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# Saskatchewan Association of Northern Communities

## NEW|NORTH

### Newsletter, January, 2016

## Mayor and Councillor Gathering: Feb 18

### Premier Invited

A formal invitation has been sent to the Premier of Saskatchewan, the Hon. Brad Wall, to attend New North's next Mayor and Councillor Gathering, at the Prince Albert Travelodge, on Feb. 18.

We've also invited the ministers of Justice, Government Relations, Economy, Highways, Environment—in fact, pretty much everyone.

We have no word on who will be attending at this point; we'll let you know as soon as the confirmations come in.

Other items tentatively on the agenda at this point include the new role of the provincial Ombudsman's office in relation to "municipal entities," and a discussion of a possible lobbying agenda for the northern municipalities for the upcoming election.



The Premier, Mr Wall (pictured, right) has been invited to the New North Gathering with the promise of an excellent choice of desserts.



### FROM THE CHAIR

BY AL SAYN, CHAIR OF NORTH

At my restaurant in Stony Rapids, I have a few simple rules about serving alcohol to customers: two drinks, maximum. And I won't serve anyone who is isn't eating. Sometimes to enforce my rules I have to stand in the doorway, stand in the entrance to the hotel. Putting yourself between someone and their next their drink can be not pleasant, and I've had my fair share of scrapes.

The choices we make about alcohol are personal choices. But I can see the bigger picture, too. That the right personal choices are not always possible, not always visible to us. At that moment when someone I know well is threatening me because I won't let him in, I can see that's not really the person I

know. That's not the person he would want to be. And he tells me that, the next day, when he's sobered up.

It's terrible, this disease of alcohol. Drunk or sober, it can own you. As a councillor for my community, I have to think about what can be done. The grip that alcohol has on some of our communities is not an easy fix. You look at the business of selling alcohol. Banning alcohol doesn't work, so how do we sell it responsibly? For me, you don't look at how much money you can make first, and then think about social responsibility second. You go the other way round. If you let commerce dictate your alcohol policies you're in trouble in my view. I don't know all the answers, but I do know we have to be consistent in our approach: the way we sell it, the way we talk about it, the way we police it all have to be in-sync.

# NewNorth News & Updates

## **New North Waterworks Now With 30% More Claustrophobia**

Already renowned for testing the physical and mental endurance of even the most hardy of northerners, the New North Waterworks, April 27-28, is set to dig into the fertile soil of your deepest and darkest fears by offering confined space training as part of an operator's safety course.

The safety course will likely be 0.6 CEUs and take operators through the many safety regulations around being stuck down a hole you can barely turn around in, as well as, presumably, the role of the guy standing at top texting his girlfriend while you quietly suffocate. The course will be presented in lecture style stretching through all of the second day of the conference, with breaks for snacks, counselling and lunch. Screaming and non-screaming seating will be available.

The full agenda and registration for the conference will be available and sent out to administrators as soon as its ready to inflict maximum psychological carnage.

### **New North Website**

Our website runs off HTML 5; OK, we don't know what that means, we just know you need a fairly recent web browser—like in the last five years recent—to open it up. If you are running Windows 7 or 8 you are good. The New North website is at **[www.newnorthsask.org](http://www.newnorthsask.org)**.

**Note:** *that is a new address.*

### **Northern Justice Symposium Registrations Available**

We mention the website because registrations for the upcoming 2016 NJS can be got from there. The Northern Justice Symposium is from May 17 to 19 at the Ches Leach Lounge, Prince Albert—same place as last time. Go to **[newnorthsask.org](http://newnorthsask.org)** or call the office at **306 425 5505** to get a registration form. The draft agenda will coming shortly. However, we can tell you that we have invited the federal Minister of Justice, **Jody Wilson-Raybould**. We have confirmed Dr Ken Coates from the U of S as a keynote speaker.

### **Brrr, it's Cold. That Can Only Mean One Thing: SUMA's Coming**

The SUMA Convention is an extraordinary event showcasing the wares of one of the best and most successful municipal associations in the country.

