



La Loche Remembers

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Saskatchewan Association of
Northern Communities

**NEW
NORTH**

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Monthly Newsletter
January 2018

Three Northern Communities in Running to Have First Cannabis Storefronts Held Up at Gunpoint

Despite the announcement this month that pot will be wholesaled and retailed through private outlets, local governments and residents are still in the dark on some of the finer points of how the legalization of cannabis will be rolled out in Saskatchewan, giving the distinct impression that either no one's done this kind of thing before, or the guy who does know anything isn't back from Cancun yet.

As it turns out, only three northern communities need worry about the retailing side, with the province deciding, more or less arbitrarily, that communities with populations above 2500 will be eligible for permits—even if this led to the very weird situation of two of those communities—Lac La Ronge First Nation, and the Town of La Ronge—being right next to each other. The other community is La Loche.

Residents still don't know perhaps one of the most important aspects of legalization: the minimum age for purchasing. Youth advocates, to the dismay of youth, are wanting the minimum age to be 24. Providing a clue as to why the province hasn't made a decision yet, then-leading premier candidate Ken Cheveldayoff publicly stated that the

minimum ought to be 25. Other candidates either didn't have a position, didn't make it clear, or, in the case of Gord Wyant, thought it should be 19, the same as with alcohol.

With the premier race done, we expect the province to move fairly quickly through the remainder of their cannabis to-do list.

La Loche, La Ronge and the band have all expressed interest in allowing a cannabis retailer within their boundaries, with strong possibilities that the businesses will be owned and managed by the local development corporations, with profits going back into communities.

Changes to federal legislation are expected to be in place around Canada Day this year, making it legal to grow a handful of plants in your home, purchase and have in your possession up to 30 grams of pot, and lifting the cap on single-day purchases of Habanero Doritos.

Forty communities in Saskatchewan have been selected for outlets by the province, and communities can opt out if they want. A petition in support of an outlet on Lac La Ronge band territory is apparently currently in circulation. ■

NewNorth News & Updates

New North Waterworks: April 18-19

“**F**ilter Surveillance and Optimization” is the featured CEU, or Continuing Education Unit, at this year’s New North Waterworks, on April 18-19, at the Prince Albert Travelodge.

While we have no idea what that is, rest assured that someone does, and hopefully those someones are the people who work for you down at the water plant.

The annual waterworks workshops draw around 80 water operators from across the north, and across the province, from both municipalities and First Nations.

Operators will, as always, have a chance to challenge for higher certifications on Friday the 20th, at the Prince Albert Polytechnic.

All information about the waterworks workshop can be found on the New North website, www.newnorthsask.org.

New North Executive to Sit Down, Stand Up, Sit Down Again, with Ministers at SUMA

Taking advantage of as many opportunities as they can, the New North Executive will once again meet with the Minister of Government Relations and Minister of Highways, among others, while at SUMA Convention this year.

Keen observers of official protocol, the New North Executive are scheduled to file into the Minister of Government Relations’ suite at around 3pm on Monday, and will have three minutes to exchange pleasantries, make an assessment of their surroundings, then take up positions around the table where they are least likely to be asked any questions.

Items on the agenda include the current state of revenue sharing, a request to carry over surplus Northern Capital Grants funding to the new allocation, and what the deal is with wearing a black blazer over blue pants.

SUMA has bountiful opportunities for northern delegates to engage in direct and unmediated dialogue with cabinet ministers and other government officials, including, of course, the Bear Pit on Wednesday.

Convention will be first major event attended by the new premier, Scott Moe, where he will introduce the new cabinet and a range of men’s active wear. ■

Northern Justice Symposium Registrations Now Open

Crime rates have been falling across the north for the last decade, but that doesn’t mean anyone’s work is done, as the north is still by far the region most impacted by the criminal justice system in the province.

Next May’s New North Northern Justice Symposium will be our 13th since the whole thing got going way back in the early 2000s with the signing of the historic, and unprecedented, Community Policing Framework Agreement between the province, the RCMP and the northern communities represented by New North. The symposium is a gathering place for people from across the province, from government, agencies, community leadership, and from across jurisdictions.

