

The changing face of the AMM Board

By Lynne Bereza, AMM Communications Coordinator

The face of the AMM Board of Directors changed significantly at the 8th Annual Convention! By the time the three-and-a-half day event ended, the Board had three new directors and two new vice-presidents – including the first female VP in the history of the organization. We sat down with all the newcomers to get to know them a bit and find out how they feel about their new roles.

Rural Vice-President Councillor Doug Dobrowolski RM of Macdonald

While certainly no newcomer to the AMM, having been Central Rural Director since the AMM was formed and on the UMM Board for one year prior to that, the position of Rural Vice-President is one Doug Dobrowolski has been focused on for some time. The third time running proved to be the charm. “As an AMM Director, you basically deal with your region,” he says, “and as Vice-President I am looking forward to meeting all of our members across Manitoba.”

Dobrowolski, a councillor with the RM of Macdonald since 1992, operates a third generation, 1,000-acre family grain farm at Domain, Manitoba. When asked why he wanted to take on the added responsibility, Dobrowolski replied “I like to look at the big picture, and I always like to say that I’m a real Manitoban – I believe in Manitoba. My family (including wife Kelly, three daughters and a son-in-law) knows that it will be a lot of extra work – plus the work on the farm – and everyone in the family is willing to pitch in.” A supportive council also played a role in his decision to run for Rural VP. “My council has been very encouraging over the years,” he says.

Dobrowolski doesn’t have any specific issues that he is interested in pursuing in his new position, as he says, “All issues interest me – I’ve always enjoyed a challenge, so whatever comes about I will take on.” One of the first challenges on Dobrowolski’s agenda will be an exchange trip to El Salvadore in mid-January. Dobrowolski was elected by the AMM Board to accompany Executive Director Masi and President Bell on the exchange. “We have a lot to offer as municipal government – which I feel is the most efficient form of government – and if we can share some of what we know, and take something back in return, that’s great.”

Urban Vice-President Mayor Shirley Kalynuik, Town of Rosburn

When asked how it feels to be the first female elected to an Executive position on the AMM Board, Kalynuik is modest in her response. “I don’t really think about it that way,” she says. “I was the first woman elected to council in Rosburn, and the first female Mayor as well, so it isn’t something that I think about a lot.” While many

people would call her accomplishments groundbreaking, Kalynuik simply sees them as a desire to keep learning. “I’m always learning something, and when I’m learning I’m not bored,” she has said. Plus, “I’ve always been involved in my community,” she says, and her long list of board and committee involvement is certainly a testament to that.

A strong supporter of community economic development, Kalynuik was the recipient of an Economic Development Association of Canada Good News Award in 1994 and of a Rural Economic Leadership Award at 1996’s Rural Forum in Brandon. She can also be credited with putting Rosburn ‘on the map’ by spearheading a plan to market the community as a town enjoying clean air, fresh water, cheap real estate and the benefits of rural living in the Toronto Sun several years ago.

Kalynuik, who with her husband Nick have five grown children, is excited about what her new position as Urban Vice President holds and looks forward to the challenges it will bring. Plus, she laughs, “I love to learn and I’m sure I will be learning plenty over the next year!”



The AMM’s new Executive: (L-R) Rural VP Doug Dobrowolski, President Ron Bell and Urban VP Shirley Kalynuik.

**Western Urban Director
Councillor Maxine Chacun,
Town of Virden**

Not only was Maxine Chacun, councillor for the Town of Virden, encouraged by her council to run for the position of Western Urban Director – she had to make a deal. “I was trying to talk a fellow councillor into running again in the municipal election, and he said that he would – as long as I ran for the AMM!” she laughs. While she was surprised at the push for her to run, she was also inspired by her council’s confidence in her. “I’m beginning my 12th year on council and the timing just seemed right,” she says.

Chacun has plenty of interests to propel her forward at the AMM board table. “I’m concerned about our RCMP – the lack of officers. Our health care is always a concern. The condition of our roads and streets, water quality, and the overall quality of life for our citizens – those are my priorities.” When asked what she hopes to accomplish while on the AMM Board, Chacun is blunt. “I don’t think one person can accomplish anything – it has to be a team effort,” she explains. “I think the AMM has been successful in lobbying government, and I want to see that continue.”

**Central Rural Director
Councillor Ralph Groening,
RM of Morris**

Running for a seat on the AMM Board of Directors was not a snap decision for Ralph Groening, councillor for the RM of Morris. He

says, “I’ve been thinking about it for a couple of years because I wanted a new challenge. I’ve been a part of lobbying since the flood of ’97, and I’ve been on council for 11 years – it was time to move forward.”

Groening knows the position will mean a time commitment. “It requires communication,” he explains. “My wife Patti works full-time and while she’s very supportive and proud of what I’m doing, I do recognize it will be a sacrifice for her as well.”

There are several issues high on Groening’s priority list as a new Director. “I’m interested in water management – which of course translates into drainage. Infrastructure and the need for better roads is important to me, as we have a lot of provincial gravel roads in our area. And education tax of course continues to be a big issue.” Given that these issues are also at the top of the AMM’s agenda, Groening is sure to be busy as he gets used to his new role.

**Central Urban Director
Mayor Melvin Klassen,
Town of Altona**

For Mel Klassen, entering the race for Central Urban Director on the AMM Board was a last minute decision. “I was weighing some other options and, after discussion with my wife Margaret, decided that running for the AMM Board was the best fit for me.” That said, Klassen has always had a keen interest in the AMM’s activities. “It’s a lobby group and that interests me,” he explains.

Klassen is interested in the fiscal imbalance issue that “every-one’s talking about,” as well as eventually getting education tax off property. “That’s something we need to work at,” he says. “It’s

**City of Winnipeg Director
Councillor Russ Wyatt**

Russ Wyatt is councillor for the Transcona Ward in the City of Winnipeg and member of the Executive Policy Committee. Not only does Russ bring the perspective of the capital city to the AMM board table, he also has an insider’s understanding of how the AMM works due to his previous work as the AMM Director of Policy & Communications. Winnipeg City Council appointed Russ to the position of City of Winnipeg Director on the AMM Board.



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encroaching so much on our taxing ability.” Recycling programs the province is working on are another area of interest for Klassen, who spent two terms as a councillor and is now into his second term as Mayor of Altona.

While these issues are indeed pressing, the key to Klassen’s decision to take on this new challenge was ultimately a belief in the AMM. “This organization has proven to be very beneficial to municipalities in Manitoba.”

The AMM’s next big event is coming up at the end of February – the Municipal Officials Seminar and Trade Show. While there, do take the time to introduce yourself to these new AMM Directors, the newly elected Vice-Presidents, and any other member of the AMM Board that you are not acquainted with. See you there! ☺



New to the AMM Board: (L-R) Ralph Groening, Maxine Chacun and Mel Klassen.

Farewell

While we are happy to welcome newcomers to the AMM Board of Directors, it is always sad to say farewell to those stepping down. We sincerely wish *Gary Wasylofski, Lorne Boguski, Rick Martel, Stan Ward and Jae Eadie* the best of luck in their future endeavors. Their contributions to the board were numerous and will not be forgotten.











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