustration with the challenges of attracting and retaining qualified medical professionals to their communities. While health care is not an issue within the jurisdiction of municipalities, municipal councillors, as community leaders, are very aware of the impact that a perceived reduction in access to service can have. Health Minister Don McMorris and the Premier reiterated their government's commitment to addressing the shortage of medical professionals, while acknowledging that the model for delivery of care in rural areas is changing.



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