This coming Symposium’s agenda will be a showcase for the great work communities have been doing to promote community justice and community policing initiatives over the last few years, which has included hosting their own justice symposiums, as well as the ongoing work to break down the silos that inhibit holistic, community-driven approaches to reduce the impact of drugs, organized crime, gangs and recidivism, and the many other things, on our collective safety and well-being.

The Northern Justice Symposium runs from May 15-17, at Plaza 88, which is located in downtown Prince Albert.

Registrations can be found on New North’s website at www.newnorthsask.org. ■

Most Surprised Man in Saskatchewan Now Premier

Proving that you can never go wrong posing with almost the entire cabinet in front of a tractor, Scott Moe, from near Shellbrook way, is now premier.

With the thinnest, but arguably, the most populist platforms of all the candidates, the premier-elect finished second on the ballot at the SaskParty's Leadership Convention after the first round of voting, a mere 30 votes behind favourite Alana Koch, but scuttled to victory on the back of preferences from Ken Cheveldayoff and Gord Wyant.

Upon election, Moe quickly re-affirmed his populist credentials with a dig at the Trudeau government's carbon tax plan, to which the SaskParty government, and a great many carbon-based life-forms in this province, are vehemently opposed.

Moe is the first Scott to become premier, if we exclude Thomas Scott (1905-16), is the 14th or 15th premier overall, depending on how you count them, and one of the few, if only, premiers to come from somewhere north of Saskatoon, the last five coming from Regina, Estevan, Saskatoon, and Swift Current.

Elected as an MLA in 2011, Moe was twice Minister of Environment, with a short spell as Minister for Advanced Education sandwiched in the middle.

One of the curious spectacles of the leadership race was candidates taking positions that seemingly disavowed cabinet decisions that they would, in theory, have been a part of making, like cuts to

education or some tax increases.

Most candidates, for example, wanted to remove the PST on insurance that they, as a party, had only just imposed, and Moe in particular, as part of his four-prong

strategy, pledged to restore funding for teacher assistants, hundreds of whom were the first to go when the provincial budget came down last March.

SaskParty members will be reasonably content with their choice of Moe going into the next election. His stance on the carbon tax seems almost personal, and given how much of a wedge issue this is for the NDP in rural areas, his commitment to that *idee fixe* will almost certainly be enough to get that party over the line in 2019 or 2020.

Earlier in the evening, Brad Wall gave his last speech as premier, advising that he "would be more partisan than usual," which no one seemed to mind one bit. ■



Despite having plenty of relevant experience, Fredrick Haultain was passed over for a cabinet position, on account of being dead.

Ministry of Govt. Relations Gets New Minister in Latest Shuffle

Hailing from Melville way, the new Minister of Government Relations and All That is the Hon. Warren Kaeding. Elected in 2016, Kaeding is the third person to take on Government Relations Etc since Jim Reiter vacated the spot to Donna Harpauer in what seems to have been not that long ago. Larry Doke took over from Harpauer seemingly a few weeks later, although it could have been months, who can remember.

A cabinet shuffle was expected no matter who became premier.

Other changes from the previous cabinet include Gord Wyant now being Deputy Premier and Minister of Education, Jeremy Harrison taking on

the new Ministry of Export and Trade Development, and Tina Beaudry-Mellor getting Ministry of Advanced Education.

The Ministry of Policing and Corrections has made a dramatic comeback, with Christine Tell, the last minister to hold that portfolio, getting it back again.

Other ministers remain where they are, including Dustin Duncan who's staying at Environment, Harpauer who's staying at Finance, Greg Ottenbreit who's staying with Rural and Remote Health, and Reiter who's staying with the other Health. ■

La Loche locals reflect on the terrible event that changed their community forever ...

BY Chelsea Laskowski

Two years ago, newspaper columnist Murray Mandryk wrote that the murder of four residents in the La Loche shooting of Jan. 22, 2016 constituted “a tragedy of unimaginable scope.”

For those who witnessed and helped in the immediate aftermath of the shooting, the scope of what happened is just as unimaginable now as it was back then. Two years ago Leonard Montgrand, executive director of the Friendship Centre, was in charge of the community hall as they brought people there by bus from the school after the shooting.

