

RC

RURAL COUNCILLOR

VOLUME 50 number 4
WINTER 2017 ISSUE

PUBLISHED BY THE SASKATCHEWAN
ASSOCIATION OF RURAL MUNICIPALITIES

Publications Agreement #40062693

GOVERNANCE

Governing at the Local Level; Making Good Decisions; The Weird and Delicate Balance of Municipal Governance; Strategic and Tactical HR Management; Equipment Breakdown Insurance; Resolving Issues Through Working Together; SARM Advocacy; Whistleblower Policies; The Call to Serve Can Be Challenging



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OUR VISION

By being the rural voice, SARM will effectively lead autonomous municipalities in creating a vibrant, diverse economy resulting in a strong, sustainable Saskatchewan.

OUR MISSION

SARM delivers timely, dependable programs and services to meet the needs of its members while influencing government policy and facilitating municipalities to work together to foster rural development and build strong, sustainable communities.



SARM ADVOCACY

BY RAY ORB
SARM PRESIDENT

HELLO to all reeves, councillors and administrators.

This past year has been a hectic one, beginning with attending the Annual Convention in March, the six Division meetings in June and being involved in planning the upcoming Midterm Convention in November.

I also attended two Federation of Canadian Municipalities board of directors' meetings and the annual conference which was held in Ottawa in June.

I was fortunate to have been re-elected as Chair of the FCM Rural Forum, which has membership from provincial and territorial associations as affiliate members from across Canada and several municipalities that have rural interests at heart.

The Rural Forum will be focusing on several priorities for 2017-18 including:

1. Investing in Canada Plan Implementation in Rural and Northern Communities Fund through a rural lens
2. Rural broadband
3. Rural economic and social development
4. Bringing more rural content into FCM conferences and developing a rural specific programming stream
5. Directing FCM staff to research the issue of cross border migration that affects Canadian municipalities and report back to the board of directors.

On behalf of SARM's board, I presented SARM's submissions to the House of Commons Standing Committees, including Transport and Infrastructure on Grain Transportation Reform, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Navigable Waters, and more recently, to Finance regarding SARM's requests for infrastructure funding and requesting that suggested federal

changes to taxation be dropped. That's in reference to the federal government's proposed changes to how incorporated family farms are transferred and that income sprinkling be eliminated. SARM is adamantly opposed to the federal government's proposed changes and has relayed that message directly to Federal Finance Minister Morneau.

Meetings with federal ministers and MPs and presentations to the House of Commons Standing Committees are all coordinated through Hill + Knowlton (H+K), our federal lobbyist in Ottawa.

H+K also organized our lobbyist trip to Ottawa where we met with ministers and ministerial staff on October 2-5, 2017. There we effectively covered all of the relevant SARM topics, including agriculture, infrastructure, rural broadband and environment.

We have also extended an invitation to Environment Minister McKenna, since we need to talk to her about issues, such as the federal tax on carbon and the *Species at Risk Act*, which affect all agricultural producers in our province.

I was fortunate to have toured an area near Val Marie which was hosted by Kelly Williamson, Orin Balas, Tom Harrison from the South of Divide Action Plan and Larry Grant, SARM Director for Division 3.

I was accompanied on the tour by Kelsay Reimer, Acting Director of Policy and Research for SARM. I think we both learned a lot about the stewardship that ranchers in the province are already offering and are maintaining the right habitat for many species at risk that are already home to, including the Greater Sage Grouse, Sprague's Pipit and Ferruginous hawk, to name a few.

We also travelled to the Wood Mountain area and met with Miles Anderson who is a local rancher. Miles showed

us the aftermath of a grass fire that left about 3,200 acres of what was supposed to be winter grazing in it's wake completely destroyed. The need for some sort of fire insurance on grassland was discussed and options for lobbying on behalf of SARM will be taken forward with the proper authorities.

As usual, SARM executives have been busy meeting with provincial cabinet ministers, but the latest cabinet shuffle provides another opportunity to meet and discuss SARM priorities with newly appointed cabinet ministers, including Larry Doke, Government Relations; Dustin Duncan, Minister of Environment; Steven Bonk, Minister of the Economy; and of course, Don Morgan, Minister of Justice.

Premier Wall has also been invited to address the delegates at the SARM Midterm Convention in November, and this will be important as this will likely be the last time he addresses our convention as Premier of Saskatchewan.

We're also going to be addressing the issue of rural crime at the convention since Assistant Commissioner Curtis Zablocki has offered to attend and speak to the delegates. His attendance shows the ongoing commitment the RCMP has demonstrated towards the reduction of rural crime in Saskatchewan.

So, we've had a busy year, and while I've mentioned only part of our busy schedule, I think it demonstrates the ongoing advocacy efforts that our board has been involved with on our members' behalf.

Hopefully everyone will be able to attend the midterm convention from November 7-8 in Regina.

In the meantime, all the best and safe travels!



MESSAGE FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT

BY CARMEN STERLING
SARM VICE-PRESIDENT

AS each year winds down, I always appreciate the opportunity to reflect on the challenges, successes and opportunities the year past has provided us. Personally, and professionally, from a municipal and community standpoint and from a SARM aspect, it is important to understand where we have come from, where are we headed, what have we achieved to help us get there and what obstacles did we encounter to getting there. One such obstacle, challenge and opportunity in this past year was the weather.

2017 saw our family continue to evolve as our oldest daughter completed her education and took on her first career position in Moose Jaw and our youngest daughter embarks on her second year of university. Our farm continues to be an important part of our lives and as in past years, it both challenged and rewarded us. Weather certainly challenged us this year, but the pride we experience contributing to the high-quality agriculture industry in Saskatchewan is one of the many rewards we receive. These challenges, rewards, experiences and how we handled them help us to make informed decisions for "next year".

Weather also challenged us from a municipal standpoint. Across the province our municipalities experienced everything from flooding and excessive

moisture to extreme drought. These extremes directly impacted ratepayer's properties, business operations, and summer recreation plans. In addition, our municipalities saw challenges with their transportation infrastructure, roads, culverts and bridges. Extremely dry conditions also impacted water reservoirs, lagoons, landfills, recreation areas and campgrounds.

The impacts of excessive moisture are generally more readily identified than those as a result of extremely dry conditions, but both carry short- and long-term ramifications. These weather extremes may not always feel like opportunities as they are occurring, but often they result in direct improvements that help to defray future impacts of similar situations. As well they help us to review and improve our policies and practices and to strengthen partnerships and resources for handling those future situations.

Although SARM may not be directly impacted by the weather events, our members and their ratepayers are, and their experiences can be turned into resolutions and recommendations for legislation, policy and process changes that have the potential to benefit all rural municipalities in the province. So, as you review the challenges and opportunities

"The impacts of excessive moisture are generally more readily identified than those as a result of extremely dry conditions, but both carry short- and long-term ramifications."

you experienced in your own municipalities in the past year, keep in mind that sharing those experiences can be valuable to all of us. If through those experiences, you've identified a situation that needs to be addressed or an improvement you would like to share, please do not hesitate to submit a resolution or speak to us directly. I look forward to each and every opportunity I have to hear from on any and all issues that impact you and suggestions you would like to share.

In closing, I want to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I hope 2018 brings each of you and your municipalities success and prosperity.



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MESSAGE FROM DIVISION 1

BY **BILL HUBER** SARM DIRECTOR, DIVISION 1



GREETINGS to everyone!

As I write this article for the *Rural Councillor*, it is mid-September and it has been quite a challenging year, especially in the agriculture communities that I as a SARM Director represent.

In the southeast corner of Division 1, we saw a spring blizzard that blew snow into towns, villages and farm yards, that we hadn't experienced in many years. The month of May brought excellent weather and few timely rains in most areas, to help green up pastures, hay fields and help get spring seeded crops off to a good start. Then we had to meet the challenges of one of the hottest, driest summers in history. As most producers are seeing the end to harvest, I believe most of us were somewhat surprised to get the yields we were getting with no more than two or three inches of rain since spring break-up.

I have been very busy since the Annual Convention in March 2017. Whereas, I had the opportunity to attend several rate payer meetings in late March and April. I certainly enjoy bringing greetings to your RMs on behalf of SARM, and I thoroughly enjoy the hospitality I receive, and of course, the excellent meals!

My responsibility as a Director, I am a representative on the Agriculture Committee and Infrastructure and Development Committee and several external committees.

This spring, the federal and provincial budgets kept our executive and directors busy with some challenges of how to deal with funding cuts in some places and increased taxes that affect all primary producers whether it be in grains or livestock production.

As a SARM Director, I am also a representative on the Scrap Tire Board, whereas the undertaking of a major program revamping was big in the past few months. I would like to announce the new name of the program: Tire Stewardship of Saskatchewan (TSS).

