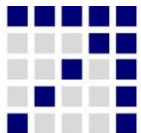


# Demystifying Alberta's Local Governments

Finding a Way to Connect Municipalities and Libraries

Alberta Library Conference 2019



Strategic Steps Inc.

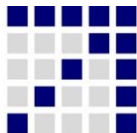


# About Me

- Ian McCormack
  - Past Library Trustee and Chair, Strathcona County Library Board
  - President, Strategic Steps Inc.
    - Governance Planning
    - Council Orientations
    - Inspections and Governance Reviews

# Agenda

- \* About Municipal Government
- \* How Local Governments Choose Priorities
- \* Keeping Libraries Front of Mind



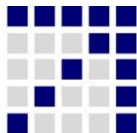
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# About You

- Who in the session is a trustee (municipal board vs system board), elected official, provincial or library staff?
- Small group introductions. Ask these questions of each other:
  - What is your name, role and library?
  - What do you think is the biggest impact your municipality has on your library, the board or the library system?



# Municipal Government



# A Quick Quiz

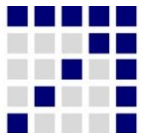
What are various types of local government entities in Alberta?

- Cities
- Counties
- Improvement Districts
- Municipal Districts
- Special Areas
- Summer Villages
- Specialized Municipalities
- Towns
- Villages
- First Nations\*
- Metis Settlements\*

Which one of these doesn't exist in legislation?

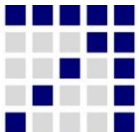
# A Brief History of Municipalities

- No Canadian Constitutional basis
- Created, modified or dissolved by Government of Alberta
- Major municipal types include:
  - Towns, Villages and Cities (often based on population)
  - Municipal Districts (Counties)
  - Specialized Municipalities



# Municipal Government Structure

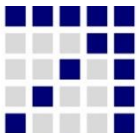
- \* Governed by elected Councils
  - Odd number of members
- \* Mayor/reeve has no more voting power than any other member of Council
- \* Some Councils elected by ward/division, some at-large
- \* Elections every 4 years
  - Sometimes a candidate must live in the area they represent, sometimes not





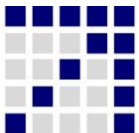
# Municipal Elections

- \* Set through *Local Authorities Election Act S. 11(1)a*
- \* 3rd Monday of October for all municipalities, except summer villages where elections take place in July and August
- \* Next election Oct 18, 2021
  - Different for by-elections & depends on proximity to the next municipal election



# Council's Employee

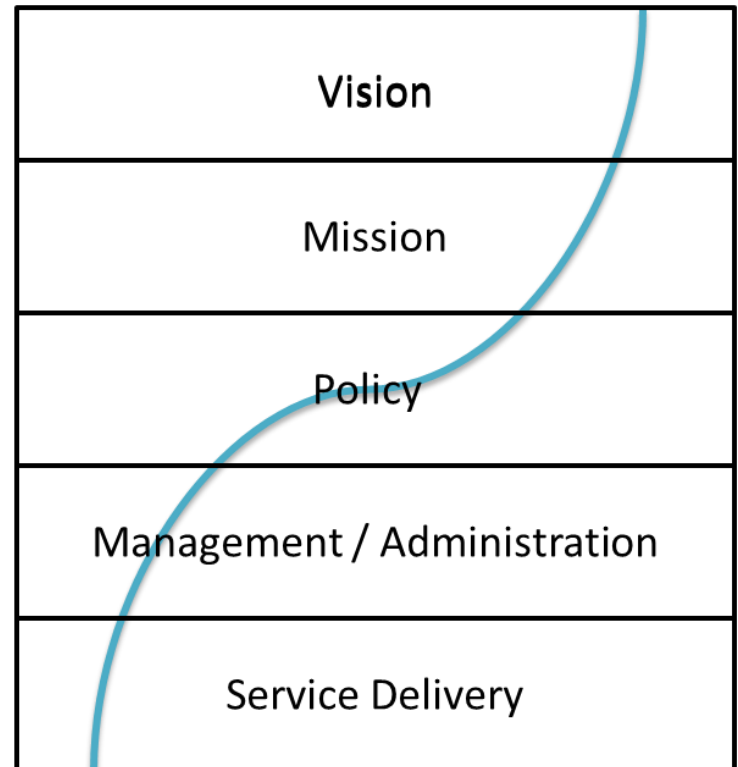
- \* Councils have a single employee
  - Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
  - Town/City/County Manager, Commissioner
- \* All other staff are accountable through the CAO
- \* Separates Political and Administrative roles of municipal government



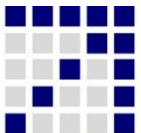
# Governance Role

- Effective Councils stay out of administration
- Councillors appointed to boards and committees
- Role in advocating for citizens
- Once voted on, decisions are 'Council' decisions