“It’s hard to fathom things like that in a community as small as this. It’s just unbelievable when I think about it, just to see the fear in their eyes and then ... I look around, the teachers, they’re all huddled and crying and I think to myself, ‘My God, they didn’t sign up for this,’” Montgrand said.

On Jan. 22, which La Loche had previously declared a civic holiday, hundreds of residents cycled into the community hall for gospel music,



Charles Rabbitskin prepares for a drum song January 22

“It’s Still Fresh”

“Right now most of the pain is being drowned through addictions and, as I say, sometimes it’s gotten to the point that we don’t even know how to feel because it’s either you buckle down under the pain or you get up and you go on.” **Violet Lemaigre**

a meal, and the company of others who have shared a type of trauma that few in the world can relate to. Others intentionally stayed home because they couldn’t bear to see the families of the victims on such a painful day.

“It’s still fresh,” Mayor Robert St. Pierre told the crowd at the hall. “This day is a time of reflection.

How have we changed from then? We are still here and I’m thankful. Look around. We are here. It does not determine us. Some act of violence does not determine who we are as a people. We determine who we are as a people.”

Last year St. Pierre’s niece Taylor Haineault, one of the high school students most seriously injured in the shooting, was back in school within weeks of rising from a medically induced coma.

“To face that environment took strength, strength that, I don’t know, not too many people have that kind of courage,” St. Pierre later said in an interview.

He said continual supports need to be in place for the people who exhibited such strength after the shooting, otherwise they fall through the cracks. People in the community have noticed post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms in their loved ones. To this day, Montgrand said his son, who was in the school at the time of the shooting and witnessed some of what transpired, is more nervous and scared than he used to be.

Many are still not fully willing to speak openly about the shooting. When Violet Lemaigre, who sits on numerous boards in the community, was asked how her family has dealt with the anniversary, she said “they don’t talk about it. Like, my two granddaughters were in that school, my husband was one of the people that did crowd control outside the school. I was outside there

sitting in the vehicle and so like we don't really talk about it. It's hard to say. And that's just it. People just don't talk about things like that."

Victims and witnesses of the shooting are among those who have turned to liquor and drugs to self-medicate in a community that already struggles with addictions and deaths to tragic circumstances.

"Right now most of the pain is being drowned through addictions and, as I say, sometimes it's gotten to the point that we don't even know how to feel because it's either you buckle down under the pain or you get up and you go on," Lemaigre said.

Lemaigre believes prayer meetings or healing circles are a way for La Loche to heal, but long-term mental health supports are important too. The province added an extra mental health nurse position to the health region in the summer of 2016, but it has seen high turnover and the community is currently awaiting a new hire, she said. Meanwhile, the mental health supports that are there now are missing the mark, St. Pierre said, because people in the community are "expected to go to you and lay it all on you but I don't think we operate like that."

The trust and relationship-building community members say they need for those supports to work, isn't there: current counselling is offered sporadically, and the initial counselling offered in the first two months after the shooting was from transient counsellors, Lemaigre said.

"Why would I talk to you if I'm not going to see you again and I gotta tell my story again to a totally different person again?" she asked.

Mayor Robert St. Pierre agrees, saying it is an issue when someone repeatedly has to tell their traumatic story to new people.

"Well, guess what that person does? Shuts down. Have you done them any good? I don't think so. Because they've given up... How can you trust when you don't have continuity?" he asked.

St. Pierre is also critical of the fact that school staff have yet to go through a critical incident stress debriefing two years after the shooting. At the Dene Building high school, attendance rates rose this year over last year around this time, said Mandy Herman, who runs Project Venture out of the school. It's a sign of determination at a school that has seen provincial promises of renovations at the school languish. While the

front entrance itself reopened late last year, the rooms right next to the entrance are in a perpetual state of construction.

Last year Principal Greg Hatch told the StarPhoenix by 2018 he wanted to see a "comprehensive healing plan" after seeing few concrete changes in 2016. However, Lemaigre said now in 2018 she feels the community is forgotten about.

