



A New Year ... a new focus ... a new plan

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

I hope everyone had an enjoyable Christmas with family and friends.

Now that everyone's New Year's resolutions have been made (and perhaps even broken, by now), it is time to get on with the business of 2005.

Many changes have taken place since I wrote my last article. Some of the positive changes for the New Year include the 33% rebate for Education Tax on farmland and, finally, a date set in March 2005 for the American border to re-open to Canadian beef.

When a person looks at change from the outside, we do not necessarily understand the process that is required to 'make things

happen.' I suppose that a small amount of this change takes some shortcuts, but most of it requires study and planning. The Association of Manitoba Municipalities' Board of Directors, for example, has just completed its Strategic Planning Session for the New Year. The Manitoba Municipal Administrators Association also conducts an annual Strategic Planning Session. However, it takes place in May. The timing of these events is designed to allow the associations to react to members' input soon after their respective conferences. Many municipal governments, boards and businesses also use Strategic Planning to devise and implement change.

What is Strategic Planning?

Strategic Planning is a management tool used for the purpose of helping an organization or municipality do a better job, to focus its energy, to ensure that members of the organization are working toward the same goals, to assess and adjust the organization's direction in response to a changing environment. In short, strategic planning is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future. The process is about planning because it involves intentionally setting goals and developing an approach to achieving those goals.



There are 5 basic steps in the strategic planning process.

Step One is getting ready. To get ready an organization must address a number of issues, including determining if the organization's leaders are truly committed to the effort and whether they are able to devote the necessary attention to the 'big picture.' They also need to identify specific issues that should be addressed.

Step Two is to develop a mission statement and a vision statement. A mission statement simply communicates the purpose of the organization. A vision statement presents what successes the organization would like to accomplish.

Step Three is assessing the situation. Once an organization has committed to why it exists and what it does, it must take a clear look at its current situation. This means obtaining current information about the organization's strengths, weaknesses, and performance – information that will highlight the critical issues that the organization faces and that its strategic plan must address. This step must include a database of quality information that can be used to make decisions and a list of critical issues that demand a response from the organization.

Step Four is developing strategies, goals and objectives. Once the critical issues have been identified, it is time to figure out what to do about them. Strategies, goals and objectives may come from individual inspiration, group discussions or formal decision-making techniques.

Step Five is completing the written plan. Once the first four steps have been completed, the planning consultant will draft a final planning document and submit it to the participants of the session. The plan should then have time lines attached to the issues identified to ensure it is not placed on the shelf. If a Strategic Plan is reviewed every year, then the time line should reflect that.

I believe that Strategic Planning is an essential tool for municipal organizations to become proactive instead of reactive. It is, in my opinion, one sure way to create real change of value to everyone involved. Your organization's leadership needs to be focused, thoughtful and creative in order to thrive and survive in today's ever changing world.

Does your municipality have a Strategic Plan? If not, set a date for your Strategic Planning Session now!

(And about those New Year's Resolutions, do you think Strategic Planning would work?) ♪

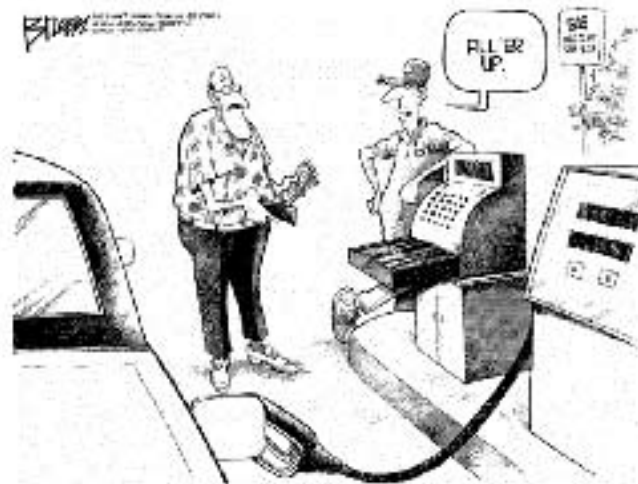
“ I believe that Strategic Planning is an essential tool for municipal organizations to become proactive instead of reactive. ”



Your Fuel Supply Contract Program

The MTCML manager of your Fuel Supply Contract Program is:
Prairie Fuel Advisors Inc. - Call Peter at 780-420-9801

Is the High Cost of Fuel Getting you Down?



The AMM Fuel Supply Contract Program Will Help!

We Provide Advance Notice of The Monthly Fuel Price Changes.
 This Information Helps Members Manage Fuel Inventories and Lower Costs.
All price changes tied strictly to changes in wholesale fuel prices.

(Cartoon Reproduced with the Kind Permission of the Cartoonist, Steve Breen)

**All fuel and lubricants are obtained from your local dealers.
 The Fuel Supply Program supports local businesses.**

The AMM office would be pleased to provide you with information on how to join the Fuel Supply Program. Call Linda Hargest at (204) 857-8666.

“Remember, the greater the volumes, the greater the savings.”