This year's event immediately precedes a provincial election: what issue or concern will be the buzz of this year's convention? We can't wait to find out. Expect a full report from us in the February edition of the newsletter.

### **Community Police Boards: Current Funding Agreement Ends March 31**

If you or your Community Police Board don't have a new agreement with New North for funding, get in touch with us right now. We say agreement but it's really just an understanding. This current funding agreement covers April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016—so you can see time is running out. Administrators, please email [matt.newnorth@sasktel.net](mailto:matt.newnorth@sasktel.net) or call me at 306 425 5505 if I haven't spoken to you already about what is going on.

### **Why Are We Getting This Now and How Do We Stop It?**

The New North newsletter typically comes out around the first week of the new month. It will now come out in the last week of the current month. If you would like this newsletter directly emailed to you, please send a request to [new.north@sasktel.net](mailto:new.north@sasktel.net), and ask to be put on our subscriber list. Obviously, if you are getting it now and would rather not get it, send an email to the same place and ask to be taken off.

## Promises of Early Release of Infrastructure Funding Look Promising

Reports in the media mid-January that the federal Liberal government was thinking of accelerating infrastructure spending in Saskatchewan and Alberta had municipal mayors across the province jumping. The reports implied that the government would be “moving up” its schedule of payments under the New Building Canada Fund. When announced a few years ago, the NBCF package had several components to it (including the Gas Tax Fund). The part that the northern municipalities access, besides the GTF, is called the Provincial-Territorial Infrastructure Component (PTIC), which to Saskatchewan is worth about \$463 million over 10 years. While the general feeling from the municipal associations is that the PTIC component is hopelessly under-funded, it is nevertheless where a portion of the northern water and sewer program (NWS) funding will be coming from—with about \$2 million already announced for La Ronge’s gensets. In total, Phase 4 of the NWS has a “to do” list of projects totalling about \$77 million.

## Northern Aviation News

*...your least reliable source!*

### Westwind Launches Alternative to Getting Shot Out of Cannon

January 7<sup>th</sup> saw the official unveiling of regional airliner Westwind’s new route from La Ronge to Regina, at a ceremony at the town’s Baker Field.

“This will totally revolutionize travel to the Queen City,” said Mayor of La Ronge, Thomas Sierzycki.

“We can finally retire The Other Big Bertha.”

“The Other Big Bertha,” the town’s German-built cannon, has been in service since the 1940s.

Flights from La Ronge to Regina aboard the winged aircraft will connect through either Saskatoon or Prince Albert.

With a flight time of several hours, it is slower than the ballistic missile now in use.

Sierzycki said, however, that the new mode of travel has the distinct advantage of allowing travellers to arrive at their destination in one piece.

“It’s always been the thing that most people complained about.

Where are my legs?  
What happened to my viscera?”

The town cannon, which had seen action on the front lines in France during the First World War before being converted to civilian use in the 1930s, will most likely be put up for sale through a Request for Proposal process.

“We think she’s got life left in her,” Sierzycki said.



Officials, including the Mayor of La Ronge Thomas Sierzycki and local MLA Doyle Vermette, are shown here standing around the new metal can, which allegedly has the capability to send up to almost 50 people hurtling through the sky toward a pre-determined destination, rested and intact.



Travellers getting ready to board The Other Big Bertha during the “golden days” of cannon, at the La Ronge airfield, June, 1956.

### Methods of Air Transport: Northern Saskatchewan





## QUEENSBURY RULES

# SUMA Convention's New Year's Resolutions

Last year it was all golf carts and revenue sharing. This year's resolutions—to be debated and then voted on at the Convention on Feb. 2—is once again fairly eclectic, providing a insight into the minds, the thought processes—and yes, the peculiar obsessions—of municipal elected officials from across this great province. And, once again, the Northern Village of Air Ronge is projecting a strong northern presence.