"Yesterday I heard on the news, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau mentioning us but I was talking to Greg (Hatch) at the school a couple of months ago about the frustration that he was feeling about how the renovations -- or lack thereof -- was going. Because all the promises that were made, now I understand that has been scaled back tremendously," she said.

Mayor Robert St. Pierre said the shooting happened in a place that was once considered a safe haven.

"For two years we had our students going back into that environment, our staff and our students. So if you're a staff member walking back into that same environment that hasn't changed since that incident and you were there, how much are you carrying everytime you walk into that building? Can you be 100 per cent teaching?" he asked.

"We've done our staff and our students a disservice when it took two years to finally get the renovations going."

The Healing Lies Within

In the past two years, Montgrand has seen ebbs and flows of community help. In the summer of 2016, the province promised and delivered on increased housing investments, increased mental health supports including a regional suicide prevention worker (who has been kept busy across the province's northwest), new trades programming and adult basic education through Dumont Technical Institute and Northlands College, and the new Dene Teacher Education Program. Subcommittees on education, health, housing and infrastructure were also created but Lemaigre is skeptical that the committees will be able to make change without having staff to run those committees rather than only volunteers like herself.

"A lot of these things it's always the same people trying to do the work and you only have so much hours in a day," she said.



Leonard Montgrand at the Friendship Centre

The provincial investments in La Loche present opportunity, St. Pierre said at the hall on Jan. 22.

“We have people that have come into our lives in the past two years who offer supports. We have them around the table now. From health. From justice. From education. We as mayor and council we have a lot of opportunities. We are still scrambling, trying to figure out what it is that we need to do with our community,” he said. “There are opportunities that are coming to us that’ll strengthen us, that’ll get us maybe to a better place. But to do that we need to work together.”

There needs to be action taken by the community in order to cope, he said. He called on people to decide enough is enough and -- on a community, family, and individual basis -- to reflect. He said the answers to healing lie within. Community members describe themselves as being a part of close-knit families, of being resilient and strong all in spite of chronic underfunding over decades that they say contributes to social issues today.

Outside agencies do have a place in the healing needed, Montgrand said, but La Loche has to drive action itself for it to be successful. He said the community needs to change the mentality for its young people in order to succeed.

“In our community we have high unemployment rates - but we can't depend on outside agencies to always meet our needs. We have to do it ourselves,” he said.

“You can't depend on everyone to make your life for you. You can get a helping hand once in awhile, get some assistance, go to school, but it's up to you to make that change. You can't expect people to do it for you, you have to do it for yourself.”

St. Pierre is optimistic about the community wellness plan that was recently developed.

“We have information in here to help guide us.”

Montgrand notes that lobbying for the new friendship centre and for infrastructure in La Loche has been fruitful for the community, with contributions coming in from the government and from corporate sponsors. Among them, the school is possibly going to partner with Loblaw's to build a greenhouse, and BHP Billiton is possibly going to make a major investment. Montgrand's understanding is that BHP would provide funds for La Loche to possibly create a community based organization with a five-year funding strategy to work on its social and economic needs, “and see where they can target dollars to try to create a strong social climate in our community.”

No one in La Loche expects healing to happen quickly. Montgrand has a distant dream of the community making the news for positive things rather than negative, of seeing headlines like “Unemployment drops in La Loche.”

He has a mantra for what La Loche needs to succeed: “incremental change of positive healing.”

“You can't take things and push your own views on people because even though you know it's good, you have to do it in a positive and incremental manner. You have to sell it to them,” he said.

“People have to understand that. People have lived in the lifestyles for many, many years and to come into a community and say 'don't do this, don't do that, don't do this,' you have to sell it to them and say, ‘Look this is not about you today it's about our children for tomorrow.’”

For now, he uses the events of Jan. 22, 2016 as a catalyst to push him ahead when he's tired or struggling.

“I try to look forward. I try to make the community better so we don't have repetitive situations like this, socially,” he said. ■

Ultra Vires v Intra Vires

We Have Mainly Brothels & Strip Clubs to Thank for Defining “Municipal Purposes,” Among Other Things

The closing of liquor stores in La Ronge on “check days” is one of a number of proposals the town is considering as part of their alcohol harm reduction strategy. To the surprise of many, the council’s vote on a resolution supporting similar such ideas is making national and international news, and is generating considerable discussion in the tri-community area. There are almost 50 proposals in the package, including one to impose a 5% levy on the sale of alcohol.