The TSS will become the program operator to oversee tire recycling activities in Saskatchewan beyond the transition period, and our vision is to have the best tire recycling program in Canada. Our mission is to operate an efficient tire recycling program across Saskatchewan.

In closing, I am looking forward to seeing many of you at the Midterm Convention in November, and if you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

All the best to you and your family, and I wish everyone a great year.



MESSAGE FROM DIVISION 2

BY NORM NORDGULEN SARM DIRECTOR, DIVISION 2

GOOD DAY everyone.

As I write this article, we are at the end of a very dry summer. Here at my ranch we had barely an inch of rain since April. Despite that challenge, our farmers managed to pull off a decent crop largely due to good subsoil moisture, and it really illustrates how far farming technology has come in 30 years. I remember when I worked for Sask. Wheat Pool in the late 70s, I had a customer claim he only seeded enough stubble every year just to keep him convinced it was a bad idea; now that is all we do.

It has been a bad year for fires. We have had nine in my RM so far, and some very serious ones in the south as a whole. Just yesterday my neighbor lost half his yard along with some minor machinery and a camper when his grain truck backfired. Fortunately, we managed to save the house and combine despite both being engulfed by the fire, it moved so fast.

The largest grass fire in the Division and maybe the province occurred in the RM 44 south of Glentworth requiring assistance from Prince Albert water bombers. This fire, fuelled by wind covered approximately 3,700 acres, about seven miles long and half mile wide. This will be a very expensive fire and costly to local producers since many lost precious fall grazing in a dry year when feed of any kind is very dear. This really illustrates the need for a grass fire insurance program as an aside to other programs or a stand-alone program – which SARM and the Stock Growers Association have been asking for, going on two years now.

As you are well aware, we also have been working on your behalf and along with other groups to oppose the carbon tax and the unfair incorporation tax changes being proposed by the Liberal government. At this point (so much is unclear) I haven't heard of any changes to the capital gains tax exemption. If that were attempted, I would argue it is at 1 million per farmer too low.

When I started farming 40 years ago it was at half a million, now it is 1 million – a 100% increase. In that same time period, farm land has gone from \$25,000 to \$250,000 or more – a 1,000% percent increase. I feel the exemption, which is most farmers real pension fund, could and should be much higher.

To be sure there is no shortage of issues or obstacles for us all to overcome, but as a grassroots organization, and through cooperation with other groups, we will prevail – right is might and with perseverance we will overcome.



Our farmers managed to pull off a decent crop [this year] largely due to good subsoil moisture, and it really illustrates how far farming technology has come in 30 years. I remember when I worked for Sask. Wheat Pool in the late 70s, I had a customer claim he only seeded enough stubble every year just to keep him convinced it was a bad idea; now that is all we do.

I hope to speak with many of you at our Midterm Convention in November. If I don't approach you first, please come say hello. I enjoy meeting our members.

Happy trails.



MESSAGE FROM DIVISION 3

BY LARRY GRANT SARM DIRECTOR, DIVISION 3



SARM has four internal working committees. I sit on the Environment Committee and the Agriculture Committee as well as several external committees.

Today I would like to say a few words about species at risk and wildlife species. In southwest Saskatchewan, there are a wide variety of species, some are classified as at risk species and others are not. Many of the birds and animals would not be here if it wasn't for the proactive management of the land by the landowners. Farmers and ranchers have done an excellent job of looking after our grasslands in Saskatchewan and the wildlife that call the grasslands home. These ranchers and farmers have preserved the land and its wildlife on their own dime with very little input and financial assistance from anyone else.

Times must change. We need to have a coordinated plan for the sustainability of our rural communities as well as preservation of grasslands and all wildlife. What may be plentiful today may be a species at risk tomorrow. Ranchers should be recognized and compensated for the management of species at risk and for maintaining the grasslands in very good condition.

Our ranchers are the best environmentalists in the world. They are on the landscape day in and day out, come rain, shine, blizzard or storm. They see the land and its inhabitants at the best and worst of times. The government needs to meaningfully consult with the ranchers and listen to what they have

“There is no reason to believe that bureaucrats and politicians, no matter how well-meaning, are better at solving problems than the people on the spot, who have the strongest incentive to get the solution right.”

- Dr. Elinor Ostrom, 2009 Nobel Memorial Prize Winner in Economics

to say. Our rural communities must be sustainable along with species at risk and their environment.

In closing I would like to give all the agricultural producers a huge thank you as you raise and grow the best and safest food in the world. Thank you.

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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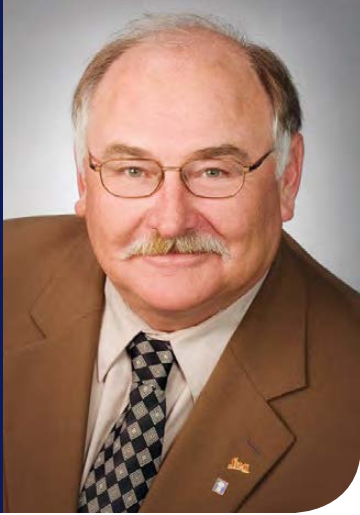


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MESSAGE FROM DIVISION 4

BY HARVEY MALANOWICH SARM DIRECTOR, DIVISION 4

GREETINGS to all Reeves, councillors and administrators. Another year is in passing with many changes transpiring.

The present budget hurt all sectors in the province. A six per cent tax increase on all insurances and municipal contracts, a shortfall of funding to MREP, and a \$32 million cut in grant funding to municipalities. This, in turn, forced councillors to raise taxes to balance their budgets. With the new budget, cost of production and no increase in grain prices is a contributing factor in crippling the Agricultural sector.

Upon attending numerous meetings with RMs in Division 4, many issues were discussed. Major issues with ditching and trenching along with conflicts between councillors and taxpayers. Councillors

had set policies and motions that were made in the best interest of taxpayers that should be followed accordingly. Prior to any ditching and trenching, the taxpayer must apply for a permit approval through the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency (WSA) before proceeding with the project. Presently the WSA is swamped with a backlog of permits to deal with.

Due to lack of funding, Clearing the Path maintenance grants were reduced from \$1,100/km to \$1,000/km, and no Clearing the Path projects were approved. Remaining funds under MREP went to bridges and heavy haul projects.

This coming year there will be an audit on all Clearing the Path roads within the province, thus forcing RMs to fund their projects with their own resources

or Gas Tax funding. End result making it difficult for councillors to use taxpayer dollars.

RMs have major concerns as rural crime is increasing. Due to a shortage in police presence, discussions have been taking place of possibly hiring municipal police or initiating Rural Crime Watch as an option.

Hope to see you all at the Midterm Convention to discuss further issues, and hopefully all went well with your harvest.

From me and my family to you and yours, we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and may God bless you all with health, happiness and prosperity for the New Year.

*SARM's board,
management
and staff*

SARM

Saskatchewan Association
of Rural Municipalities

*Wish Everyone a
Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year!*



MINUS 30 IS NOT THAT BAD

BY JUDY HARWOOD SARM DIRECTOR, DIVISION 5

OVER the years, while on business trips, I have had the opportunity to golf in a number of cities in the southern United States. Before teeing off in Orlando, we were told to stay away from the many ponds, there might be alligators... alligators, OK no problem. Before teeing off in San Antonio, we were told not to go in the rough to attempt to retrieve any balls, there might be rattlesnakes... rattlesnakes, OK no problem. While golfing in New Orleans we were warned to be on watch for all of the above but no one mentioned the unbearable, oppressive, double bogey causing heat and humidity.

Before golfing in Saskatchewan, I might prepare for an attack by mosquitos and the inevitable prairie winds, but nothing life threatening, just annoying.

During those golf games in the southern US, when playing with local residents, I invariably would be asked how on earth I could survive in Saskatchewan with -30 winters? Why wouldn't I consider a move to the south where there were no winters, no snow and no -30 days to live through? There was a veiled insinuation that I was crazy to stay and live in such a supposedly uninhabitable province. In defence, I would smile and respond with my politically correct answer, "it's a dry cold and you dress for it."

At the time of writing this article, Houston and area was still cleaning up after the catastrophic hurricane Harvey, projected cost for cleanup and repairs \$190 billion. Hurricane Irma, with 185 mph winds, had just devastated most of the Caribbean Islands, including parts of Cuba, and then slammed into Florida, estimated cost of cleanup and repairs, \$250 billion. Satellite photos revealed that the hurricane force winds of Irma stripped the foliage and changed the green islands of the Caribbean to brown. Hurricane Jose, a category 4, followed Irma, thankfully Jose stayed mostly in the Atlantic continuing northward with tropical storm force winds hitting the northeastern Leeward Islands then turning northwest slamming the coast of New England. Hurricane Maria immediately followed with winds at 175 mph, a category 5. Maria devastated the island of Puerto Rico, the island could be without power, for possibly up to six months. When you see footage of the carnage it is unbelievable, the loss of life, homes flattened, trees uprooted, massive flooding and boats tossed around like toys. The emotional and physical toll of these four recent hurricanes is unfathomable, getting back to "normal" will take a very long time.

