

Alberta Clarion

Society of Local Government Managers

2007 Issue 1

Municipal Administration Leadership Workshop

Kananaskis Village – May 9-12, 2007

The Society of Local Government Managers will be hosting the Municipal Administration Leadership Workshop from May 9 - 12, 2006. The Mountain Refresher fills the void left by the suspension of the Municipal Refresher Course formerly offered by the University of Alberta.

An informative, educational opportunity awaits you in a beautiful mountain setting. The Society has planned an exceptional two and a half day educational program directed at meeting the needs of municipal administrators, assistants, departmental managers, and government employees looking for a professional educational experience that provides practical skills for dealing with contemporary issues. The Alberta Local Government Forum is offering the four day Local Government Leadership's Local Government Facilitator Program

You will find senior and junior level CAOs from urban and rural, large and small jurisdictions who value the opportunity to learn from each other as well as from experts in the field.

Reach your Peak – Plan on attending the Municipal Administration Leadership Workshop in beautiful Kananaskis Country. For more information go to www.clgm.net

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SLGM Awards & Bursaries

Edmonton, Alberta

The Society of Local Government Managers has developed three bursaries to encourage and assist regular members with their continuing professional development.

The MALW Bursary provides registered members with the opportunity to access to two five hundred dollar bursaries or a one thousand dollar bursary for continuing education.

Bursary Criteria and application forms may be obtained by contacting the Society's Offices. March 31st is the deadline for applications.

The SLGM Award of Excellence cosponsored with Brownlee LLP, was developed to publicly recognize those individuals who demonstrate service excellence in local government.

The Award also recognizes the achievements, contributions, and continued pursuit of training of those individuals involved in the administration of local government.

The Award of Excellence recipient will receive \$3,000 along with a keepsake award.

Regular, associate and student members of the Society of Local Government Managers may apply until March 15, 2007 for the Award.

The sixth Award of Excellence will be presented during the Municipal Administration Leadership Workshop on May 11, 2007 at the Awards Banquet in Kananaskis.

For more information, please contact

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Board Highlights

“Just the Facts”

2007 General Operating Budget Adopted

The 2007 general operating budget contains a slight increase in regular and associate member fees. There is a \$20 increase in the regular member fees and a \$25 increase in the associate member fees. Student member fees remain unchanged at \$30 per annum.

Registration fees for the Kananaskis Mountain Refresher Workshop have been increased by \$50. This is the first increase in the fee in 4 years.

Money has been set aside to focus on a Work Force Strategy. The Society will be attending Career Days throughout the province and will continue the development of the Career Days Binder. This binder has been developed for use at High School Career Days. Work is continuing on print material that will target post secondary students encouraging them to consider local government management as a career choice.

Money has been set aside to continue the development of the Intransition Library and the network system for members who may find themselves in transition.

The Society has revisited the Internship Bursary. The bursary encourages the Municipal Interns to attend MALW. Interns in the current program who have not attended MALW in May of 2006 can apply for a bursary to attend in May 2007. Conditions do apply. For more information, please contact the SLGM Offices. The Society's Board has made a two year commitment to this bursary.

Joint Initiatives - The Society along with the Alberta Association of MD's and Counties, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, the Alberta Rural Municipal Administrators Association and the Local Government Administration Association are working together to complete a Marketing Strategy to encourage people to consider a career in local government.

Election Training - The Society, as the umbrella educational organization, will provide training to the Returning Officers, Election Day Workers and Candidate Orientation Session this year. ☐

The magic of mentors

WHO WOULDN'T WANT a mentor?

A mentor is someone who is knowledgeable and experienced in some aspect of business or life that we are not, someone who can provide insights, shortcuts, advice, introductions and information.

Mentoring can be a formal arrangement, as when an experienced manager provides structured guidance to a new manager.

A mentor can also be an informal relationship with someone already in your life. For example, you might explore an employee's deep understanding about an organization's needs, culture and strategic direction, or you might build a relationship with a business owner in order to learn about the company's products and clients.

