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Last words (THOUGH WHETHER “OF WISDOM” REMAINS TO BE SEEN)

It's the beginning of March when I'm writing this, and in a few weeks the privilege of representing MMAA as its President will belong to someone else. In fact, by the time you receive this article it may be down to a few days. So what final words do I have?

ON THE MANITOBA MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION

For many years MMAA has worked for the development of its members. It has been my privilege to continue with this and serve as its President for this two-year period. It is an experience that I encourage other MMAA members to consider and, like Morden's Council, for councils to support administrators in this venture.

ON THE ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA MUNICIPALITIES

Whether or not we may agree with every direction AMM takes, the reality is without AMM, municipalities in Manitoba would be a lot worse off. Whether it's human nature or some other reason, it seems many find it easier to criticize when we don't agree. If we were to use the positive reinforcement philosophy instead and praised AMM for the things it is doing that we support, the message would be even stronger. Those serving would also have a much more positive perspective, along with greater energy to get those things done.

ON THE ALL-IMPORTANT HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUE

Municipalities will see an increasing challenge in recruiting and retaining good employees. Ours is an aging society. For employees, workplace condition expectations are continually increasing. Employees expect more and more to make a difference in what they do by being given responsibility, not by being micromanaged. The stack of Provincial

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regulations we're expected to know and adhere to continues to grow, with little end in sight. Some members of the public – at times actually supported by individuals on Council (a member of the employer's board of directors) – have a perspective that government employees are there to be verbally abused or worse. Over the past two years, I've heard too many stories from MMAA members about workplace situations that should be considered unacceptable. Councils that don't spend time addressing the workplace shouldn't be surprised they are regularly hiring new, inexperienced people who later end up leaving for the same reasons. *(Editor's note: See the next issue of Municipal Leader for a Special Report on Human Resources.)*

ON THE ANTICIPATED ADMINISTRATIVE WORK LOAD

Downloading is going to create even greater challenges for municipalities in the next few years. The Canadian economy is well below what it was a couple of years ago. The federal

government has far less money available for spending. As a have-not province, Manitoba ends up in the same situation even though our economy hasn't been impacted as greatly. Whether by creating regulations or simply discontinuing funding programs, upper levels of government will be tempted to reduce costs by requiring or "allowing" municipalities to take on those costs. Each time this is done the strain on staff also grows.

ON MUNICIPAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The October municipal election will be an opportunity and a threat. Some council members have already decided not to run again. Others will run but won't get back in. In some cases, proven leaders will no longer be at the table. In other cases, new faces will present an opportunity to move municipalities forward. Unfortunately, it is possible single-issue candidates will get in, find out they are alone on that view, and spend the next four years disrupting democracy to the detriment of their municipality. Outlining roles and responsibilities right at the beginning of a new council, and even to potential candidates before the election, is a needed action.

ON THE PURPOSE OF IT ALL

Local government is a good thing. All of us need to be optimists, and promote our municipalities and organizations whenever we can. The public needs to know we all believe in what we do, and are working collectively to make it better and better. I look forward to being a part of this positive direction for the foreseeable future. 