

Wanted: Municipal Administrator(s)

By Lynne Bereza, AMM Communications Coordinator

All municipalities, at one time or another, will be faced with the resignation or retirement of their Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). Given the key role the CAO has in the municipality, the process of replacing an experienced CAO – someone who has become extremely knowledgeable about your municipality over the years – can be daunting.

A Guide to Hiring Your Chief Administrative Officer

Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade, Municipal Finance and Advisory Services, June 2006

Over the past several years, it has become increasingly evident that municipalities will soon be facing a shortage of qualified administrators.

Two years ago, the Municipal Employee Benefits Board (MEBP) provided a report on eligibility information for the Manitoba Municipal Administrators Association (MMAA) members. Based on the spreadsheet, at that time 21% were eligible to retire immediately, and 38% within five years (see table below left).

The MMAA had received a similar report a few years prior to this, and as the organization devoted to promoting the career of municipal administration, subsequently has included action to promote the profession in its annual strategic plan.

Retirement eligibility only tells part of the story, however. While an aging membership is one factor in the upcoming shortage of CAOs, the profession has not always been visible as a career choice. Lack of adequate training for people entering the field is yet another factor, and sometimes poor hiring decisions are to blame.

Whatever the reasons, the Manitoba Municipal Administrators Association is taking steps to meet this challenge head-on. In partnership with AMM and Manitoba Local Government, MMAA is:

- attending career symposiums to ensure youth today are aware of this fulfilling career, where what you do can make a direct impact on the community you live in;

- encouraging its members to speak at local schools, educating students about local government and the opportunities available;
- encouraging councils to take on a youth member as a way of ensuring today's youth are exposed to local government; and
- promoting the MMAA publicly through regular media interviews.

Town of Morden CAO and MMAA Past-President, **Ernie Epp**, says “MMAA initiated these directions with its interests of sound local government at heart. Without good recruitment, there would be fewer individuals available to do a good job, and greater demand for those fewer individuals.”

In addition to recruiting new people into the field, the MMAA is placing a strong focus on professional development for existing administrators. Local government continues to become more complex, with CAOs citing “regulation overload”, the expectations of the public and council, and public abuse of municipal officials as threats to sticking with the profession.

To prevent the stress and frustration that sometimes leads to resignation, the MMAA has worked to help ensure existing members receive the education – and support – they need. A leadership training and development program for membership is in the works focusing on municipal-specific sessions for basic, intermediate and advanced levels of CAOs.

MBMMAA 2009/04/20 Municipal Employees Benefits Program							
EARLY RETIREMENT REPORT							
	South East	South West	Central East	Central West	North east	North West	Total
Total MMAA	46	78	42	63	2	19	250
2009	7	23	9	9		5	53
2010	3	4	3	1			11
2011	1	7		1		1	10
2012	2	2	3	4			11
2013		6	1	4			11
2014	3	4	4	1			12
2015	5	3	1	4	1	1	15
2016	3	5	2	4		3	17
2017		3	2	3		2	10
2018		1	1	2			4
2019	3	2	3	6	1		15
2020		1	1	2		1	5

MBMMAA 2010/06/29 Municipal Employees Benefits Program							
EARLY RETIREMENT REPORT							
	South East	South West	Central East	Central West	North east	North West	Total
Total MMAA	62	87	42	67	3	28	289
2010	8	15	10	7		3	43
2011	1	6		1		1	9
2012	2	2	2	3			9
2013	1	6		4		1	12
2014	3	5	4	1			13
2015	6	4	1	4	1	1	17
2016	4	6	1	4		4	19
2017	2	3	2	3		3	13
2018	1	1	2	2			6
2019	3	4	2	6	1		16
2020	2	1	4	2		2	11
2021	3	1	1	2		1	8



The AMM website tells its own story. In the first six months of 2010, the AMM web page devoted to job advertisements included 15 CAO postings alone. And the document “A Guide to Hiring your Chief Administrative Officer”, published in 2006, continues to be one of the most often downloaded documents on the website.



“Generations of today won’t stay in a position where they aren’t valued.”

Ernie Epp, CAO, Town of Morden

“In the next few years it will become even more important for local government politicians to realize how important the phrase ‘employer of choice’ will be,” says Epp. “Generations of today won’t stay in a position where they aren’t valued. It will be those municipalities who recognize this and create the workplace necessary that will prosper.”

Recent statistics suggest the MMAA’s efforts may be having

an impact. The MEBP provided an updated eligibility chart for this article (see table on right, page 34) and the numbers are now 15% eligible to retire immediately and 30% within the next five years.

At the end of the day, the MMAA realizes to attract and retain CAOs, the goal is not simply to promote municipal administration as a career choice, but as a career *of* choice! •



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