On reflection, if ever asked that question again, why would I not move south and escape from nasty winters, I would say...in

Saskatchewan we don't get hurricanes, seldom earthquakes, yes some tornadoes, but never tsunamis. Our province experiences four beautiful seasons, breath taking sunsets, migratory birds spring and fall, glorious harvest colours, over 100,000 lakes to enjoy, more sunshine than any other Canadian province and the Saskatchewan Roughriders... Go Riders!

We are so fortunate to live in this amazing province...I guess *minus 30 is not that bad*.

May I wish everyone, and in particular Division 5 reeves, councillors and administrators, a very Merry Christmas, a safe holiday season and health, happiness and prosperity in 2018.

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RAMBLINGS OF A DIVISION DIRECTOR

BY ROD WIENS SARM DIRECTOR, DIVISION 6

THIS past spring and summer there have been several issues that I have been pondering. In no particular order, I would like to share some of my thoughts.

As I write this, the federal government is looking at making changes to the corporate tax structure. According to the federal government, corporations are getting unfair tax advantages that others do not receive. They are considering these changes to make the tax system more fair.

Most rural municipalities faced the same question of tax fairness this spring. This was a re-assessment year for agricultural land. Most agricultural land values increased substantially. Many quarter sections more than doubled in value. In a municipality with only agricultural land as a tax base taxation this year would be much the same as other years. The mill rate would change, but everyone's portion of the municipal tax load would stay the same.

The problem comes when there are other tax classes included in the assessment roll. With the increase in agricultural assessment, the percentage of the taxes from agricultural land should have increased and the percentage that other tax classes pay should have decreased. Would this have been fair? Many municipalities said no. This is the reason we have tax tools to use. It is our responsibility to be fair to our ratepayers.

Tax tools are our way of making the tax roll fair. It is our right to use them, but only to level the field. Everyone needs to share the burden of taxation. Our goal as municipalities should be to do this as equitably as possible.

In the same way, the federal government is responsible to have a fair taxation system. They need to balance the corporate share of taxation with the personal share. We as municipalities argue that we need sub-classes in some areas of property tax to be more fair. Is it fair for the federal government to lump all corporations together? What is a fair split in income tax?

This past year we saw the amalgamation of the provincial health boards, but we did not see the amalgamation of school boards. As rural municipalities, we do not have direct responsibility over these boards, but our ratepayers have a great interest. Health care and education services are critical to rural Saskatchewan. We as rural municipalities need to make sure our concerns are heard by the powers that be. We need to hold them accountable for meeting our education and health care needs. Maintaining the status quo is often seen as the simple answer to meeting our needs, but it is not often the right answer. Health care and education need to grow to meet the needs of today

"I believe climate change is happening... We need to change what we are doing to minimize the affects of our impact. And we have changed... Saskatchewan as a province is a leader in recycling, and we will continue to change. All without the implementation of a carbon tax."

and tomorrow. Are the needs of your community being met? Is there a better way to meet those needs?

The federal government have said that infrastructure development is one of their priorities. They are providing millions of dollars in funding to meet infrastructure needs. They are even targeting rural and remote areas of the country for this funding. The problem is that they define rural as any municipality under a population of 100,000. That lumps most of us at the low end of the rural scale. Most of our municipalities are too small and not remote enough to qualify for much funding.

Finally, I want to talk about climate change. I believe climate change is happening. Seven billion people living on this earth has had an impact on the planet. We need to change what we are doing to minimize the affects of our impact. And, we have changed. Think of what has changed in your municipality in the last couple decades. Landfills have evolved, sewer and lagoon systems have changed. Farmers have moved to zero-till systems of farming. Windmills are producing power. Many of our houses are heated by natural gas instead of oil. Saskatchewan as a province is a leader in recycling, and we will continue to change. All without the implementation of a carbon tax.

We have shown that we have an incentive to change to more environmentally friendly practices. The result of a carbon tax will be to offer justification to those who refuse to change. They will pay to keep doing what they are doing. We need to continue to be aware of how we are impacting our environment and continue to move forward in what we do.

Thanks for the opportunity to ramble. We as the SARM board represent you as rural municipalities. We need to hear your thoughts on these and other issues.

All the best in the New Year.



GOVERNANCE: start the discussion

BY JAY MEYER
SARM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



GOVERNANCE is the framework in which an organization operates. It is important that municipal councils establish controls, display accountability to their ratepayers and assure that staff act in the best interests of the municipalities. Strong governance begins with strong communication between council members, council and management as well as council and local ratepayers. Governance does not have to be difficult. Like most issues people deal with, the discussion is easier to initiate in good times rather than bad. Instead of being reactive when you are working on governance policies, be proactive to make what can be a difficult situation much easier.

Make governance easy by starting the conversation with your council, committees and management around roles and responsibilities. Laying a strong foundation will make for a strong, effective governance policy. Determine the

following: what are the roles, and who is responsible for what?

If you do not identify these roles and responsibilities, people will make them up themselves, resulting in a lack of clarity. Not all councils have the same governance style. It depends on the situation as well as on the capacity of the council. Have an honest discussion and be transparent with each other. It is not always better to do what you have always done; it may seem easier, but that does not mean it is the right approach.

Do not be afraid to change things up. Councils and management consistently change, including the education, experience and history around the council table. Do not shy away from the hard conversations around governance as, like any business, there will be a time you have to face it, and it is much easier facing challenges early in the stage rather than when it may be too late.

Strong governance brings with it councillors and management that are more confident dealing with issues and will make your council table a better place for debate and decision making.

Being proactive in governance is key. Take small steps in the development. It does not have to be difficult. It will take time and energy, but it will be one of the best things you can do as community leaders. Work on governance should never go away, constant monitoring is critical for growth.

I challenge those members who do not have a governance policy to start talking about developing one. Invest in assistance. It will be the best investment you will ever make. It could turn into a legacy for generations of your municipality's future councils and management to benefit from.

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WHISTLEBLOWER POLICIES

Can Strengthen Governance

BY KELSAY REIMER

SARM ACTING DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND POLICY

GOOD governance is significant for numerous reasons. It not only gives the local community confidence in its council, but enhances the confidence that elected members and officials have in their own local government and its decision-making processes. It also leads to improved decisions, helps local government meet its legislative responsibilities, and most importantly, provides an ethical basis for governance. Whistle-blower polices help form a good governance framework under which to operate.

A whistleblower is defined as a person who exposes any kind of information that is deemed illegal, unethical, or not correct within an organization that is either private or public. Whistleblowing occurs when employees reveal wrong doing within their place of employment to law enforcement and often experience repercussions such as demotion, dismissal or negative treatment after they have made such a disclosure. It is necessary for laws to exist to protect employees who, in good faith, disclose wrong doing within an organization or company.

Saskatchewan's *Public Interest Disclosure Act* came into effect on September 1, 2011. The Act creates a mechanism for the disclosure of wrongdoings in the public service and includes provisions to protect whistleblowers from reprisals. A person is prohibited from taking a reprisal against an employee, or directing that one be taken, because the employee has, in good faith, sought advice about making a disclosure in accordance with the Act, made a protected disclosure, or cooperated in an investigation, or declined to participate in any wrongdoing. However, municipal employees in Saskatchewan are not necessarily covered by public interest disclosure legislation.

Several municipalities in other provinces and territories have created their own policies or bylaws to address protection for whistleblowers. The bylaws and policies tend to focus on protecting an employee who reports on the actions of another employee, or a member of the public reporting on the actions of an employee, and do not deal with an employee whistleblowing on a member of council about conflict of interest or ethical matters.

During consultations on *The Municipal Conflict of Interest Amendment Act, 2015* (Bill 186), representatives of SARM and the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) requested government to consider providing legal protections to municipal employees who disclose wrongdoing within municipalities. Representatives from SARM, the Rural Municipal Administrators Association of Saskatchewan, New North, SUMA, and the Urban Municipal Administrators Association of Saskatchewan had preliminary discussions with the Ministry

of Government Relations to discuss this issue, and an Options Paper was developed in March 2016.

More responsibility has been placed on municipal employees to report conflicts of interest since related changes were made to *The Municipalities Act*. There is concern that the existing whistleblower provision in the Saskatchewan Employment Standards Statute is not sufficient to uphold the rights of municipal employees. SARM is encouraging the province to better protect municipal employees from whistle-blowing persecution by updating *The Municipalities Act* to include a council requirement to have a policy in place that outlines how an employee is protected in instances where whistleblowing is thought to occur.



On January 1st, SAMA implemented the 2017 Revaluation which saw property values in the province updated in relation to the January 1, 2015 base date.