## Council's Sphere

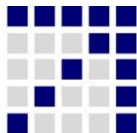


## Manager's Sphere



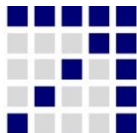
# Raising Money

- \* Limited ability to raise money.
- \* Property tax on residential and non-residential property.
  - Costs more to service residential tax payer than a non-residential tax payer, so res : non-res ratio is important.
    - Most smaller communities are in the 85-95% residential tax.
    - Rural communities often have more non-residential
    - Larger urban communities often more balanced



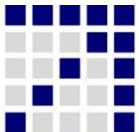
# Raising Money

- Grants from other orders of government
  - Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI), Gas Tax, GreenTRIP
- Fees and charges
  - business tax, permit fees, facilities admission, transit, offsite levies
- Collect the Education Property Tax on behalf of Government of Alberta
  - Can be a significant portion of overall property tax bill



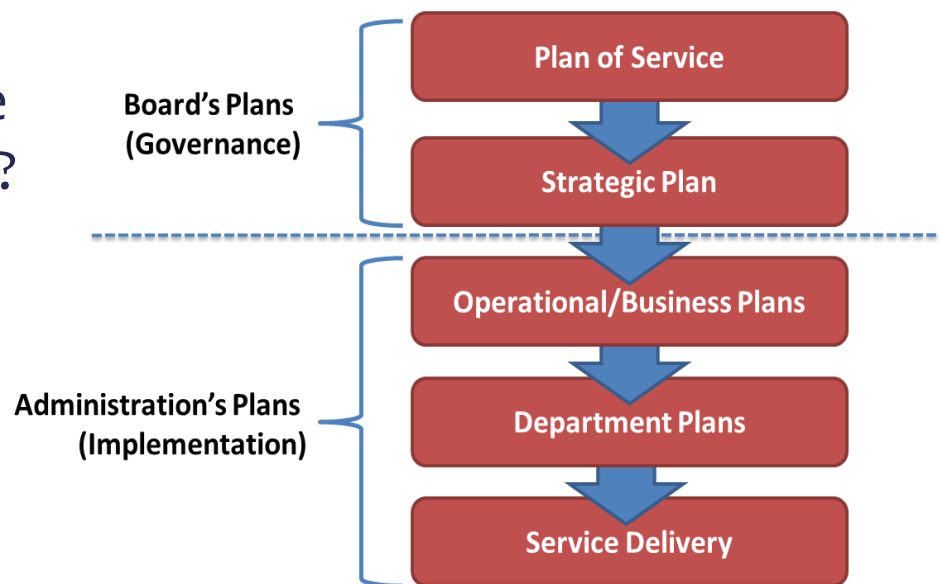
# Elected Officials as Trustee

- \* Up to 2 members of Council can be appointed to the library board, *Libraries Act S. 4.3*
  - Same role as other trustees. Not an elected official
  - Advocate for the library to Council
- \* Typically appointed by Council at an organizational meeting
- \* Library systems - one board member from each municipality
  - Library boards are often involved in the selection process and in making recommendations.



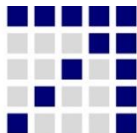
# Trustee Governance

- Trustees' governance role in libraries
  - What is your experience in your governance role?
  - What are your library's main strategic governance plans or documents?
    - Do you use them?



# Getting Money from the Muni.

- \* Request dollars as a grant or as a levy on property tax bills (from *Libraries Act*)
  - S 8 (1) The municipal board shall before December 1 in each year prepare a budget and an estimate of the money required during the ensuing fiscal year to operate and manage the municipal library.
  - (2) The budget and the estimate of money shall be forthwith submitted to the council of the municipality.
- \* Council can't edit the budget, but they can accept or reject it





# The Issue of Space

- \* Library can be housed with the municipality or separately
- \* New municipal buildings often contain the library as well
  - Blackfalds, Strathcona, Morinville, Fort Saskatchewan
- \* Sometimes a tenant, sometimes a partner



# Government Priority Setting

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By [Kristin Rushowy](#) Queen's Park Bureau  
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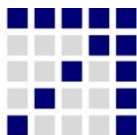
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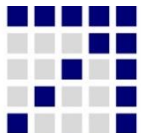
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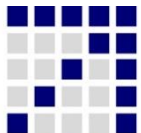
# Limited Resources

- Councils earn their keep by making tough choices.
  - There is always more work to do than there are resources available to do it.
- Revenue increases can be political
- Non-discretionary expenditures
  - Maintenance, repairs, payroll
- Discretionary expenditures
  - Beautification, cultural/recreation programs



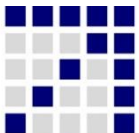
# Municipal Budgets

- Local governments can't approve a deficit budget
- Annual budget setting happens in late fall, but can last until the new year with an interim budget
  - Budget planning starts much earlier in the year
  - Capital and operating budgets approved
- Requisitions approved to appear on property tax bill
  - Municipal, education, others like seniors, libraries