Let's take a (mostly serious) look at some of this year's offerings for you to chew over.

### 1. Stubble Burning

While most of us prefer just to use a razor, “stubble burning” is apparently a thing in rural Saskatchewan. What's more, it produces carbon emissions. The resolutions calls on SUMA to advocate with the provincial government to pass legislation to “ban the burn.”

### 2. Decommissioning costs for landfills

This resolution from the Village of Neville calls for a change in the way that the Ministry of Environment deals with small landfills, arguing that regulating these to the same standards as large landfills doesn't make a lot of sense, especially given their small “environmental footprint.” The resolution wants the ministry to use a “sliding scale” based on population “when enforcing environmental guidelines used to decommission existing landfills,” and/or financial or technical assistance to encourage compliance.

### 3. “Vaping” in public areas

Not to be confused with vamping and anything else Madonna might do, “vaping” is the cool word for the act of “smoking” a vaporiser—sometimes known as an e-cigarette. The health effects of e-cigarettes are unknown, and Saskatchewan City Mayors' Caucus doesn't like that. Therefore, they have proposed that vaping, along with smoking generally, be banned in public places—which, if we are not mistaken, is everywhere.

### 4. Fire Guards for Northern Saskatchewan

This resolution from the Village of Air Ronge calls for the government to develop and maintain fire guards around every community in the north. Seems straight forward enough.

### 5. Transit Assistance for People With Disabilities

Our favourite resolution is this one from the Village of Invermay. The government already provides a subsidy to about 70 municipalities in Saskatchewan to provide transport for people with disabilities (in the north, only La Ronge and Creighton are eligible for it). There was some talk that with the new disability strategy that assistance might be broadened; the fiscal context seems to have gotten in the way. In any case, Invermay wants the TAPD program expanded to cover all communities operating a paratransit service.

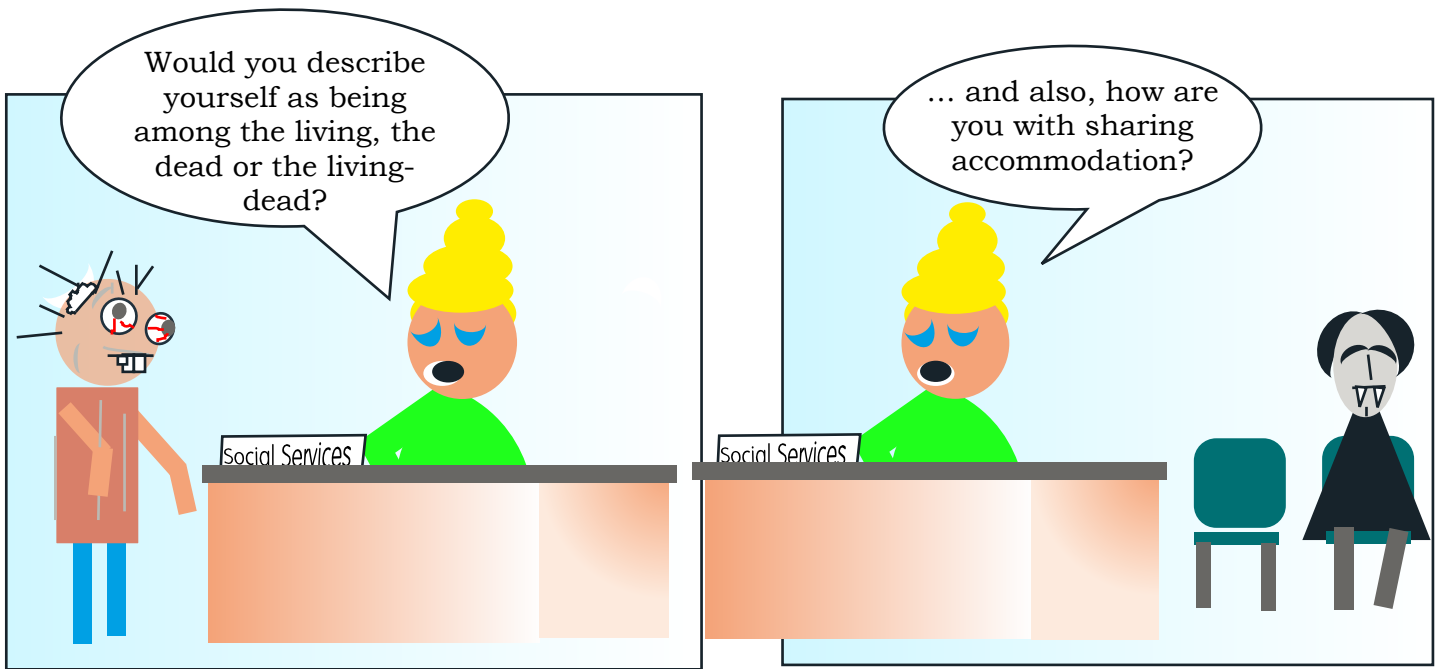
### 6. Upgrade to Power Lines for Northern Saskatchewan

