



Year off to a good start

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

Each spring, our Annual MMAA Conference marks the end of the MMAA year and the beginning of a new one. The Conference has come and gone for yet another year and those in attendance considered it an unqualified success. My sincere thanks goes out to co-chairs **Jim Dowsett**, **Rhonda Stewart** and **Mary Smith**, along with all of the volunteers who worked so hard to make it such a success. I'd like to extend a special thank-you to Executive Director **Mel Nott**, who moves around in the background making sure that everything ties together and runs smoothly.

At our AGM, our membership again placed their trust in me by re-electing me President of the Association. I thank them all for the opportunity and look forward to the coming year.

Congratulations to **Dale Lyle**, re-elected Vice President and to **John Marnock**, who will join the Executive Committee after being elected unanimously by his peers on the Executive Council. Welcome **Mitch Duval** from District #3 and **John MacLellan** from District #1, our two newest Directors on Council. I look forward to working with both of them and hope that they find their time in this role rewarding.

Thank you to retiring Directors **Doug Cavers** of District #3 and **Howard Norek** of District #1. Your contributions to MMAA are greatly appreciated.

Your Executive Council just recently completed the Strategic Planning process

for the upcoming year. **Dean Yaremchuk** facilitated for the third straight time. This year's process seemed even more productive as Dean is now quite familiar with the Association and its goals, and Council is reaching out past just a basic plan. It is certainly advantageous that Dean is a member as well. This year, MMAA will work toward raising its profile amongst those involved in municipal affairs and increasing the professionalism of members at large. I believe our plan for 2005-2006 will go a long way toward accomplishing that goal.

Council has had an opportunity to review *Bill 29, the Municipal Councils and School Boards Election Act*, and the general consensus is that we are pleased with the results.

The proposed legislation is designed to replace the outdated *Local Authorities Election Act*. As part of the stakeholder group that provided suggestions to improve local elections, I am convinced that the new legislation will address many of the issues that we had with the old legislation. The Province states that the new act will require local authorities to appoint one person, the senior election official, who will be responsible for all aspects of the election. Since municipalities vary dramatically in size within the province, this will empower the senior election official to hire as few or as many people as necessary to carry out the election process thereby streamlining the process.

Although our Association is pleased with the progress to date, we will continue

to lobby for additional changes. At our 2004 Conference, a resolution pertaining to non-resident voters was passed. Members were concerned about changes made in 2002 that only allows two non-resident owners per property to vote. The amended section 5(1.3) states, "If three or more persons qualify as registered owners, no more than two of them may register as non-resident owners. Each person registering must do so with written consent of the number of those persons who, together with the person registering, are a majority of the registered owners." This is an added burden on administration since returning completed forms does not seem to be a priority for most electors. Even so, when they arrive at the polls, they expect the right names to be on the list of electors. Our resolution proposes changes that would satisfy the purpose for which that section was amended but at the same time minimize election complexity. Our resolution suggests that the Ward System be eliminated in municipalities having an electorate of less than 500 individuals and that it be replaced with the election of representatives on an "At Large" basis. This would allow all non-residents to vote and, at the same time, simplify the administration process.

In the coming year there will undoubtedly be more issues and more opportunities for the MMAA to be productive. For my part, I look forward to the challenge, but I most look forward to the opportunity to get to know even more elected officials, MMAA members and all others who are involved in this municipal community. Much of this experience will be made possible by my opportunity to sit on the AMM Board as Ex-Officio and to attend the many AMM sponsored events. I want to thank the Board, staff and membership of the AMM for this opportunity. ☺

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