SAMA is currently working with municipalities to resolve inquiries and appeals that have arisen from the revaluation, and has already begun maintenance work for 2018. The timely delivery of maintenance will be a major priority for the Agency moving forward.

At the 2017 SARM Midterm Convention, SARM members will vote to appoint two SARM representatives as SAMA Board members. Board members are appointed for a maximum three-year term, and may be reappointed to subsequent terms.

For more information on SAMA or Saskatchewan's assessment system please visit our website at www.sama.sk.ca.

Contact SAMA by phone at: 1-800-667-7262,
or by email: info.request@sama.sk.ca.



GOVERNING at the local level

BY MICHELLE BUECHLER
RMAA DIRECTOR FOR DIVISION 6

THIS is my first article for the *Rural Councillor* as RMAA Director for Division 6. I hope everyone had a safe and bountiful harvest.

“Training for administrators and councillors is ongoing and needed as more programs are downloaded from the federal and provincial governments to the local level.”

In this article, I will be touching on some of the roles, responsibilities and governance of council and administrators, as their roles are becoming more complex. Offices that were once managed by one person now range from two to four people and maybe more due to the activity that is happening in their respective RMs. Municipalities in the province may consist anywhere from mostly agriculture properties to extensive commercial, industrial, country residential and seasonal properties. Each one comes with its own set of challenges. Administrators are not only assessors and tax collectors, they now have to be knowledgeable in such areas as development officers, community planners, asset managers, emergency planners, mediators, advisors, human relations, accountants and the list continues.

Council's priorities have also changed from primarily road building and maintenance to health care, commercial, industrial and residential development, landfill alternatives, policing and fire issues, and the ever-growing issue of human resources and employee retention. Training for administrators and

councillors is ongoing and needed as more programs are downloaded from the federal and provincial governments to the local level to be administered. The administering of these programs has increased the work load on an already busy office environment.

Governance is one of the biggest responsibilities in local government today. The complexity of governance is difficult to capture in a simple definition. The need for governance exists anytime a group of people come together to accomplish an end. Governance proposes several definitions, but most rest on three dimensions: authority, decision making and accountability. It is recognized that good governance is a requirement for sustainability. These three dimensions should be practiced in good faith by council, the administrator and the foreman to bring amity to the municipality.

The Municipalities Act defines the authority that councillors and administrators possess. This authority is not to be abused but to provide direction and guidance for the smooth operation of the municipality.

Decision making is a joint effort on all parts of management of the municipality. Fair and consistent decision making is critical for smooth and fair operations. Multi-tasking is an everyday occurrence for administrators, so sound decision making is essential.

Accountability is the administrator and council's obligation to account for its activities, accept responsibility for them, and to disclose the results in a transparent manner. Examples of accountability may include the proper use of revenues and expenditures, fairness of the budget process, policy making and implementation.

As administrators in such a busy field of work, more times than not we think we have our day planned until the door

is unlocked and the phone starts ringing. All the jobs that were scheduled to be completed today just became tomorrow's or next week's project.

This is a normal work week for a municipal administrator. Needless to say our job is very challenging, but it's also very rewarding. Every administrator and councillor should be proud of the quality and quantity of work that is accomplished to keep our municipalities running effectively and efficiently. This job is never boring, some days are better than others, and some days are just plain terrible, but we bounce back with resilience to get the work completed so we can move on to the next challenge. So please acknowledge the great job your local administrator is doing and let them know how much they are appreciated.

“Governance is one of the biggest responsibilities in local government today.”

After working in the rural government for over 12 years I left the municipal field for year and a half and went to work in the corporate world in downtown Edmonton. Although this was a very challenging and exciting career, my heart was still in rural Saskatchewan. Therefore, I chose to re-convene my career as a rural municipal administrator and took the position of administrator for the RM of Paynton No. 470 in Paynton, SK.

It is great to see so many familiar faces and to be able to get reacquainted with my administrator friends.

Saskatchewan truly is the best place to live.

RESOLVING ISSUES

Through working together

BY DISPUTE RESOLUTION OFFICE, GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

HUMAN beings tend to follow predictable and natural patterns in the way we think and interact with other people. When these patterns are understood, it can lead to better working relationships, effective resolution of issues, and increased trust between people involved.

When people experience the same event, they often form very different viewpoints. This is due to the information they have available to them, the experiences they have had, and their biases, values and beliefs that they filter an event through. We are not always conscious of this dynamic as humans. When we are in situations of conflict or engage in difficult discussions, our reliance on those viewpoints can either escalate or de-escalate conflict. When we become conscious of the influence our viewpoint has on conflict escalation, we can interact differently with people and be more successful.

The role and title that you assume when joining a board or council can be clearly defined and written down. How you chose to interpret that role and your responsibilities on that board or council is based on your perspective, as outlined above. Others will also fill in the blanks about your role and responsibility as a part of a board or council. There may be times your role is interpreted as a decision maker, a participant, a facilitator either non-neutral or neutral, or as a sounding board. How involved, the intensity in which you are involved and your level of authority, or perceived authority, will be factors in how someone views you and your role on a board or council.

Let's take for example, Fred. Fred has been a long time member of the community. He grew up playing hockey at the local rink and graduated from the local high school. Fred lives on a farm outside the nearest town, and after some encouragement from neighbors, he puts his name forward for RM council-

lor. After winning the election for his division, Fred notices something about his neighbors. He starts getting more phone calls and more people stop him on the road to chat. These chats typically include complaining about the grading on the roads. Fred understood that in his role he was to hear their concerns and take them to council. Fred, as he brought these concerns to the council table, learnt that the graders were currently busy at the other side of the RM fixing a road that recently washed out. Fred provides this information to those concerned, but it doesn't seem to slow down the calls or complaints. It seems to Fred that the neighbors who encouraged him to put his name forward are now the ones who are his biggest critics. These people see Fred's role as a primary decision maker in the RM.

When there is lack of clarity or assumptions based on our filter, conflict can result between members of the board or council, the administration or ratepayers. Conflict is competitive in nature. When conflict is unmanaged, this competition can erode relationships. When competitive, people are less likely to be committed to fostering a good relationship and be more interested in reaching their own objectives. Some competition can be healthy to create an atmosphere of improvement; when it is all about winning, trust and efficient decision making can be lost. As a board or council that is to provide strategic direction for those they are elected by, efficient decision making is important.

Imagine trust like a bank account. We can make deposits and withdraws through our actions. When we manage conflict poorly and compete excessively, we can drain the account. Trust, when it is high between people, allows for easy decision making and high level conversations, without a lot of suspicion or information needed to back up responses.

When trust is diminished or broken, it can take time and effort from all parties to make decisions. Focus turns to proof or supporting information rather than focusing on the problem. Broken trust also results in decreased open, respectful and frank conversations about the issues.

Trust, as an integral part of smooth decision making and productive conversation needs to be fostered in the relationships between board or council members, administrations and ratepayers. Close or personal relationships can further complicate discussions with those you interact with. To be able to resolve conflict efficiently, it is important for board or council members to raise issues effectively, limit defensiveness in others and adjust personal approaches when necessary. Leaders on boards and councils need to exhibit the behavior of how to resolve conflict effectively to continue to work towards cohesion among council and gain confidence from ratepayers.

Let's go back to Fred. He continues to provide information to the ratepayers that call him about the road quality. What he begins to notice now is that a few of his neighbors have stopped waving to him as he drives by on the grid or speaking openly when he stops at the Co-op to get gas. Fred is frustrated, he has done what he thought he needed to do, by providing his ratepayers with information, but still the interactions with his neighbors are not the same. What is going on between Fred and his neighbors? What will be important for Fred to remember as he moves through the rest of his term as councillor?

On November 6 at the 2017 SARM Councillors Seminar please join us in exploring more about human interaction, the resulting issues that may arise and some strategies to begin the work on repairing those relationships.

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THE CALL TO SERVE CAN BE CHALLENGING

BY KEN ACTON

EXECUTIVE-IN-RESIDENCE, UNIVERSITY OF REGINA



EACH of us, in our own way, want to give back to our communities; making them a better place to live for our families and our neighbours.

We all take different approaches; some join community-based organizations and volunteer, others help with specific community events each year, such as the local fair or a hospital or rink fundraiser, and some even agree to sit on the board of the organization. Others are limited in their ability to volunteer, so they give financially. Then there are those who, with urging from friends and neighbours, agree to let their name stand for election to local office as a councillor, reeve or school board trustee. You do this not because you are looking for fame and fortune – you do it because your community needs you, and you answer the call to serve.

Why is the job so challenging once elected? There are a number of factors that make governance at the local level especially challenging.

First, everyone knows everyone else. You likely know every family that lives in your division; after all, they are your neighbours, your children attend the same school, and you may be members of the same service club. Compare this to being a city councillor where you simply do not know everyone by their first name; there are tens of thousands of residents in the city and, even if you operate on the ward system, there are thousands of residents.