Another one from the Village of Air Ronge wants to see existing wooden power poles in northern Saskatchewan changed over to steel ones.

### 7. The Costs of Internment for Indigents to be Covered by SAP

With SAP (ie, Saskatchewan Social Assistance Program) already providing subsistence to indigent person (ie, people with no means to take care of themselves) who are alive, the Town of Shellbrook would now like that assistance to be extended to them when they are dead. That's right, apparently SAP only provides assistance to people who are living, breathing and walking above the earth, not residing within it. Internment costs for the

indigent dead (great title for a TV show, right?), according to *The Cemeteries Act*, fall on the municipality when there is no one else to pay for them. These costs continue in perpetuity, although what happens in the case of the dead rising would seem to be a grey area.



## SK Unemployment Rate Edging Up

*Increase in provincial unemployment disproportionately affecting Aboriginal workers. Why?*

The December labour force statistics showed that Saskatchewan's unemployment rate has increased by 1.8% since the same time in 2014, from 3.7% to 5.5%. While that is essentially a move from a state of virtually full-employment to normal, it is still a worrying sign for the province.

Jobs lost were mainly in the mining, oil extraction, agricultural and natural resource harvesting areas (including fishing).

Construction and manufacturing also showed slight declines in employment, although not by as much as you would think.

There were 1,800 Public Service jobs lost altogether, with most appearing to have been lost in the Education Services category—suggesting that there is a budget squeeze going on there. Private sector employment had actually risen by 5,000 jobs between December 2014 and December 2015, but a big firing spree seems to have gone on between November and December 2015—when 6,000 jobs were cut. That's a bit rough just before Christmas.

The increase in Aboriginal unemployment is particularly alarming. The overall unemployment rate among Aboriginal people is 12%, an increase from 8% in December 2014. However, the participation rate of Aboriginal

workers slipped overall between November and December 2015 by 0.4%. Both the employment rate and participation rate of Aboriginal workers has fallen in the last 12 months—a bad combination, as it suggests people are giving up even looking for work. One possible explanation is found in the rise in the participation rate of Métis workers, coming back from Alberta's oil sands and registering as unemployed here.

Since the 2000s, the overall employment rate for Aboriginal people in the province has increased. The increases in employment opportunities have come in all sectors of the economy—but the resource extraction industries, which have made a particular effort to attract Aboriginal workers, has been the biggest beneficiary of Aboriginal talent.

It has come at a cost: their relatively-lower educational attainment levels puts Aboriginal workers at a higher risk of lay-offs in downturns in manual labour-intensive industries. We see this in the statistics. By contrast, employment in the “service industry”—an area where Aboriginal people tend to be under-represented—has increased. As Saskatchewan moves more to a service-industry oriented economy in the down-turn, the problem of Aboriginal under-employment might also only get worse.