# Strategic Choices

- High Priority: Combination of important and timely
- Priorities change
  - 'To do' lists get completed
  - New priorities emerge
- Environment shifts
  - Natural disasters
  - Downloaded requirements



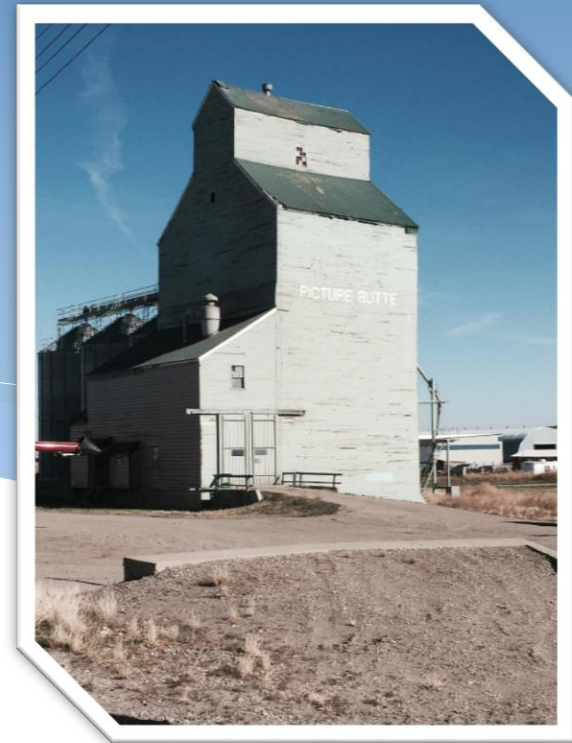
# Question

- \* Is there anything that surprises you about how municipal governments operate or the role they play with libraries?



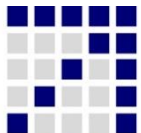
Finding a Way

# Keeping the Library Profile High



# From Facts to Stories

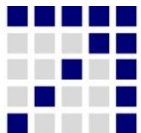
- How government works and priority setting are factual, narrative.
- Terry O'Reilly
  - “Make people feel your message, not just understand it” T. O'Reilly
  - “Don't tell the same old library story the same old library way. Harness the emotion of storytelling”
  - Sell the benefits not the features.





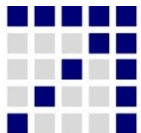
# Why Move to Your Community?

- What is it about your municipality that made you or your family want to move there?
  - Why do you remain?
- How would you define ‘community’?
- Do you measure community well-being?
- How can that be leveraged to the benefit of the library?



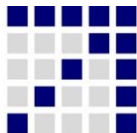
# Question

- How effectively does your library board (or trustees) interact with municipal elected officials?
  - Do you have any great ideas that might help others?
  - Do you have roadblocks you'd like to overcome?



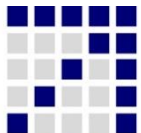
# Find a Way to Build Profile with Elected Officials

- Identify how libraries can help achieve Council's strategic plan and vision
  - Build this into your Plan of Service
- Get to know elected officials – what motivates them?
  - “What interests council members fascinates the CAO”
- Host events that are valuable to the broad community
- All trustees must share the same message



# Find a Way to Build Profile with the Community

- Engage broadly and consciously with the community
- Set up a board committee specifically to look at strategic library advocacy
- Collaborate with like-minded community groups
- Show all member municipalities the value you provide (system libraries)
- Focus - don't try and be all things to all people



# Find a Way to Be Authentic

- \* Speak passionately about why you support the library. Why should anyone else be an advocate if you're not?
- \* Be conscious of your actions. Think strategically. Why would an attempt at improving relations resonate?
- \* Look for shared interests & quick wins
- \* Library users can be some of the most compelling advocates

# Find a Way to Grow Advocates

- \* Build and nurture relationships
- \* Publicize how the library is active in your community
  - Likely not just around literacy. May include citizenship, newcomer support, children, seniors
- \* Actively promote citizen engagement
- \* Provide opportunities for community members to be involved, some for the first time

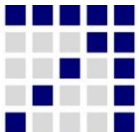


# What's in it for Us?

- \* How do elected officials meet library board and staff needs?
- \* Can elected officials influence material selection?
  - Selection of contentious material, filtering of computers, selection of who can use meeting rooms.
- \* Board can modify policies

# Good Practices

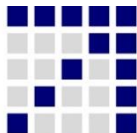
- \* Look back & celebrate accomplishments with each other
- \* Refrain from slipping into the negative
- \* Set measures for your library – what does success look like? How can you prove value to Council?
- \* Continue to consciously communicate





# Resources

- \* Libraries Act:
  - <http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/L11.pdf>
- \* Local Authorities Election Act:
  - <http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/L21.pdf>
- \* Municipal Government Act:
  - <http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/m26.pdf>



# Questions and Contact Information

- \* Thank you for attending today
- \* Ian McCormack
  - 780-416-9255
  - [ian@strategicsteps.ca](mailto:ian@strategicsteps.ca)
  - @lan\_mccor