Second, the administration of the RM is small; there are a limited number of employees and infrastructure to support the operations. I am not suggesting that the administration does not coordinate and deliver a significant number of

services; it is just that there is not a large administrative support system operating out of the RM office fielding calls and answering questions. Again compare this to a city administration; there are significantly more staff and correspondingly more ability to respond to complaints about road repairs, garbage pick-up and snow removal.

Given the dynamics in rural municipalities, the roles and responsibilities of individuals can be grey. It is not surprising that if an issue arises, the ratepayer will simply phone or stop by to discuss it with you as a councillor. When this happens, it is our tendency to listen and then respond with “I will look into it” or “I will mention it to the administrator.” Remember we agreed to take this job because we wanted to make our community better, so it is a natural response. What we are really saying is, we will look into the situation and let them know what we found out. Unfortunately, what the ratepayer hears is “don’t worry about this; I will solve the problem.”

This is where the problem begins as you have taken ownership of the issue. The role for the ratepayer is one of observer and critic. If you are able to solve the issue, the ratepayer will be of the view that no special acknowledgement is required – you simply did what you are paid to do. However, anything short of a perfect resolution and the ratepayer is disappointed. In their mind, you really haven’t lived up to expectations; you didn’t do your job.

Much of this situation is due to unclear understanding of roles, responsibilities and the process for issues management among the reeve, councillors and the administrator. Do you represent the in-

terests of the ratepayers in your division or do you have a broader responsibility to act in the best interests of the RM as a whole? Who is in charge of day-to-day operations? Who does the administrator report to, and what is he or she accountable for? When an issue arises, what is the process for resolution; do you direct the ratepayer to initially attempt to resolve the issue through discussions with the administrator? If it is not resolved there, what is the next step?

I look forward to talking about this more on November 6 at the 2017 SARM Councillors Seminar.

As a council, it is important that you take time to discuss and reach agreement among yourselves and your administrator on your individual and collective roles and responsibilities. The relationship with your administrator is critical in terms of operating effectively and efficiently. The administrator needs to be part of this discussion, so you are one team with a clearly defined process on how complaints/issues will be handled. This will result in day-to-day operational issues being resolved at the lowest possible level within the organization, while more complex and strategic issues move up the organization and come before council in an orderly, informed fashion.

When you are approached by a ratepayer with a complaint, listen, show empathy if appropriate, and before taking ownership, reflect on the processes the council and the administrator have agreed upon in terms of dealing with issues that arise. The administrator and ratepayers will respect and appreciate your honesty and support.

MAKING GOOD DECISIONS

IDENTIFYING, addressing and managing conflicts of interest are key to good governance. Changes to municipal conflict of interest rules became law on November 19, 2015. Now is a perfect time to review conflict of interest in general, as well as some of the other requirements that were introduced in the past two years.

Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest occurs when a person is in a position where a private interest may, or may appear to conflict with his or her role as a municipal council member. Conflict of interest provisions recognize that the judgement of even the most well-meaning person may be impaired when their own interests or the interests of someone close to them are affected. Each council member is responsible for determining whether a conflict exists in a matter brought before council.

Some questions to ask include:

- “Am I perceived to be financially or otherwise vested in the public issue?”
- “Are my private interests perceived to be in conflict with my public duty?”
- “Would a reasonably well informed person consider that the interest might influence how my public duty is exercised?”

If council members are in doubt as to whether a conflict exists, they may wish to seek a legal opinion to ensure that relevant legislation and the common law are considered. The Ombudsman has published three public reports about alleged conflict of interest in municipal decision making. The reports are available online at www.ombudsman.sk.ca.

Declaring a conflict is part of a healthy decision making process. If a council member properly declares a conflict of interest and follows the requirements, they can avoid being disqualified from council. A council may choose to use strategies to help each other recognize when a potential conflict may exist. Having “conflict of interest” as a standing item early in the agenda can allow council to quickly scan the agenda items and discuss if potential conflicts may arise.

Remember, when an interest is declared, the declaration:

- Occurs before any consideration or discussion;
- Requires that the general nature of the conflict be disclosed; and
- Includes any material details that may reasonably be seen to affect the member’s impartiality.

A declaration, including the general nature, the material details, and the abstention/withdrawal of the council member who declared a conflict, are recorded in the meeting minutes.

Because the consequences of violating conflict of interest rules may be severe, a council member may wish to declare an interest if they are in doubt regarding a potential conflict.

Public Disclosure Statements

Public disclosure statements became mandatory for municipal council members on November 19, 2015. Every council member should sign the first public disclosure form within 30 days of being elected to office. The disclosure statement identifies:

- The name and nature of employment;
- Financial interests; and
- Other involvement that may be seen to affect fairness in making a municipal decision.

The disclosure statement does not include specific financial details such as salary, the value of holdings, or number of shares.

Members of council must update their statements every year by November 30 or make a statement that no changes have occurred since filing the public disclosure statement. This deadline is approaching fast, so it is important to make sure that the annual declaration is complete.

Council Procedures Bylaw

Municipalities have passed a Council Procedures Bylaw outlining how the municipality does business. Problems may arise when current practices and the bylaw are at odds. This may lead to misunderstandings. Ask the administrator for a copy of the Council Procedures Bylaw if you do not already have one. Council may wish to review this document from time to time to make sure current practices and the bylaw align. Key discussion questions may include:

- What does the Council Procedures Bylaw say we would do?
- Is our current practice and the bylaw the same?
- Should we look at changing our practice or the bylaw?
- What are our next steps?
- Do we need to place anything on the next council agenda for future discussion?

Municipal Complaints Filed with the Ombudsman

If a citizen is not satisfied with how their municipality dealt with a complaint, the matter can be raised with Ombudsman Saskatchewan. After an investigation, the Ombudsman can make recommendations to the municipal council if the investigation indicates the municipality:

- Made a decision or acted in a way that is contrary to law, unreasonable, unjust, oppressive, improperly discriminatory or based on a mistake of law or fact;
- Exercised a statutory power, duty or function for an improper purpose, on irrelevant grounds, or by taking into account irrelevant considerations; or
- Should have given reasons for a decision or action.

The Ministry of Government Relations developed several resources to help municipalities implement the conflict of interest amendments. Search “conflict of interest” online at saskatchewan.ca to access these resources.

Note: This article is intended for informational purposes only. It is not to be construed as legal advice. Should you require advice, please consult the legislation and a lawyer.

GOVERNANCE

Council

Operations/Management



RURAL COUNCILLOR

HAVE YOU CROSSED THE LINE?

The weird and delicate balance of municipal governance

BY JEFF MULLIGAN

AS a municipal councillor have you ever said something like this?

- To the coffee shop crowd: “I will get them (RM staff) on this right away.”
- To an RM staff member who asks; why do I make less than other staff? You respond: “I will check into this for you.”
- To RM management: “I don’t care what you have to do, just bring forward a budget that calls for a zero per cent tax increase!”

If you have, then you have crossed the line of good governance, surely, with the best of intentions. After all, we get into municipal politics because we care about our community, believe we can make a difference, and have been honoured with the trust of our neighbours who have elected us to go get things done. Unlike the local Lions Club, minor sports associations, or the Agricultural Society, which are all carried by the tireless hands-on commitment of board members rolling up their sleeves to carry the workload, municipal governance calls for a hands-off model. Simply defined as: council is responsible for defining **WHAT** and **WHEN**, while management/administration are the owners of **WHO** and **HOW**.

As council members, we have an incredibly important role within the municipality. We ensure that through a variety of points of interaction and ratepayer input that we co-create a strategic vision, while building consensus on priorities and timelines to communicate to the manager that reports to

Unlike the local Lions Club, minor sports associations, or the Agricultural Society, which are all carried by the tireless hands-on commitment of board members rolling up their sleeves to carry the workload, municipal governance calls for a hands-off model.

council. Councillors are often elected and come to the council table with acknowledged skills or expertise; even riding some contrived authority on the backside of a high-profile election issue. Engaging council members in operational roles or tasks creates organizational confusion with staff and contractors as to who is supposed to be directing the project and exactly how the work is to be completed. Remember, council members will come and go with each election or life change, and as such, there is unacceptable risk to the municipality in assigning operational responsibilities to an elected official.

The consistent operational framework and expertise resides with the chief administrative officer function as outlined in *The Municipalities Act*. The Act, very wisely, precludes members of council from serving as employees of the municipality during their entire term on council. As soon as a councillor, admittedly just trying to help, dives into operations, either by instructing

an employee or contractor or completing tasks generally assigned to RM employees, they *have crossed the line*. At that point, the municipal governance model is kicked into an out of control tailspin. Management and staff become unsettled, potentially undermined, and unable to successfully complete the work that delivers enduring value to ratepayers.