## Hot Topic Mandatory Candidate Training for Local Govt. Elections

With municipal elections around the corner it is perhaps not a bad time to revisit a question that arose a couple of years, caused a minor stir, then disappeared, never to be heard from again. That question was whether anyone running for municipal office in northern Saskatchewan should be required to undergo some kind of compulsory training to qualify as a candidate.

The New North Executive brought a motion to this effect to the SUMA Convention in 2014, with the specific caveat that it would only apply to the north. The buzz at the Convention was that compulsory pre-candidacy training was not only not a bad idea; it was also badly needed. However, New North's motion didn't get to a debate; it was withdrawn before we got a chance to see how people really felt about it.

The New North Executive supported mandatory candidate training for two main reasons:

1. To help support the efforts of the communities to improve overall level of governance;
2. To discourage the high incidences of "nuisance candidates" at municipal elections.

Candidates running for municipal office may not necessarily possess a good understanding of the range of roles and

responsibilities of elected officials. While individuals can run for municipal office for any number of reasons, the potential for candidates to misjudge both the depth and level of commitment required to hold office can fatally undermine the work of council.

Moreover, while ballots are free and open to anyone who meets citizenship, age, residency and other criteria, there is no bar to "nuisance candidates" who nevertheless meet those criteria but whose intent is not the serious contemplation of office but rather the spoiling of the ballot for those who do.

It was thought that the measure would help ensure that elected officials have the capacity and

desire to provide proper and adequate leadership to overcome some of the northern municipalities' biggest challenges. It was also thought that the gains made in public accountability would far outweigh the loss of the few hours of a committed individual's time. After all, anyone who didn't have the desire to commit themselves to a candidate training program probably didn't have the time to make an even greater commitment to serving their community.

Although the New North Executive had proposed this resolution, the seeds of it actually go back to the The Options 2000: Northern Municipal Sector Final Report—which came out of The Taskforce on Municipal Legislative Reform—which recommended that "consideration should be given to developing more extensive training programs for elected officials and appointed municipal officials." The rationale was that:

"Such training programs are desired by many municipal officials as a means to upgrade their own skills and also to increase the number of Northerners who will be qualified [to] contest and fill elected and appointed municipal positions." (39)

### **Mandatory Training as Pre-Requisite for Nomination as Elected Official: The Motion to the SUMA Convention, 2014**

**Whereas** municipalities ought to be governed by persons with the foremost interest of serving the public in mind,

**And Whereas** persons can gain municipal office without an understanding of the demands and needs of the position,

**And Whereas** there are currently no such eligibility requirements,

**And Whereas** such a requirement would be a bar only to those person without the necessary commitment to serve as elected officials,

**Now therefore be it resolved that** SUMA lobby the Saskatchewan Ministry of Government Relations to amend legislation to reflect that, henceforth, persons are not eligible to nominate as a candidate for municipal elections until they have completed a Candidate Training Course in municipal governance.

Although stopping short of linking “training” to the eligibility to hold office, it is certainly contemplated that “enhancing qualifications” could be achieved through the amendment of “statutory provisions.”

## **Legal Objections and Obstacles**

### **a. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code**

The Code derives largely from the Charter of Rights, but has arguably greater application. Section 8 specifies that everyone has the right to freely exercise their “franchise in all elections.” Although it is ambiguous as to whether this section applies to municipal elections, “franchise” generally, if not universally, refers only to the right to a vote. (One potential caveat here is that in the United States, the “right to vote” has sometimes been interpreted as “the right to vote for a candidate of your choice.”)

The Code contains sections relating to “equality before the law” and “freedom of association.” Because these sections are nearly identical to those found in the Charter, we can deal with those sections in relation to the Charter.

