

## Taking the Pulse of Planning Practice - Address and Toast: April 7, 2010

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- I am very honoured to be invited by Ian Wight to address you, the class of students who have completed your coursework towards achieving a Master's of City Planning at the University of Manitoba.
- So you have completed your coursework and have survived the late nights, the writing of papers and exams, the working on project teams, etc. Some of you are working on your thesis. Some of you have completed your degree. You may be asking yourself what am I going to do with the knowledge and skills that I have acquired over the last couple of years. Will I be able to pursue a career in planning? And if I am unable to find a planning job once I graduate or find that planning is not the career for me, can I use the knowledge and skills of this planning degree in other occupations? I hope that my address can help answer those questions.
- To answer those questions, I am going to share my views on the present and future of planning practice in Manitoba – views that have been built on experience and knowledge acquired by twenty-eight years of practicing planning – five at the City of Winnipeg as a Neighbourhood Improvement planner; 23 years as a planner at the Province of Manitoba, ten as a senior planner at Manitoba Urban Affairs, ten as a manager in Education and Training, and the last three years as Assistant Director of Community Planning and Development at Local Government.
- Presently, the context for land use planning in Manitoba is defined by **The Planning Act** for the area of the Province outside the City of Winnipeg and Part 6 of **The City of Winnipeg Charter** with the exception of lands owned by the provincial and federal governments.
- Under these Acts of the Manitoba Legislature, the council of a municipality or the board of a planning district, formed by two or more municipalities, are responsible for the adoption, administration and enforcement of the development plan by-law, zoning by-law and all other by-laws respecting land use and development for the municipality.
- Presently, as a land use planner, you could be working for the City of Winnipeg, the City of Brandon providing assistance to the Brandon and Area District, and the Selkirk and District Planning District, or you could be one of the 25 professional planners that provide providing professional advice and technical assistance to the remaining 44 planning districts that involve 148 member municipalities and the 49 municipalities that exercise their planning authority. In 2007/2008, these provincial staff assisted in the preparation and adoption of 201 development plans and zoning by-laws, processed 864 new applications for subdivisions and reviewed 121

subdivision applications where the district planning board has delegated subdivision authority. You could also be working for one of the eight of the thirteen planning firms that are hired by planning districts and municipalities where extensive planning services are required to prepare land use development and secondary plans and zoning by-laws.

- By law, Planning District Boards and Municipal Council must prepare a development plan for their areas. Development plans must be generally consistent with the Provincial Land Use Policies. Presently, the Provincial Land Use Policies encourage that land uses and development are planned and designed to be compatible with their surroundings, prevent or minimize conflicts and avoid dangers to public health, safety and the physical environment.
- To implement the Policies, municipal and district development plans and plans of subdivision, are circulated to seven provincial departments (Infrastructure and Transportation, Conservation, Water Stewardship, Agriculture, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Innovation, Energy and Mines (Mines and Petroleum Branches), Manitoba Telephone Services and Manitoba Hydro for their review, comments and objections. Some of those departments have hired people with planning backgrounds to help review local development plans and subdivision applications.
- In the summer of 2010, the department of Local Government is hoping to have a new Provincial Land Use Policies Regulation. Last spring, in partnership with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, intensive public consultation was held on these new policies across the Province. These policies will help Manitoba into a new era of planning practices which will focus on developing sustainable community plans.
- According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, a sustainable community plan is a plan developed through public consultation that identifies a vision and included environmental, social, cultural and economic goals for the community. The plan describes strategies for reaching its goals and target, and integrates all areas of municipal concern, such as safety and security, waste and water management, energy use, neighbourhood and transportation planning, economic development, cultural and recreational programs and facilities. I found it interesting that the majority of the topics of your student practitioner collaborations touched on environmental, social, cultural and economic elements of community planning.
- This new era will call for planners to come to work with knowledge of not only land use planning but with some understanding of community and economic development. We will also be looking for planners who can assist municipalities and districts to engage their residents and their businesses to develop SMART goals for their communities and that can facilitate the development of strategies in the areas of developing resilient and complete communities. This will require a set of competencies related to great communication, interpersonal, leadership, management,

analytical, innovative problem-solving, and implementation skills – skills that I think the University of Manitoba has tried to help you develop over the last two years.

- In addition, planners will be called upon more to be educators and to develop tools and resources to assist municipal councils and planning boards to address the numerous challenges facing them in working to achieve their community visions. Once the new Provincial Land Use Policies Regulation has been registered, our planners will need to help municipalities in learning about the new policies and how to use them to create sustainable community plans. Many of our municipalities and planning districts have limited capacity to implement the policies, so there will be a need to develop with both political and administrative officials the competencies and the knowledge so that they can successfully implement their development plans.
- In the future, planners will need to assist municipalities to think and act regionally. For example, one of our regional managers has been working with the Morden, Winkler, Stanley, and Thompson Planning District to help them address growth management issues in the area. He has had to encourage local councilors and CAOs to use a regional approach to solving a waste water infrastructure to facilitate the growth of residential development in the area. This has led to bringing municipal financial experts to help those municipalities identify a fair and equitable way that these municipalities can share in the cost of those services.
- There is another area that planners are going to be needed to play an important role in managing and creating change. This is in the area of policy and program development and implementation. In the past, Local Government has hired planners to help design and project manage the province's Neighbourhoods Alive and the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement. In the future, we will need planners who can design and implement policies and programs to address emerging complex issues like climate change, poverty, safety, economic development, etc. These issues will require planners that can identify probable causes and propose elegant cost-effective solutions based on research and promising practices – planners who can communicate those issues and recommendations both verbally and in writing to a variety of audiences – politicians, stakeholders, etc. in a clear, concise and timely manner and planners that know how to successfully implement those solutions. Given limited resources, this will require individuals who will come to work with good business and political acumen, good project management skills and that can foster collaboration and partnerships to deliver policies and programs.
- As an example, in the last two years, I have hired a great team of four individuals one of which is Katy Walsh, one of your graduates this year. This team has spent two years designing and are now beginning implementation of a community based pilot project to help 12 municipalities and 6 community organizations to reduce green house gas emissions in their communities. They have creatively developed tools and resources to facilitate the engagement of municipalities and communities in this process, in identifying the source of their emissions, in developing and implementing

action plans and a method of measuring the amount of emissions their actions will help to reduce.

- In conclusion, I would like to raise a glass to congratulations on your completing your courseload and say that Manitoba would like to see the knowledge and the skills you have acquired in the last year put to good use in the future to develop sustainable and resilient communities in Manitoba.