With the resolution passed, the town can now expect to be hit with a barrage of opposition as they work toward turning the proposals into bylaws (or at the very least, forcing agreements out of local retailers).

Underlying all this is the issue of how far the town can itself really go to regulate alcohol venue opening hours, or anything else, which fall under the jurisdiction of the provincial or federal governments. Despite municipal legislation seemingly telling them they can pass any laws that touch on the “safety, welfare, and health of people and the protection of people and property,” local governments have found that they have quite a lot less authority than they thought, and a lot less than they’ve wanted. That’s because local governments can only make laws which, firstly, seem to relate to “municipal purposes,” and secondly, which don’t step on toes of the federal or provincial legislatures.

The question of where the lines are drawn has been hotly contested in the courts since the beginning of confederation. In one case from the 1920s, a rural municipality in Saskatchewan passed a bylaw closing dance halls on Sundays. A local rate-payer took the matter to court. The courts said they didn’t have a problem with a municipality regulating the hours of operation of a business, or even a dance hall (whatever that is). Rather, it was the fact that it was clearly a bylaw “enacted for the purpose of compelling the observance of and preventing the profanation of the Lord’s Day,” which is not really within the power of a municipality to do, because it concerns the “regulation of public morals.” If it

were a matter of regulating the hours of operation to provide “for the rest and quiet for the community,” that’d be fine, since who doesn’t need a break from all that dancing. The fact that the bylaw mentioned only Sundays, and no other day, led the courts to infer that this was really a religious thing, and that it encroached on the singular privilege afforded the federal government to make laws about.

Similar issues arose in the Northern Village of Buffalo Narrow’s attempt to pass a bylaw prohibiting VLTs in the community. There, the courts had to decide whether the bylaw was *ultra vires* because in “pith and substance it is criminal law” (because gambling is criminal act, you see), and only the federal government may make laws on criminal matters, although, of course, the province is delegated powers to permit, manage and control gaming.

The question in front of the court is often whether, through a licensing or other regulatory activity, a local (or sometimes provincial) government is really just trying to find another way of prohibiting an activity altogether which, had the higher order of government wanted to do that, they would’ve just done that.

For example, the City of Calgary passed a bylaw prohibiting “people remaining on the street for the purposes of prostitution,” saying it was a public nuisance. The court, on the other hand, felt that the “dominant intent” (and effect) of the ban was to completely outlaw prostitution, which, again, touched on criminal law. There, the judge said that “...however desirable it may be for a municipality to control or prohibit prostitution, there [was] an over reach in this case which offends the division of legislative powers.”

In another defining case, *Buck v Courtenay* (if you’re making notes), a municipality was challenged for refusing to grant a business license to an escort agency. The prospective owner of the agency made the point that her business was like any other, and criticized council for not acting in the interests of the

community: after all, it would only “thrive if it was utilized.”

Remember, this was a business license application, for the kind of business that is otherwise perfectly legal. Council, clearly knowing what an escort agency is, didn’t grant the license because “they didn’t think it was in the best interests of the public.”

The question here was, in seemingly imposing a general ban on all escort agencies, whether council was really acting in a reasonable way, and “exercising proper discretion.” The judge noted that there were plenty of escort agencies in the area, at least as far as he could tell from the yellow pages, and he had no evidence that this activity “in the past had affected adversely the youth of the community, its family life or had promoted illegal activities.”

He granted the license to the escort agency, and council scurried back to chambers to look at their zoning bylaws. The problem was that council wasn’t really basing their decision about the business license on grounds related to the business itself. Rather, they were expressing, through the licensing process, their disdain for escort agencies in general. If council had made an argument related to traffic flows, or an increased drain on public services or the RCMP, that might have been different.