### **b. The Canadian Charter of Rights**

The following points may be observed in relation to the Charter of Rights, based on cases brought before the Supreme Court, with respect to this issue:

- Municipal Elections are not subject to the Charter’s right to vote, or right to stand for election, section (s3). Those rights only apply to Federal and Provincial elections.
- The right to run for municipal office is not protected by the Freedom of Association section (s2).
- Municipal electoral laws, as well as laws made by municipalities, **are** subject to the “Equality before the Law” section (s15). However:
- The courts have found that “Equality before the Law,” as with any of the Charter Rights, can be “read down” by the “Guarantee of Rights within Reasonable Limits” section (s1).

In the case of *Rheaume v Ontario* (1992), a registered nurse argued that a section of Ontario’s *Municipal Act* that prohibited a public servant from running for, or holding, municipal office, breached her constitutional rights. With reference to the alleged violation of section 3, the Court of Appeal maintained “that s.3 of the Charter, the right of a citizen, *inter alia*, to vote or to be qualified for membership in the House of Commons or in a legislative assembly, does not apply to municipal councils.”

With respect to section 2, the court ruled that the individual is “free to associate” with “anyone in her campaign,” but there is no “constitutional right to be associated with municipal council as an elected member.” The section 15 ruling was more complicated, as the court decided to perform an “Oakes test.” According to section 1, “limits” can be placed on an individual’s rights if the limits are “reasonable.” The Oakes test (from *R. v. Oakes* [1986]) provides guidelines to determine when a Charter right can be limited.

In short, the court in *Rheaume* held that the law restricting a municipal worker from holding office *was* discriminatory, but it was a reasonable form of discrimination in the circumstances. In a similar case heard at the same time—*Jones v. Ontario*, the facts of which are nearly identical to *Rheaume*—the court decided that municipal employees do not represent an historically “disadvantaged group,” and so the limits placed on their “right” to hold office was a reasonable one in light of the desire to maintain the political neutrality of the public service.

The implications we can draw from the cases are as follows:

- Limiting the requirements for candidacy is entirely possible in municipal elections and is constitutionally allowable;
- However, any limitation on a fundamental democratic right has to be reasonable, and be very specifically linked to a broader, socially-desirable goal, or a goal whose net gain to the public interest is worth the cost of infringing an individual’s fundamental rights (e.g. not allowing municipal public servants to run for office diminishes conflicts of interest and is considered a net gain for society).

The bottom line is that putting an extra qualifying criteria seems legally possible, but there has to be a pretty good reason for it. If this issue can’t get by a resolution of elected officials, it is difficult to see how it can go any further.

## 2016 Provincial Election: *Battle for the 3.63%*

### New North's Lobbying Agenda for Provincial Election Taking Shape

*What issues will shape the election campaign in the two northern ridings this March?*

The recent federal election showed the impact that a smart, concerted and strategically aligned platform from the municipal associations can have on the political fortunes of the different parties. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM, as it is better known) put together a little conference bag of policy goodies for the parties, with the federal Liberal and NDP parties both committing to using the pens and wearing the lanyards contained therein—although the NDP's communication of its commitment may have got lost amidst Mulcair's increasingly desperate efforts at reverse engineering the act of smiling.

Incumbent MLAs Doyle Vermette and Buckley Belanger of the NDP, and Sask Party challenger Thomas Sierzycki in the Cumberland riding and Phil Elliot shaping up against Buckley on the westside will be hearing from New North about some of our top priorities for the northern campaign. Please note: the list below isn't conclusive or exhaustive; we expect that the northern elected will have a chance to play around with it if they choose.

#### **Long-term care**

MLA Doyle Vermette's tenacity helped get the long-term care facility in La Ronge on the government agenda, with \$500,000 put aside by government for a conceptual design for a new building. However, there is clearly still a growing need elsewhere across the north for LTC beds.

