

PANEL PRESENTATION: SARM CONVENTION

March 13, 2013

Good Afternoon. Thanks to Colleen (Christopherson) and Ryan (Domotar) for their preceding presentations from the vantage points of Municipal Affairs and an Rural Municipality.

In addition to being an RM Councillor and permanent resident of the OH of Bayview Heights, I also hold the position of 2nd VP of the Provincial Association of Resort Communities of Saskatchewan (PARCS). Today, I am wearing the hat of an OH and the association that represents many of the “resort” communities in Saskatchewan. From the handout prepared by PARCS, you will note that only 8% of rural municipalities have organized hamlets that are resort communities located in them. I am pleased to see all 8% represented here today!

Over the past 15 years of being a hamlet resident and serving in all 3 Hamlet Board positions, as well as serving 3 terms on RM Council, I have witnessed an evolution in working practices between the RM of its OH's. It is these “best practices” in working relationships between RM's and OH's that I wish to speak about today.

In speaking with the PARCS members and Board and other OH's in Saskatchewan, I see 6 “best practices” or principles that can improve the relationship between municipalities and their OH's: the first principle is that of:

1. **Communication:** Every relationship is built on communication and the integrity of the parties at the table. The RM of Meota has adopted a couple of practices that enhance communications with the Hamlets. Our RM has an annual meeting each spring with the 11 OH Boards where all parties can present information and share common concerns. Then the Reeve and at least 1 Councillor attend the annual meeting of each Hamlet and with 11 OH's, these meetings take place on every long weekend between May and October. It is through this process that we seek to understand each other's interests.

A second component of communication is training and orientation. Hamlet Boards need to be orientated to their roles and responsibilities. The Guide to Organized Hamlets is a starting point, as is orientation to the Official Community Plan and Bylaws of the RM. You can't criticize a Hamlet Board if you don't orientate them to their responsibilities and advisory capacity.

The second principle is that of:

2. **Transparency:** Transparency always arises when it comes to decision-making around resources. OH expenditures all flow through the RM, with 2 signatures of the Hamlet Board. Each Hamlet in our RM also submits an annual budget and a capital budget update every 5 years. All of these expenditures and projections are presented to the ratepayers in the Hamlet at the annual hamlet meeting. We consider this transparency. While the RM, on the other hand, publishes its annual audit, this does not achieve transparency in eyes of the OH. At the very least, we continue to find ways to achieve a mutual understanding regarding transparency.

3. **Mill Rate Discretion:** We have already heard about the option that RM's have to set separate mill rates for hamlets, individually or collectively. This is an excellent practice which must be applauded as the mill rate is then based on the budgetary needs of the OH and seeks to mitigate high reserves in some Hamlets and deficits in others.

4. **Enfranchisement:** Seasonal property owners in RM's often feel disenfranchised with Fall elections. Yesterday, a resolution was made to move municipal elections in RM's to even later in the fall. Although this resolution did not pass, this would have caused further disenfranchisement of seasonal ratepayers in OH's and of snowbirds as well. We at PARCS are pleased to see at least one RM that has opted to pass a bylaw allowing for mail in ballots. They have not only done this, but are allowing people to make application and present ID in the summer preceding a fall election, **IN THE EVENT THAT AN ELECTION IS NEEDED.** Enfranchisement of seasonal property owners and even snowbirds means some advance planning, but it can increase the involvement of ratepayers in municipal elections. It can also reduce costs if the RM chooses to do mail in ballots versus advance polls.

I want to preface the last 2 `best practices` as not being entrenched in any legislation, but rather practices that PARCS is advocating for on behalf of OH resort communities:

5. **The 5th practice should be considered when the Guide to Organized Hamlets is rewritten.** As resort or cottage communities, there is a need for policies that can be applied in an OH where people live in close proximity to one another and close to the lake, that address factors that are unique and different from the rest of the RM.

6. This then leads me to the 6th and final principle that I would like to address: OH's that are resort communities border a body of water, a park or a provincial forest. We are the 'stewards' of the lake, the park or the forest and have a vested interest in the environment and ecological systems that connect the land, or municipality, and the water. As residents of OH's, we have the water craft, boat docks and marina issues to deal with in our frontyards, and ATV's and weekend warriors in our backyards. OH's which are resort communities support the growing economy of Tourism in Saskatchewan through developments in our hamlets like playgrounds, green space or public reserve, and even summer kitchens, but we have no authority to regulate or enforce anything. This is where we are seeking a model of governance similar to that of condo associations in cities. There is no intention to usurp the powers of the RM, but to strengthen governance at a local level.

In closing, there are some excellent examples, just at this table, of efficient and effective working relationships between RM's and OH's. We encourage you to make this the norm, not the exception. As this province continues to grow and thrive, there will be an even greater impact on our OH's and resort communities and we must continually seek ways to manage the impact of development and tourism in a positive and progressive manner with our municipal partners.

Thank-you for your attention. The Moderator will entertain any questions.