Generally, though, courts give municipalities pretty wide discretion when it comes to making bylaw, licensing and zoning decisions. As the judge in *Shell v Vancouver* said:

Recent commentary suggests an emerging consensus that courts must respect the responsibility of elected municipal bodies to serve the people who elected them and exercise caution to avoid substituting their views of what is best for the citizens for those of municipal councils. Barring clear demonstration that a municipal decision was beyond its powers, courts should not so hold. In cases where powers are not expressly conferred but may be implied, courts must be prepared to adopt the “benevolent construction” ... Whatever rules of construction are applied, they must not be used to usurp the legitimate role of municipal bodies as community representatives.

The exceptions are where council has decided to regulate the conduct of individuals, or is taking

too close a look into the welfare of people’s souls. Those things are way out.

However, where a council can show a reasonable link between their bylaw and the regulation of public safety or the prevention of a public nuisance, and where no other order of government has already set foot with their own regulations, they’re usually golden. ■

The Thing About Referendums ...

Everyone knows what a referendum is. A referendum is when a government seeks a general vote on a single political question. But the meaning, or the impact, of a referendum can be different depending on where you are, and which level of government we are talking about. In most constitutional monarchies, like Canada or Australia, referendums are needed to change the Constitution, with varying thresholds for determining when a vote has “passed” (usually, the majority of the voters in the majority of states/provinces; the definition of “majority” is an interesting one in the context of non-compulsory voting).

Then there is the question of whether referendums are binding on government. The result of the Brexit referendum in the UK, for example, was not binding on government, although the Parliament there is seemingly going along with it. In about half the states in the U.S., referendums can be used to repeal laws passed by the legislature.

In most cases, referendums are just political tools, and, as in the Brexit case, can be easily harnessed to a politics of division and exclusion as much as to settle questions of national destiny.

Municipal governments, of course, can also exploit referendums for similar, if not quite equivalent, purposes. The procedures for how to set a referendum (and plebiscites) in motion are in sections 148 to 158 of *The Northern Municipalities Act*.

Plebiscites are similar to referendums, but are in no way binding. Section 155 (1) says that referendums on proposed bylaws can be binding in the case of a “yes” vote. On the other hand, council can still go ahead and pass a bylaw that everyone voted “no” on (s155(2)).

Not every question in front of council can be put to a referendum. For example, the subject matter of a referendum cannot be anything related to the budget or the municipal tax levy. This is because of the “delegation of powers” rule. So, council wouldn’t be able to put a question to a referendum related to whether to raise the water rates, since this is a budget item, and council cannot let anyone else make those kinds of decisions. ■

Education Property Tax Changes Take Effect

Northern Saskatchewan municipalities will potentially be most affected by the new requirement that education property tax abatements or exemptions of \$25,000 or more for a single property, or 5% of a municipality's total tax levy, within a tax year, will need to have government approval.

The changes came into effect on January 1st.

A part of the reasoning for the approval process is so government can keep a critical eye on exemption and abatement trends, which, if they start going pear-shaped, might lead to a change of heart about the whole abatement and exemption idea. The government's heightened paranoia may signal their growing awareness of the changing moral economy of the EPT. Where once there may have been, at the very least, the perception of a link between the collection of school taxes and the financial capacity of school divisions, that is absolutely no longer the case.

The latest step-down in the erosion over time of the relationship between municipalities and the local school division comes, ironically, in the year

government increased EPT mill rates. Even then, despite holding the line on those rates during the Reiter years, the portion of education funding coming from property taxes increased at a greater rate than that coming directly from the general revenue fund, mainly due to increases in assessments. The EPT increase in the last budget was probably recognition that assessed values were eventually going to level out.

Municipalities can make requests to have properties exempt or abated by emailing government. There doesn't seem to be any penalty for waiving EPT above the thresholds without approval, other than the fact they'll put all your abatements and exemptions under the microscope, and make you pay for any collections that are not then subsequently approved.

While we don't have up-to-date figures for school tax receivables, the analysis we did a couple of years ago showed Northern Lights School Division writing-off millions in uncollected taxes. ■

New Policing Initiative on the Way

This month, the federal government announced their new First Nations policing funding package, which will deliver about \$291 million over five years to support policing in those communities. Overall, the federal government kicks in about half the cost of policing on reserves, with the provinces and territories paying the rest.