Remember, as councillors, we get our call to action, authority and ability to act through:

- ✓ Resident feedback and consultation
- ✓ Legislation: *The Municipalities Act*
- ✓ Municipal bylaws
- ✓ Strategic plan and municipal development plan
- ✓ Budget approval – operating and capital
- ✓ Municipal policy
- ✓ Council meetings

None of these vehicles or forums implies an operational authority or responsibility for council, either as a whole or as individual members of council.

The flip side is the responsibilities and authority of management/administration, which can be captured this way:

- ✓ Ratepayer service levels
- ✓ Regulatory compliance
- ✓ Departmental operating plans and priorities
- ✓ HR policy and administration
- ✓ Financial management and reporting
- ✓ Contract management and administration
- ✓ Project plans, management and resourcing
- ✓ Workload and task assignments

All of the management/administration functional responsibilities listed above, mandate operational authority and hands-on leadership to achieve the key objectives of the municipality.

Herein lies the distinction of **WHAT** and **WHEN** (Council) vs. **WHO** and **HOW** (Administration).

You will be best served by keeping these basic principles in mind while passionately discharging your responsibilities on behalf of the municipality. At times, we become exasperated, frustrated, or may even give credence to the adage: “Nothing moves very fast in government.” This is neither an acceptable

excuse to resign yourself to lower levels of municipal achievement nor is it a free pass to jump into an unauthorized operational role.

A discussion that I had with Premier Wall shortly after I was elected, and reinforced by my mayoral experience, is that a four-year term goes by in a flash. Don’t assume you will have a second term to achieve the priorities of this council. The best way to achieve results is to clearly understand and contribute to the strategic plan, do your homework on emerging issues to best equip yourself with the ability to influence the collective direction of business conducted at the council table, and immerse yourself in the endless responsibilities that come with your role on council.

Finally, commit to supporting and building a governance model that positions council and staff to excel in the areas of responsibility they are each assigned. A model that limits the urge to jump back and forth across the governance line, if you want to consistently deliver positive results that current and future ratepayers will benefit from for years to come.

Photo credit: shutterstock.com



GOVERNANCE:

Better strategic and tactical human resource management

BY LEAH KNIBBS BAdmin MBA CPHR CPM CPC



AS a councillor, you are a part of the RM governance team. Governance comes with many responsibilities; some you expected and some you didn't. Being an employer is one such responsibility.

An employer oversees the organization, thus implementing strategic human resource management (HRM). Being a supervisor of one position, the administrator, is also a responsibility. A supervisor oversees the work of people, thus implementing tactical HRM. In conversations with councillors, dealing with strategic and tactical HRM is their least favourite responsibility and causes the most sleepless nights. Here are some things councillors can do to create better strategic and tactical HRM.

Know the basics. For HRM areas that come up all the time, know them. Sick leave application, performance management, etc. are common HRM areas. When council supervises their one employee, they work in those HRM areas often. Strategically, council will also approve or develop policies in those HRM areas. Training, hearing a speaker from the Ministry of Labour (free service), or getting resources (*Rights and Responsibility: A Guide to Employment Standards in Saskatchewan*) are inexpensive ways to learn HRM basics.

Increase your capacity. Over the years, councils have supported staff in increasing their capacity in new or developing strategic and tactical areas. If this is good for staff, why not for councils? Your council may have taken governance training because it was a new role. Being an employer may be a new role, too. You can increase your capacity any number of ways; attend a program or get a mentor

are common ways. Increasing your capacity is an investment. For example, it is much cheaper to understand harassment and how to create a respectful workplace than it is to run an investigation.

Develop policies. Councils have approved or developed a number of strategic policies around tendering, taxes, meeting procedures, fire services, etc. You also need strategic HRM policies. Some policies are required by law, such as a harassment policy. In all cases, policies provide guidelines, direction, communicate intention, and share a common statement about the HRM area. Once policies are implemented, develop a strategy so staff understand and follow the policies, and review them regularly.

Seek professional assistance. Engaging professional accounting services is common for RMs. RMs feel the value for those services. Legal and HRM professional services can also add value. Some HRM issues have major risk, cost and/or long-term impact. Increasing your capacity in these areas are just too difficult or not worth the effort. Consider when you have a specific health issue, often you are referred to a medical specialist that deals with that specific health issue. The same can be true with lawyers and HRM consultants. For example, if a return to work program needs to be developed, you may want to consult an HR consultant that specializes in that area. If the RM has a human rights issue, you may want to consult a lawyer that deals specifically with human rights.

How would you like to be treated? This simple rule applies to HRM too. If you consider how you would like to be treated, then you probably have a

good understanding of what to do. For example, you may have an administrator whose performance is not at the desired standard. If you were the administrator, how would you like to be made aware of this and how would you like to be involved in the solution. Many tactical HRM issues can be addressed by this simple rule.

Good communication. The most common assumption is talk is communicating. Communication is about understanding, not talking. If there is talking but no common understanding, communication has not taken place. When you want to communicate, consider listening, asking questions and gaining a clear understanding. Try this simple exercise: next time someone talks to you, respond only with questions to gain further understanding. Improved communication will help you with HRM and all other strategic and tactical areas too. This is a key area to develop your personal and collective capacity.

When I ask organizations why they are successful, it is often because of the people. Councils have three major resources to oversee strategically and tactically: money, capital and people. Even with limited funds, old equipment/buildings, etc., organizations can be successful if they have good people. To ensure you have people producing first-rate work, you need to be a good employer and supervisor. Governance deals with strategic HRM. Supervision deals with tactical HRM. Strategic and tactical HRM are both critical to creating a productive, safe and pleasant workplace.



EQUIPMENT

Breakdown Insurance

BY AMY ROETTGER

INSURANCE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

IF your municipality belongs to SARM's Property Self-Insurance Program (PSIP), this article is for you. This is especially true if your municipality hasn't yet taken advantage of the Equipment Breakdown (formerly known as Boiler & Machinery) insurance coverage that is available through the program. This article is meant to provide an overview of this coverage option, to enable program participants to make informed decisions around whether or not to purchase it, in addition to the regular PSIP building and contents coverage.

The intent of Equipment Breakdown insurance is to protect against the sudden and accidental mechanical or electrical breakdown of certain equipment. Equipment breakdown is, with few exceptions, excluded under the regular property insurance policy. This is a standard exclusion within the insurance industry. Hence the need for many policyholders to buy the additional protection that comes with Equipment Breakdown insurance.

Equipment for which this insurance is meant to provide breakdown coverage for includes (but is not limited to): 1) pressure vessels and boilers; and 2) mechanical or electrical equipment that generates, transmits or uses mechanical or electrical power (except unlicensed mobile equipment). Some examples of these two types of equipment are pumps, compressors, pressurized water tanks, cooling systems, fans, power generators, electrical panels and boilers. If your RM owns any such equipment (and it probably does), you may wish to consider the cost of replacing or repairing it, should it suddenly and accidentally break down. Equipment Breakdown insurance can protect your RM against that cost, subject to a \$1,000 deductible.

The intent of Equipment Breakdown insurance is to protect against the sudden and accidental mechanical or electrical breakdown of certain equipment, which includes (but is not limited to): 1) pressure vessels and boilers; and 2) mechanical or electrical equipment that generates, transmits or uses mechanical or electrical power (except unlicensed mobile equipment).

Equipment Breakdown coverage isn't the only benefit provided by this insurance. Coverage for the damage caused by an explosion of a pressure vessel is also provided.

Did you know that under the regular property insurance policy, an exclusion exists for damage caused by the explosion of equipment items that are subject to internal pressure of more than 15 pounds per square inch (not including gas cylinders, as long as they are manually portable, and not including water heaters of less than 24" in diameter)? It is important to note that not only is damage to the pressure vessel itself excluded, but so is any explosion damage to the policyholder's surrounding walls and other property.

By purchasing Equipment Breakdown insurance, your RM can be protected against this risk. This is an important consideration, as the explosion of a relatively inexpensive piece of equipment can result in costly damage to things around it. If this is a concern, please contact Amy Roettger of the SARM Insurance and Benefits department to discuss the matter in more detail.

Like any insurance policy, Equipment Breakdown insurance is subject to terms

and conditions contained in the policy wording. It is beyond the scope of this article to review all of them in detail. It should be pointed out, though, that Equipment Breakdown insurance is not meant to cover things that are normal to operating equipment, such as wear and tear, rust and corrosion. And, as mentioned earlier, Equipment Breakdown insurance does not apply to mobile equipment, such as tractors, graders, etc.