To locate an informal mentor, identify someone in your environment who has the desired expertise, knowledge or skill, and let them know what you are seeking. Formal mentoring can often be arranged through professional associations or by hiring a professional coach/mentor.

Whether formal or informal, an effective mentor, willing and able to share relevant information, wisdom and resources over a period of time.

All successful mentoring is built on trust and initial rapport. To maintain and take full advantage of these precious relationships, effective questioning and focused listening are vital.

Direct questions are most effective when you are seeking specific information, for example, "Who do you know who ...?" or "When is the appropriate time to contact the manager?" or "How can I apply for this grant?"

On the other hand, open questions are most effective when you want broad, unrestricted information: "What would you do when ...?" or "what are your observations?" or "How can I make the most of ...?"

Profit from your mentor's generosity by listening with complete attention. Put aside inner distractions to fully focus-don't prepare another question, a comment or objection during an answer. Take a moment to collect your thoughts before replying. When unsure, ask clarifying questions. When you want to check your understanding, restate the information in your own words.

Concentrated listening supports accurate memory, but, more important, it generates rapport and respect between you and your mentor. Sincere acknowledgement of the value you receive from a mentor is one of the surest ways to foster and strengthen the relationship. ☐

Scarce Labour No Excuse for Poor Hiring

Yes we know it's an employee's market. Yes we know that qualified staff are extremely rare, if not non-existent in certain fields. And yes we know that employers are desperate for staff now, not later. BUT, this does not excuse some of the shoddy hiring practices that we are now increasingly seeing. This doesn't mean that employers should automatically settle for second rate staff. And, you do have alternatives.

Times are extremely tough for employers in all fields of work, but the situation is only exacerbated when you hire unqualified or incompetent or underachieving staff. As a home builder, would you like to hear the prevalent comment these days that "one shouldn't buy a house that's been built lately, as they are so poorly constructed." Or the other comment today regarding so many retail stores - that the current staff" are totally useless, know absolutely nothing about the product, and don't care to boot."

There is absolutely NO excuse for not conducting thorough reference checks - regardless of where the prospective applicant is from. There is also no excuse for not verifying the applicant's credentials. This will take more time and more effort, but the consequences of not doing so are serious enough to warrant that time and effort. Poor staff can cause you untold grief and possible legal consequences and financial loss due to proven negligence on your part. Poor staff also seriously affect the performance of your other staff, who resent having to work alongside someone who isn't qualified, who doesn't work as hard, and who doesn't care, yet gets paid the same amount of money and probably does so in a far shorter period of time.

We have recently seen employers hire staff who have lied about their credentials and even forged the signatures of referees. We have seen employers hire staff who have been terminated from several previous employers and for good reason. They obviously did not do due diligence in checking references or chose to ignore them. We continually see employers knowingly hire staff who are not qualified and without any plan for ensuring that they do become qualified.

There are many alternatives which employers should seriously explore. The larger employers, such as those in the oil patch, are going out of province and out of country to recruit and train their required labour; they have the political and economic ability to do so. But the smaller employer also has alternatives.

This is still a free country and employers also have "rights"; you are legally entitled to ask such questions and to plan accordingly.

A flexible approach is also what is required to the whole area of employee benefits and hours of work. Why not let staff choose the benefits that are applicable to their age, family status, and lifestyle? Many employee benefits carriers provide for such a "Cafeteria" style approach with a maximum benefit dollar amount per employee. Why not be flexible for mothers with young children who need to have flexible hours and time off? Why not show the same flexibility for those who have elderly parents to take care of? Why not let staff work from home if the type of work allows for it? As long as the quality and customer service is maintained, why not be flexible? Studies have repeatedly shown that there is greater productivity on the part of staff that are provided with flexible working arrangements to suit their individual and family circumstances.

Be prepared to staff full time positions on a part time basis. Who says that a manager's job can't be shared? Who says that part time staff aren't as committed as full time staff? Who says the extra benefits for two staff instead of one is a waste of money? It's time to get rid of this traditional bureaucratic mindset.

