

# AMM Board OF DIRECTORS

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Doug Dobrowolski, President

## Has the pendulum SWUNG TOO FAR?

**It amazes me** as I look back over the last 18 years as an elected official how times have changed. Not only have the demands on our time increased but our role as elected officials has taken on a whole new meaning.

Our accessibility to the public with cell phones, e-mail, and text messaging would have some say these are important tools to respond to any situation at a moment's notice. Others say people want information now and more importantly, they want answers.

The council agendas are longer and with more complex issues to deal with. But for me the biggest issue is frustration. Sit back a minute and look at it from the average person's perspective. Someone comes to you with a problem and they expect you to solve that problem in a reasonable timeframe. Little do they know how dependent we, at the municipal level, are on the other orders of government to make a decision.

So has the pendulum swung too far? As an order of government we are elected to govern, and yet often we are unable to. Rather, it seems we are spending more time filling out forms, trying to comply with the latest regulation, finding the "right" department to take us from start to finish, reacting to constantly changing demographics, all while trying to balance a budget. We don't need any additional roadblocks.

The average person doesn't want to hear your problems. They want an answer to their problem. Therein lies the frustration. For generations there has been a dislike with someone else making decisions for us on the things we do every day. That someone or somebody who feels it would be in our best interest to do things a certain way, yet really does not have the practical experience or the actual hands-on ability to give advice.

The AMM Board of Directors feels this frustration too and has identified as a top priority the need to review how government works in Manitoba. We want to make sure both the Province and

municipalities have the tools they need to meet the expectations placed upon them. We call this review the 4Rs - roles, responsibilities, resources and relationships.

The AMM spent the past year actively laying out the case for why this review is necessary, raising it at every minister meeting we attended. So far, the Province appears open to participating. I am hopeful we can travel down this road together to find a new way of governance in the province - one in which municipalities have the appropriate level of responsibilities and the corresponding access to the resources needed to meet those responsibilities.

Over the years the AMM has worked with the Province on providing the tools necessary to make us better elected officials, in our knowledge and decision-making abilities. I also encourage you to take advantage of the professional development seminars the AMM provides throughout the year. Taking part in these sessions will help you to be better informed and add to your skill-set and comfort level to deal with the issues you face every day.

As we begin a new year, there will be no shortage of challenges. We can always go into great debate on what is the right thing to do, but I believe it all comes back to the basics - attitude and values. This is what will continue to make our towns, villages, cities, and municipalities strong enough to face those challenges and overcome many obstacles.

In closing, I'd like to congratulate my partners on the AMM executive team, Urban Vice-President **Shirley Kalyniuk** and Rural Vice-President **Roger Wilson**, on being acclaimed to their positions. I think I can safely speak for all of us when I say we learned a great deal over the past year, and I look forward to serving another year with both Roger and Shirley. Finally, to our members, I wish you all the best in the coming year and I look forward to working with you all. 