The annual premium for SARM's Equipment Breakdown insurance runs from \$200 to \$500 annually, in addition to the regular property insurance premium. The deductible per claim is \$1,000. You are encouraged to check your Schedule of Buildings and Contents issued as part of your RM's PSIP policy. If it does not show "Equipment Breakdown Endorsement," and if you are interested in learning more about this important coverage, please contact Amy Roettger, Insurance Program Administrator, at 306-761-3732 or at aroettger@sarm.ca.

Disclaimer: the foregoing is for general information only. In a claim situation, the terms and conditions contained in the SARM policy wording will apply.

Providing input into Saskatchewan's **SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT**



Saskatchewan municipalities and organizations provide input into future solid waste management strategy for province

THE Government of Saskatchewan has compiled input received from a variety of Saskatchewan voices, after launching a public engagement process earlier this year on the future of waste management in the province.

“We knew it was crucial to consult with people and organizations across Saskatchewan with an interest

in solid waste management,” says Wes Kotyk, the Ministry of Environment’s assistant deputy minister of environmental protection. “We held an online webinar, published a survey on saskatchewan.ca, and hosted in-person engagement sessions for a variety of municipalities, businesses and organizations to gather input that will help us further develop a strategy in the near future.”

The engagement sessions included members of the public, First Nations

and Métis communities, rural and urban municipalities, consultants, private waste facility operators, stewardship organizations and recycling representatives. Consultation focused on three key areas of a future solid waste management strategy: landfill management; waste stewardship and recycling; and government leadership.

The ministry’s What We Heard: Spring 2017 Engagement document expands on each of these three areas, based on the feedback heard online and in-person. Some of the themes included concerns about landfill tipping fees and costs, the need for enforcement and audit of regulations, and enhanced educational programs around municipal refuse. Other areas included household hazardous waste management, access to recycling programs, and standardization of best

practices and regulations across the province and other jurisdictions.

“The ministry is committed to ongoing engagement as part of this strategy, and we appreciate everyone’s contributions to the process so far,” adds Kotyk. “The comments from this round of engagement provided us with some valuable perspective on waste management opportunities for the province.”

The next step is a draft strategy, including short- and medium-term action plans in each of the three key areas, as well as more engagement opportunities on the plans.

The What We Heard document, along with more information about the strategy and consultation, is available here or by searching ‘solid waste management strategy’ on saskatchewan.ca.



BE AWARE OF “Nasty” Yellow Starthistle

BY HARVEY ANDERSON

SARM INVASIVE ALIEN PLANTS GROUP
PLANNING ADVISOR

YELLOW STARThISTLE is a very nasty invasive alien plant which is growing close to Canada, in North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, and Washington. This weed is related to the many other knapweed species, of which, we presently have four different species growing here in Saskatchewan. The fact that other species of knapweed, can grow very successfully in Saskatchewan suggests that Yellow Starthistle will also grow well, if it gets established. The feature which makes this weed so nasty, is the 1 to 2 inch long thorns growing from the bracts of the flower head. These can cause injury to grazing livestock and wildlife and the plant is reported to be extremely toxic to horses, causing “chewing disease,” if the animals eat it in overgrazed pastures or in forage.

Yellow Starthistle was reported to be present in southern Alberta, a few years ago, but it is believed that this small patch was eradicated. Yellow Starthistle will likely again be reported in Alberta as it is only a matter of time, before it is moved northward again, by livestock movement or importation of hay.

This weed can out-compete desired vegetation, whether it is native or domesticated forage species. Yellow Starthistle is very invasive and has taken over large areas, particularly in rangeland, pastures, gravel pits and in rural road right-of-ways. It can invade grassed riparian areas, although it occurs mostly on well drained soils, in the U.S.A. This weed is reported to have invaded 15,000,000 acres in the state of California, alone, and is still expanding in most western states.

Generally Yellow Starthistle occurs as an annual, or winter annual in its northern range, and has a deep tap-root which enables it to extract moisture from depths. This weed starts out as a



fall or spring rosette, with deeply lobed basal leaves. The flowering occurs in late June through August, and the flower color is bright yellow, with a star shaped arrangement of golden colored thorns protruding from the flower bracts. The flowers are located singly at the ends of much-branched stems. The plants normally grow to the height of 3 to 4 feet, at maturity.

With livestock movement from the U.S.A. to Canada there is always some hay which is brought along to feed the livestock, in transit, That is the most likely way it will arrive here in Alberta

or Saskatchewan. Be aware of this weed and report it, if seen, to your local RM weed inspector as this is not a plant any of us want to see establish itself, in any part of Saskatchewan.

Harvey Anderson is an Invasive Plant Management Advisor working jointly with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. Funding of this program is provided through the Canada-Saskatchewan “Growing Forward” Program.

Southern Saskatchewan **BANK ROBBERIES**

RCMP ask for public assistance identifying suspect in robberies in Southern Saskatchewan

Since May, 2016, six robberies and two attempted robberies occurred at financial institutions in southern Saskatchewan. To date local detachments and our General Investigation Section continue an extensive investigation.

In order:

- On Friday, May 13, 2016, a bank in Pangman was robbed.
- On Friday, June 24, 2016 a bank in Hodgeville was robbed.

- On Wednesday, January 4, 2017 a bank in Pangman was robbed.
- On Monday, February 6 a robbery was attempted at a bank in Pangman.
- On Friday, March 10 a bank in Holdfast was robbed.
- On Friday, May 17 a bank in Glentworth was robbed.
- On Monday, June 5 a robbery was attempted at a bank in Glentworth.
- On Tuesday, June 13 a bank in Central Butte was robbed.

Fortunately, in all instances, zero people were physically injured.

Investigators have noted similarities in these eight incidents.

The suspect is consistently described as an adult male, 40 to 50 years of age with a heavy set or stocky build and 5'5" to 5'8" tall.

This individual has worn dark balaclavas or toques, gloves, a grey hooded sweater, a tan coat, an orange hoodie with an Under Armour logo on the front, a camouflage or dark coat.



Images (clockwise from top left) of the Pangman, Hodgeville and Central Butte bank robberies.



Images from the Holdfast bank robbery.

Potential vehicles involved include a grey van, a red SUV, and an older model dark coloured Chevrolet extended cab truck, possibly a Silverado model.

Safety is always our number one priority. We want to assure the public that we've been investigating the similarities in these robberies for a period of time.

If you are hearing all these descriptors together and think you recognize or know this individual, please contact your local police service. If you want to remain anonymous, call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 – the only way anyone will ever find out if you called Crime Stoppers is if you tell them.

You can call, text or email Crime Stoppers and may be rewarded cash for the information you provide.

YOU CAN HELP AND RECEIVE CASH REWARDS



IF THE INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE LEADS TO THE ARREST OR CONVICTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL(S) INVOLVED. ANYONE WITH INFORMATION ABOUT THESE CRIMES SHOULD CONTACT THE PROVINCIAL TOLL FREE TIP LINE. CALLS ARE NOT TRACED OR RECORDED AND CALLERS CAN CHOOSE TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS. YOU CAN ALSO REPORT ONLINE AT SASKATCHEWAN.CA/TIP



TURN IN POACHERS 1-800-667-7561 OR #5555 FROM SASKTEL CELLULAR

North Battleford Conservation Officers received 2 separate calls regarding moose poaching on private land in the Prongua district between the dates of Sunday, August 20th and Wednesday, August 23rd, 2017. Investigating officers found in both incidents that the poachers had shot these moose, then drove into the standing crop to retrieve the moose. They had transported them to locations nearby and field dressed each. The first case involved a bull moose, which was killed 8km northwest of Prongua. The second involved a cow moose, which was shot 2.5km west of Prongua.

The public's help is needed to solve these cases.



STAY UP TO DATE BY VISITING WWW.SASKTIP.COM OR FOLLOW SASKTIP ON TWITTER/FACEBOOK/YOUTUBE

rural councillor **MEMBER NEWS**



**RM OF BIG STICK NO. 141
GORDON FORD
IN MEMORIAM**

Gordon Ford was born May 25, 1936 and died August 14, 2017 in Maple Creek. He attended Motherwell School until 1947 when it closed and he was bussed to Maple Creek.

Upon completing school, he worked for Acorn Construction, who was building the No. 1 Highway from Piapot to west of the overpass.

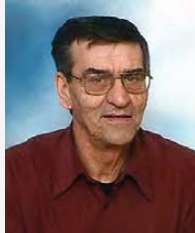
Gordon married Myrtle Montgomery on January 9, 1957 in Saskatoon. In 1960 they moved to Elbow, SK where he moved some of the first loads of dirt into Gardiner Dam.

In 1963 Gordon and Myrtle settled on the Ford family farm, and in 1967 they bought a farm south of Golden Prairie, SK where they raised their four children and still reside.

Gordon was a councillor for the RM of Maple Creek from 1971-79 and a councillor for the RM of Big Stick from 1990-2009.

Gordon is predeceased by his father, Hilton; mother, Ethel; his brother, Ken; son Glenn; and daughter Gayle.