#### **Roads**

The government's 2015 budget heralded about \$57 million for "northern transport" (which includes highways, airports, bridges). About \$12 million was for one-off upgrades to airports, and a lot of that was federal money. Excluding those one-offs, since 2004 the northern transport budget has gone from about \$30 million to \$45 million. That's a 50% increase over 14 years. However, as a percentage of the total provincial highways budget, northern spending has fallen from 11% to 7%—a decrease of almost 50% on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

#### **Mining Contribution to Northern Municipal Sustainability**

Northern municipalities provide services to around two-thirds of all northern mine workers. The northern mines contribute property taxes and lease fees to the NMTA every year—which the government and the Management Board use to help supply different programs to northern municipalities, including the Northern Water and Sewer Program, Capital Grants Program, and even New North. Unlike the potash tax, however, this revenue is not directly available to communities, and its use reflects priorities set by government.

#### **Northern Food Security**

The southern communities are feeling the pinch of the low Canadian dollar forcing up the price of produce. Welcome to the north, where the high cost of living is an everyday, all year round challenge to the health and well-being of northerners—especially in the far north: the Cost of Healthy Eating Saskatchewan 2012 has calculated a basket of food in the far north costing 72% more than a equivalent basket in the south. With a number of food security proposals on the table, we'd like to see government taking an upstream approach to dealing with the effects that the high cost of nutritious food has on the incidence of chronic disease in the north—such as heart disease and diabetes.

#### **Northern Municipal Revenue Sharing (NRS)**

Northern revenue sharing is an equalization fund to help northern municipalities provide the same levels and quality of services to residents in the NSAD as enjoyed by communities in the south. The increases to NRS have enabled municipalities to enhance their levels of service (such as water security) and to develop a range of non-municipal sector benefits in the face of falling assistance in other areas of government—such as housing. The NRS also underpins northern municipal economic development initiatives. The "positive externalities" of the NRS cannot be underestimated. Predictable levels of NRS have not only improved the ability of northern municipalities to plan for their long-term sustainability, but have done so to the benefit of northern mining operations, which contribute about \$100 million a year to government revenues.



# Opinion **Liquor Privatization a Lightning Rod Issue?**

BY MATT HELEY\*

The Premier, Mr Wall, has put the privatization of liquor stores on the agenda for this coming provincial election. If it wins, the Sask Party will see the victory as a mandate to eventually privatize the retail side of liquor sales in the province, with the loss of about 800 union jobs.

The model here, as always, is Alberta, which privatized its liquor stores in 1993. While other provinces indicated at the time that they might go in the same direction, allowing a few private operators in for good measure, no one other than Alberta has gone the full monty.

Opposition to the privatization is coming from a number of interest groups, including the SGEU. Two SGEU-commissioned reports by the Centre for Policy Alternatives focus on both the economic and social cost of privatization. In the first, the CCPA looked at the revenue lost to the Alberta government after privatization, and noted if we pursued the same model the province would lose millions a year: "In 2013, Saskatchewan's liquor business had a return on investment of 64%, while Alberta's whole-sale only operation had a ROI of only 46%. If SLGA earned the same rate as Alberta's liquor system in 2013, it would have foregone \$65 million in net income."

Well, yeah. However, the foregoing of long-term revenue is not in itself an argument against privatization. Foregoing revenue is also what happens when you cut taxes (between 2000 and 2006 the NDP's tax reforms saw about \$300 million a year lost to government revenue). In fact, it is the high profitability of liquor retailing that enables the province to sell it off. In addition, the ripping of every conceivable cent from SLGA (leaving it just 0.1% for re-investment) over the last decade means that the corporation is not in a position to renew its capital stock or open new stores. Inevitably, the decline of SLGA as a profit-centre is virtually guaranteed as the new private stores come on line.

The social impact of increasing alcohol's exposure to the profit motive is a more compelling (and perhaps more persuasive) argument against privatization—at least from our

perspective. As the owner of liquor stores in the north, SLGA has mostly tried to accommodate the wishes of northern leaders wanting to see liquor sold in a socially-responsible way. The glass bottle ban, which was initiated by New North on behalf of the northern municipalities a few years ago, was widely unpopular with the public; the restaurateurs and hoteliers were apoplectic. Yet few people would say today that it hasn't improved safety.

