



Lynne Bereza, AMM Communications Coordinator

## New faces – and voices – FOR PARKLAND

*The 2009 June District Meetings resulted in two AMM directors choosing to step down. Coincidentally both represented the Parkland District – Mayor Rene Mailard and Reeve Robert Misko. We sat down with the newly elected directors – Reeve Ron Kostyshyn (Parkland Rural) and Councillor Betty Nykyforak (Parkland Urban) – to get to know them.*

**Ron Kostyshyn** may be a newcomer to the AMM board of directors, but his is a familiar face to many. This Past-Chair of the Manitoba Conservation District Association (MCDA) has long taken an interest in environmental stewardship in both his volunteer activities and on his own farm. He is also a 20-year veteran of the RM of Mossey River council where he is serving his first term as Reeve.

When asked what prompted him to run for council two decades ago, Kostyshyn's answer is similar to many. "My Dad had been a councillor, and some of the ratepayers in my ward asked me to consider running." When it is noted that often people follow their parents into public service, he adds that his grandfather was also on council, "so it's kind of third generation."

So, too is the family farm that Kostyshyn operates with wife Judy, a loans officer for the Ethelbert Credit Union. Kostyshyn admits he enjoys the peace and quiet of his close-knit municipality of Mossey River (located just north of the RM of Dauphin and surrounding the Village of Winnipegosis), along with the willingness of people to help out their neighbours. Although Kostyshyn grew up here, he did step away from his hometown for a time, moving to Saskatoon for 10 years to work for an engineering firm. He returned to the farm when his Dad became ill and could no longer operate it.

While the decision to leave a relatively urban lifestyle was not easy, Kostyshyn remembers one thought that stuck out in his mind. "I felt that I probably would

be sorry if I never went back to farming. So we decided to try it and if we didn't like it, we'd sell the farm and go back to Saskatoon, because we love Saskatoon – it's a beautiful city." Almost 30 years later, they're still farming and Kostyshyn is glad his daughters were raised in the same small community atmosphere he was.

As if farming and serving as Reeve doesn't keep him busy enough, Kostyshyn continues to take a strong interest in the conservation district (CD) movement, currently serving as a sub-district chair for the Inter Mountain Conservation District. He also sits on the Ethelbert & District Veterinarian board. When asked about his decision to run for the AMM board, it is clear that Kostyshyn's dedication is not limited to his own municipal boundaries. "First of all, the AMM is a good organization," he stresses. "I felt that I wanted to continue our voice as a representative for the Parkland district. Because the AMM is such a strong lobby group with both the provincial and federal government, it is another tool to provide that strong voice for the ratepayers of the district."

At the time of this interview, Kostyshyn had experienced just two meetings of the AMM board, making it somewhat difficult

to assess what he feels may be the challenges facing the association. While emphasizing his continued interest in Manitoba's conservation districts – "I feel that it is imperative that the AMM continues to assist the MCDA in its movement toward watershed planning for future generations," – he is willing to bide his time in finding out just where he fits. "It's just a matter of seeing what I can assist in." So far, Kostyshyn, who has been appointed to sit on the AMM's Resource Management committee, will represent the AMM on the Aggregate Review Committee as well as the Beaver Control Program Review. (When it is noted that beavers seem to be an issue in the Parkland, he does stress – with tongue firmly in cheek – "We are without a doubt probably the proudest people to say we have the highest population of beavers in Manitoba!")

Ron and Judy have two adult daughters (one in Comox, BC and one in Calgary, AB) and are the proud grandparents of a two-year-old grandson. And while the kids have moved away, and he still sometimes wonders what life would be like had he chosen the city life over farming, it is probably a safe bet that Ron Kostyshyn is not leaving the RM of Mossey River anytime soon.

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*– Ron Kostyshyn*

If one word could be used to describe **Betty Nykyforak**, it is probably “trailblazer” – either that or “persistent.” It certainly would not be “quitter.” As the first woman (ever!) to sit on the Town of Roblin council, including one term as Roblin’s first female mayor, Nykyforak knows much about winning – and losing – elections. After 20 non-consecutive years on council, she is not one to let the odd loss get her down, and in fact comes back stronger the next time.

Her path in municipal politics has not been straight and began three decades ago. She was first elected to council in a by-election and was acclaimed more than once before being challenged and losing her seat. She returned to council three years later and then ran for Mayor. After serving three years, she was again unseated by former AMM Urban Vice-President Lorne Boguski, and defeated once more the following election, again by Boguski. The next time around, Nykyforak took a different route, running successfully for a council seat.

As mentioned earlier, Nykyforak is nothing if not persistent, and she continues to feel fulfilled by her role in municipal politics. To paraphrase the early words of her husband Mervin: “Why in the devil do you want to get involved in all this?” Nykyforak is candid. “I find it interesting and I love to keep learning.” (It speaks volumes that during the years she did not serve her council Nykyforak served her community, and family, in other ways. The former teacher, teacher’s assistant, and 4-H leader also babysat her grandchildren frequently during her non-political years. She is also a director and life member of the Roblin Ag Society.)

Her decision to re-enter political life resulted in not only a win in the last municipal election, but an interest in the AMM Board of Directors. Two years ago, Nykyforak unsuccessfully ran against then-Parkland Urban Director, Mayor Rene Maillard. This time around, Maillard cleared the path for Nykyforak. “It’s a shame nobody else ran,” she says. “At the same time I do have the time for it and I am very interested in finding out more about what my role is.” Nykyforak, who has been appointed to sit on the AMM’s Social & Fiscal Issues Committee, is also somewhat philosophical in her approach. “I see it as wanting to justify my existence here on earth,” she states, adding she enjoys meeting people and personal interaction.

While Nykyforak has made the jump to representing her region on the AMM

board, her love of her home community is quickly evident. “Roblin is a great community,” she emphasizes. “There are excellent opportunities here. We are at a crossroads of two major highways, we have great recreation, and the Town of Roblin has excellent staff.”

Nykyforak is not a Roblin native, but rather married into the community she has grown to love. Mervin is semi-retired and owns the trailer court while still operating a backhoe part-time. They have three grown children and five grandchildren, who have surely benefitted from Grandma’s willingness to help out with babysitting duties. As they get older though, they don’t have to worry about Nykyforak becoming bored – with her keen interest in learning, her seat on council, and her new position as an AMM Director, she will have no problem keeping busy. 📌

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– Betty Nykyforak*



New AMM Parkland directors Ron Kostyshyn (Rural) and Betty Nykyforak (Urban)