Gordon leaves behind his family to remember and mourn him. Loving wife Myrtle and daughters Brenda (Roger) and Donna, his sister Donna, brothers Gary and Bryan and numerous nieces and nephews.



**RM OF CRAIK NO. 222
HILTON SPENCER
IN MEMORIAM**

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Hilton Spencer of Craik, SK in August 2017 at the age of 69. With his much-loved wife and children by his side, Hilton fought until the end with the same determination and strength that he displayed his entire life.

Hilton was born in Craik in February 1948. He was predeceased by his parents, George and Violet (Sloan). Proudly carrying on Hilton's spirit and love for his family are his wife of 43 years, Wilma (Sianchuk), and their four children: George (Barbara) Spencer and their daughter, Athena, of Blufton, AB; Peter (Brady) Spencer and their sons, Mason and Grey, of Edmonton, AB; John (Jennifer) Spencer and their children, Ainsley and Flynn, of Martensville, SK; Rae Lynn (Dan) Crooks and their daughter, Madyn, of Weyburn, SK. He is also survived by his brothers: Ernest (Nancy) Spencer and Dave (Arlette) Spencer and by numerous nieces, nephews, family and friends.

Hilton loved his family and was unable to hide his pride as he spoke of them. His grandchildren were one of his real joys, and he always brought a new and fun experience to them whenever he spent time with them.

Hilton was creative, resourceful and intelligent. He loved to golf and archery hunt with his friends and family. He was also community minded, serving as president of the Craik Golf Course and as the reeve for RM No. 222 for

27 years. He fought for many ideas that he believed would make his community prosper, including keeping rural health care intact and bringing new businesses and families to the area.

His entrepreneurial spirit served him well as he supported his family and the community through his company, Spencer Trenching, as well as by farming, raising livestock and owning his own semi and gravel trailer. In the weeks before his passing he spoke of retiring on the farm and rekindling his passion of working with horses. We will be forever proud of his integrity, selflessness and life lessons.



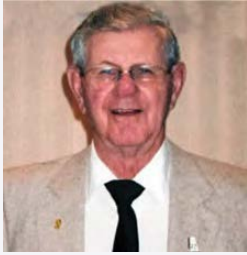
**RM OF HAPPYLAND NO. 231
FRANK KUNTZ
IN MEMORIAM**

Frank Kuntz was born July 17, 1922 on the family homestead south of Sceptre. He was one of 13 children born to Adam and Veronica Kuntz. He attended Cululi Country School and joined the service after school. When Frank returned, he started farming south of Prelate. In 1958, he married Hilda Humphrey. Hilda had two children from a previous marriage, and they had three children together. Unfortunately, Hilda passed away in 1970, leaving Frank to raise the children.

Frank was active in the community, serving on the local school and credit union boards. He was a councillor for the RM of Happyland for Division 4 from 1962-89. He was also active in sports, especially golf in the summertime.

After retiring from farming, he continued to golf and develop other interests. Frank enjoyed rock hounding, lapidary work, wood working, collecting antiques and fishing.

Frank passed away in May 2017. He leaves to cherish his memory: his children, son Frank (Peggy) Kuntz; daughter Terry (Rodney) Gill; daughter Patty (Mel) Cole; step-son Glen (Elaine) Koutsky; and son-in-law Richard Mastel and numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren. He is also survived by his brother Harry (Betty), brothers-in-law Walter Hercun and Jack Sutherland, and sisters-in-law Loretta and Louise Kuntz.



**RM OF DEER FORKS NO. 232
RICHARD KEIL
IN MEMORIAM**

Richard Keil was born October 7, 1925 at Estuary, SK. He married the love of his life, Ellin, on July 1, 1960, after which they moved back to the family farm.

Before then, Richard worked for CP Rail and the Union Milk Company.

For 30 years, Richard was a councillor for the RM of Deer Forks, never missing a meeting.

He spent 16 years as a trustee on the Western Senior Citizens Home Board of Directors and gave 34 years of service to the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool.

Living only a few miles from the South Saskatchewan River, fishing was one of Richard's favourite pastimes.

During the winter months curling was his passion, participating in many bonspiels. He also enjoyed baseball.

Richard passed away on July 2, 2017. Richard is survived by his wife Ellin; two children, Treena (Dave) Redman and Kelly Keil (Tracy Rizzoli), grandchildren and great grandchildren; sisters-in-law Helen Keil, Loretta Shastal, Doreen Harsch and brother-in-law, Roland Harsch, as well as numerous nieces and nephews.



**RM OF ITUNA
BON ACCORD NO. 246
EDWARD JOSEPH GOLEMB
IN MEMORIAM**

Edward (Ed) Joseph Golemba, second youngest from a family of ten children, was born on June 20, 1928 near Krakow, Poland in a small village called Leki Dolne. Ed's family immigrated to Canada aboard the passenger ship "Assonnia," arriving in Ituna, SK on June 29, 1929.

In 1930, the family settled in the St. Joseph District near Ituna where they built a two-room log house and several other log shelters that were urgently required to begin a homestead life on a wooded quarter of land.

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There were three fox farms in the district, so on his way to school every day, Ed set up a trap line where he trapped gophers and rabbits as food for the foxes. He also cut down trees and hauled wood to Ituna. In 1942, Ed quit school to manage the family farm. However, in 1943, a wood sawing accident almost claimed the loss of Ed's left hand, which, although tragic, gave Ed the opportunity to return to St. Joseph School.

In 1950, he took over the family farm. In 1951, he married Jean Winter who was teaching at Ravine School, north of Leross, SK. They were blessed with two children, Marvin and Rita Mae.

All through Ed's life, he went over and above the call of duty to contribute to his community and to try to make it a better place for everyone. He was a wonderful example of what a good neighbour should be. During the 55 years that Ed farmed, he served on over 40 different community service committees. He was the Division 3 councillor in the RM of Ituna Bon Accord for 38 years. As a result of his community service, he received the Lieutenant Governor's Award for Outstanding Service to Rural Saskatchewan in 2010. In 2013, due to his tireless work for his community and the province, as well as his strong commitment to his family and church, he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. Ed felt no task was too difficult for him. Many times, he would jokingly say, "The difficult I do right away, the impossible takes a little longer."

Ed enjoyed music, telling jokes, lathe and machining, creating and manufacturing iron products, fishing, playing cards, and visiting with family and friends.

He leaves to cherish his memory, his loving wife of 65 years, Jean, children Marvin (Maryann) Golemba of Ituna and Rita (Garry) Fichel of Battleford, SK, four grandchildren and three great grandchildren.



**RM OF KELLROSS NO. 247
GERALD BRUCE
RETIREMENT**

Gerald Bruce was hired April 29, 1991 to dig stones out of the roads with a crow bar until grass mowing time. He then mowed grass until the end of that season. In 1992, he picked stones, mowed grass and was trained on the grader by the foreman at the time, Bill Murry. From 1992-94, Gerald mowed grass and graded roads. In 1995 he became the new foreman and grader operator, a position he held until his retirement on August 31, 2016.

The outside employees and the administrator took Gerald out for supper August 31, 2016, on the last day of his employment. Council for the RM of Kellross No. 247 had a private social for Gerald after the October 7, 2016 council meeting. At the Annual Ratepayers Supper Meeting on April 7, 2017, a public acknowledgement of Gerald's 25 years of service was celebrated by presenting him with his own grader (donated by Brandt Tractor) and presenting his wife, Bev Bruce, with a bouquet of flowers.

The council, administration and outside employees wish Gerald a fun-filled, relaxing great retirement, and we thank him for his 25 years of service to the RM. He will be truly missed.



**RM OF MOOSE RANGE NO. 486
RICHARD C. COLBORN
RETIREMENT**

The RM of Moose Range recognizes Richard C. Colborn for his years of service and dedication. Richard worked at the RM as administrator from 1987 to 2016. His knowledge and years of experience helped to guide the municipality to where it is today. Council and staff wish him all the best in the future.

MEMBER NEWS TIPS

Here are some tips to help you prepare your Member News submissions:

- Do not include photos in Word documents. Send them as separate high resolution JPG, PNG, TIFF or PDF files.
- Try to send original photos not ones that have been scanned from printed documents or taken off of websites. Scans of printed documents and online photos do not reproduce well.
- Photos should be a minimum of 300 dpi resolution. Tip: check the file size. If the photo file is less than 100 kb in size, it may not print properly in the magazine.
- Check your cell phone camera resolution before taking photos. Often to save file space, photos are taken at a low or medium resolution. Ensure that the camera's settings are set to High, Highest Quality or Maximum resolution.
- Try to keep the length of submission write-ups under 250 words.

Please email questions or Member News items to sarm@sarm.ca. Thank you for all of your submissions. We love sharing your stories and achievements with our readers!

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