One of New North's current policy initiatives is to see liquor store employees with the power to monitor and report to the RCMP big batch purchases of alcohol (without a permit) as a measure to interrupt the supply of alcohol into dry communities. The initiative has the support of the RCMP. SLGA is baulking, but we are confident that at some point they will come round. In a private market context, this measure would be unimaginable (but not impossible, perhaps).

To our mind, the SGEU is on better ground when it argues from a social impact, rather than an economic impact, stand point as well. Its paper (again, produced by the CCPA) on the "social consequences" of liquor privatization in Alberta and B.C. suggests that with privatization comes slacker compliance with liquor regulation. As an example is the audit of how well private- and publicly-owned liquor stores "police" the sale of alcohol to minors: publicly-owned stores, while not perfect, had a compliance rate of 63%; privately-owned stores came in at just 25%. The argument is clear, simple and highly emotive: privatizing stores will lead to more liquor in the hands of minors. Privatizing liquor is exceptional politics. It will operate as a lightning rod issue in the coming election, perhaps as a diversion from the discussion about the economic calamity around us (although governments rarely change in times of calamity anyway).

But hopefully the argument around liquor privatization won't be won on the appeal of possibly cheaper beer; to our mind, northerners know the true cost of a beer—the social cost, that is. And they know it isn't cheap.

**\*The opinions expressed here are those of the author**

**"A Profitable Brew: A Financial Analysis of the SLGA and its Potential Privatization," by David Campanella for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives; "Impaired Judgement: The Economic and Social Consequences of Liquor Privatization in Western Canada," by David Campanella and Greg Flanagan, also for the CCPA.**

***Upcoming New North Events***  
**New North Mayor & Councillor Gathering**  
*February 18, Prince Albert Travelodge*  
**New North Waterworks Workshops**  
*April 27-28, Prince Albert Inn*  
**Northern Justice Symposium**  
*May 17-19, Ches Leach Lounge, Prince Albert*

### From the CEO, Al Loke

Last June we launched New North's Financial and Administrative Program, in partnership with Northern Municipal Services. The program is a part of both New North's and government's capacity building endeavours to help the northern municipalities achieve full compliance with their financial obligations under *The Northern Municipalities Act*.

Our program will have a life-span of 2 or 3 years. After that, through our efforts, government's efforts, and of course through the efforts of the communities, we hope to see every municipality in the north 100% compliant.

So far, the program has been going OK. Slowly but surely, communities who need help are signing up. Others will choose to go it alone—which is good, too. There is a lot of work to do in some cases, but in others a lot of the work has already been done. In fact, the improvements in the overall compliance rates of the northern municipalities has been excellent—not just financial compliance, but in all other areas as well. This is a credit to the elected and appointed officials. Everyone agrees that the goal of any assistance is for communities to reach 100% self-sufficiency: this is the definition of capacity building. From our end, we think that we could be doing more. The Financial and Administrative Program is New North putting its money where its mouth is, dedicating resources to supplying practical help to municipal administrative staff, particularly to the clerks who often say to us that they do not have the proper training to do their jobs.

In time, we'd like to expand our services even more: to operate a type of "circuit rider" program where we can send someone out to "troubleshoot" administrative issues on the fly. We think this kind of program could help municipalities from slipping back again. It's one thing to make gains, and another thing altogether to keep them.

**[www.newnorthsask.org](http://www.newnorthsask.org)**

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Mayor Duane Favel (**Vice Chair**)

Mayor Gordon Stomp (**Treasurer**)

Mayor Val Deschambeault

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#### Newsletter Submission Policy

Please submit all articles, questions and complaints to [matt.newnorth@sasktel.net](mailto:matt.newnorth@sasktel.net).

**New North - SANC Services Inc.** (Saskatchewan Association of Northern Communities) through strength in unity is organized to advocate, negotiate and initiate, improvements for the interests and concerns to the Local, Provincial and Federal Governments to enhance the quality of life for Northern people within the Northern Administration District (NSAD) of Saskatchewan.