Why not hire women for positions that are typically male dominated? We have frequently told our manufacturing clients over the years, that having a good mix of male and female staff on the traditional male dominated plant floor is highly beneficial to plant morale, plant productivity, and employee relations in general. There is far less acrimony and disruption on the plant floor when there is a good mix of male and female. Quite frankly, we have found in our experience, that female plant staff are usually on average more productive than the typical male plant worker.

With the shortage in the building trades, why not hire more women? We just heard from a former female coworker that, at the age of 50, she left a national accounting firm, picked up a hammer and shovel, and started work at a construction company. She says that she is earning more, feels healthier, and has lost weight!

We fully understand the current problems with trying to recruit in the Alberta labour market, but as we said in the beginning, scarce labour is no excuse for poor hiring.

Productive Workplaces ☐

Part-time learning is popular: survey

There are still those who take part-time studies in pursuit of a fatter paycheck, but today a majority of Canadians taking extra training just want to learn more, according to a Statistic Canada survey.

The survey, designed by the Canadian Council of Learning and administered this spring by Statistics Canada, found 73.41 per cent of adults who take work-related training are motivated by the desire to learn something new, and almost 69 per cent take courses to perform more effectively in their current jobs.

And for 32.5 per cent, they are taking courses to boost their earning power and 31 per cent said they are taking courses to make them eligible for a promotion in the future.

The survey also revealed that younger Canadians and Canadians with higher education are more likely to take work related training.

Irrespective of the reasons or motivation working Canadians have to study part-time, experts say, the bottom line is, they are acquiring new skills and knowledge that improves, their prospects and opportunities.

This establishes a new trend that, education is a continuous process and no longer ends with just the completion of formal schooling and acquiring degrees.

Given this trend, employees should take the initiative to find out what sort of training their employers offer in-house and what sort of financial support they might provide for courses taken outside of work, advised Monika Morrow, vice president and national practice leader with Right Management, a Toronto-based consulting firm. The study also mentioned that those who take advantage of training opportunities get noticed.

According to Morrow, employers are always looking for people who are committed to their personal development as well as their career management. Simply put, these people are valuable assets to an organization. □

The Electronic Market Place

CLGM - PREMIERE JOB POSTING SERVICE

The Society provides an overnight advertising service to its members, subscribers and all rural and urban municipalities within Alberta. Advertisements are also posted on the Society's website. This service is available to any company or organization wanting to communicate with municipalities quickly and cost effectively. The Society charges a flat fee for this service. Visit <http://www.clgm.net/classifieds/index.htm>

Waiver Policy

SLGM'S MEMBERSHIP FEE WAIVER POLICY

The Society realizes from time to time members may find themselves between jobs with their professional fees unpaid and as that may prove to be a financial hardship to the member, the Board will invoke its power to waive in part for a period of time the member's fees.

The Society of Local Government Managers recognizes two categories of certified membership: *active* and *retired*.

Effective Jan. 1, 1996 a retired certified member who has left the practice in the local government field and is eligible to be the recipient of the Local Authorities Pension Plan benefit or another pension benefit and elects to be pensionable will pay no dues.

Active certified members pay full dues with the following waiver provisions:

- Unemployed for six months or more: *one-quarter of full dues*.
- Family leave, interruption (minimum six months) of career due to parental considerations: *one-quarter of full dues for maximum of five years, consecutively of in total*.
- Long-term illness or disability (medically unable to work): *full dues waived upon receipt of a medical certificate*.
- Engaged in full-time study at a post-secondary institution: *one-quarter of full dues*.
- Employment income less than \$20,000 per year, not eligible for any other waiver and not engaged in exclusive local government management practice *one quarter of full dues*.

Members meeting these requirements should contact the Registrar requesting an application form from the Society specifying which waiver provision you wish to apply for. The member must complete and return the waiver application promptly to the Registrar at the Society's Office. Payment of reduced dues, if applicable, must accompany all applications.

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The Last Word

Congratulations to:

- New members Robert Ellis and Nina Gales
- Keith Bender CLGM on his 31 December 2006 retirement

Why not pass along the newsletter to a colleague when you've read it?

Published by the Society of Local Govt. Managers of Alberta
P.O. Box 308, Bruderheim, AB T0B 0S0 www.clgm.net