While that's a lot of money, it disappointed many on the First Nations side, because it only applies to existing agreements. Going into negotiations, at least five First Nations in Saskatchewan thought they might be able to follow File Hills into putting together their own police service, but that'll have to wait for another time.

In the meantime, we have the province's new Rural Crime Protection and Response Team, or PRT, starting up fairly soon. Announced following the review into rural

policing last year, the PRT drafts anyone in a uniform with a gun, mainly Conservation Officers in the north, into the firing line, in an integrated law enforcement strategy aimed at creating a more visible, more responsive and likely much better looking policing presence in the north and across the prairies.

In effect, a 911 call will dispatch any law enforcement that needs immediate response. This might mean Highway Traffic officers, if they are closer or better positioned than a local RCMP member, will be getting calls to your place when someone breaks into your car and takes your new sunglasses.

The PRT will spring into action April 1, and we hope to hear more about it at the Northern Justice Symposium in May. ■

Latest Building Canada Fund to Maybe Include Money for Snow Forts

With details still to be hammered out via Integrated Bilateral Agreements, optimism was running high that giant snow forts would be included in the list of eligible projects in the latest round of federal infrastructure funding, according to public servants currently peering out their windows.

Set to begin rolling out sometime this year or next or whenever anyone gets to it, the federal government's Investing in Canada Infrastructure

Fund will deliver, over 10 years, more than \$300 million for city transit, \$400 million for green infrastructure, including water and sewer projects, \$50 million for recreation, sport and culture infrastructure, and \$100 million for small community projects.

Snow forts would qualify under a new and separate category specifically dedicated to reclaiming lost childhoods and wondering where time went. ■

FROM THE CEO**MATT HELEY**

The new premier, Scott Moe, has moved very quickly since getting elected last Saturday, including announcing a new cabinet sooner than many thought. There are also three by-elections coming up on March 1, which should all be SaskParty holds.

The premier left Donna Harpauer in Finance to bring down the budget which, given the slightly better economic outlook, should be better than last year's train wreck. And as noted previously, everyone's more or less forgotten about the question of what will happen with municipal revenue sharing, with the expectation that perhaps nothing at all will happen.

Of particular interest going forward are landfill regulations, given Moe's position during the leadership campaign. Moe committed to "expanding the mandate and responsibilities" of the Landfill Advisory Committee, which is made up of municipal representatives, including a few from the north, tasking them with "undertaking

a detailed review that will result in better solutions for waste management in Saskatchewan communities."

What does that mean for the extensive and "fullsome" review of all things solid waste management that is already underway, and in fact, about to end? Participants at this year's SUMA Convention will get a first look at the province's discussion paper on landfill stuff which, in the next few months, will be extensively shopped around at municipal venues.

Moe's position that the "current system of asking towns, villages and RMs to pay significant engineering costs, which are far beyond their financial resources" for new sites or the decommissioning of old ones, plays well to the peanut gallery, but now that he's premier, is it really a good message to be sending at a time when municipalities are rapidly moving ahead, at least partly because of the changing and more stringent regulatory environment, with sustainable and long-term regional approaches to solid waste? ■

About New North ...

Since 1996 New North has been the voice of the municipalities of Northern Saskatchewan. Our goal, as defined by our mission statement, is to advocate, negotiate and initiate improvements in well-being of the residents of the Northern Saskatchewan Administrative District. Organized on the basis of strength through unity, New North partners with all northern stakeholders, from government and non-government agencies, associations and First Nations, to enhance the quality of life, create opportunities and build better futures, for the people of the north.

New North Executive

Mayor Bruce Fidler (Chair)
Mayor Robert St.Pierre (Deputy Chair)
Mayor Gord Stomp (Treasurer)
Mayor Mike Natomagan
Councillor Keith Laprise

New North Staff

Matt Heley
Chief Executive Officer
Phone: 306 425 5505
ceo.new.north@sasktel.net

Sunshyne Charles
Executive Assistant
Phone: 306 425 5505
new.north@sasktel.net

New North SANC Services Inc

Phone: 306 425 5505
Fax: 306 425 5506
207 La Ronge Avenue
La Ronge, Sk

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