



It's all about life-long learning

By Val Turner, CMMA – President of Manitoba Municipal Administrators Association

As students return to school, we can't help but think about new things that we've been meaning to study. I think that we have all come to realize that it's all about 'life-long learning' and, to coin an old phrase, "If you are not moving forward you're simply falling behind." Experience or youth; wealth or influence – none of these can replace knowledge.

How and where do we find this knowledge? Some of us are great readers, while others are great listeners. Some are great dreamers and others great analysts. Today, with the Internet, there are so many information sources, that sometimes the most difficult part is knowing where to start.

Several years ago the MMAA decided it should provide relevant opportunities for its members. With this in mind, a mandatory Professional Development Program was rati-

fied at the AGM. This program was designed to create and maintain professionalism within the association by offering learning experiences specifically to those in the municipal community. As members began to take advantage of these opportunities, others within the municipal community began to show interest. Today, the MMAA runs a full slate of seminars annually where there is a full 40% attendance by non-members.

The MMAA recognized that while our organizations generally had strong leadership, visionary leadership was more difficult to develop. The MMAA felt it was important to prepare our municipal leaders as much as possible for the challenges of a changing world and it was decided to focus on at least one such issue each year. This year, the PD Committee has been able to arrange for a particularly exciting and relevant event

– climate change in the municipal community. On November 9 and 10, the MMAA has arranged for an impressive slate of speakers who are best suited to give us some of the tools that are required to provide this visionary leadership.

This event, entitled *Evolving Environmental Impacts and Opportunities in Manitoba*, features a number of impressive speakers, including a representative of the International Institute of Sustainable Development, Chair of the National Round Table on Environment & Economy **Glenn Murray**, President and Chancellor of the University of Winnipeg **Dr. Lloyd Axworthy**, and the renowned **Dr. David Suzuki**. The event is open to everyone in the municipal community and will eventually open to the public, if space is still available. For more information, you can go to the MMAA Website at www.mmaa.mb.ca.

'PD' should also include subjects that may not appear directly related to your duties. These are often called 'soft subjects,' and include interpersonal relations, setting priorities, stress management, etc. In addition, we recognized that 'Professional' Development is not the only type of development that we need, we also need 'Personal' Development to round out our lives. It is important to look after our personal relationships, grow within our families and get involved in activities that are just plain fun. It is important for both mental and physical health.

Our role as municipal employees or municipal elected officials is so diverse we could continuously attend professional development seminars pertaining to our duties. Personal Development should also take on an important role in our lives. Although there is no doubt that today it is all about life-long learning, I, for one, can't help struggling with it all. After much consternation, I concluded that balance was the key, a balance between 'learning' and actually 'living.' I would like to encourage you to strive for your own individual balance by making good decisions about your activities. I hope that the work of our Professional Development Committee will help to make some of these decisions easier. ☺



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