



AIM NETWORK LAUNCHES COHORT PROGRAM TO STRENGTHEN ASSET MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN MUNICIPALITIES ACROSS ATLANTIC CANADA

[CLICK HERE TO VISIT COHORT WEBPAGE](#)



Last summer, AIM Network received the good news that it was selected by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to be one of 17 partner organizations receiving a grant to build understanding of asset management and related technical capacity in municipalities across Canada. AIM Network’s efforts will focus on supporting municipalities in the Atlantic region.

In total, FCM awarded \$5.2 million in grants to its partner organizations, made available through its Municipal Asset Management Program, which it delivers with funding from the Government of Canada. FCM and the Government of Canada recognize that asset management has tremendous potential to direct infrastructure investments towards the best long-term outcomes for our communities, and that as a discipline it’s here to stay. They also know that it’s still a relatively new approach and that small cities and towns especially need support to adopt asset management and make progress. That’s because asset management isn’t simply a plan that can be left to sit on a shelf or referred to once a year at budgeting time. It’s a business process that involves everyone in the municipality who has a role to play in planning for and delivering services, from the mayor and council right down to front line workers. With that in mind, this round of FCM grants enable local leaders and key municipal staff to have access to ongoing training that is collaborative and encourages knowledge sharing across communities, at deeply discounted rates.

This is the second time AIM Network has been selected as a partner of FCM. In 2017 it received a grant to build awareness of asset management among municipalities in the region, and as a result it has built a growing network of communities that see the value of asset management and want to get on board. Those that are ready to take next steps have not hesitated to join AIM Network’s new cohort program.

WHAT IS THE COHORT PROGRAM?

The program is bringing participating municipalities through a learning process that began this Fall and will continue through to December 2019. To date, four cohort groups have been established and have already begun their work together, involving a total of 27 municipalities. They include two in Nova Scotia (a southern group and a northern group), one in western Newfoundland and one in PEI. AIM Network is working to establish two additional cohorts by early 2019, one in southern New Brunswick and a second cohort in PEI comprised of very small municipalities. Each municipality has enabled multiple staff, and in some cases a mayor or councillor as well, to take the time to participate fully.

The program will bring each cohort together for four workshops designed to help them advance some of the fundamental components of asset management.

AIM NETWORK NEWS IS A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ATLANTIC INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT NETWORK, PRODUCED WITH SUPPORT FROM THE FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES AND GOVERNMENT OF CANADA.

Confirmed Cohorts			
Nova Scotia (south)	Nova Scotia (north)	PEI (large communities)	Newfoundland
Mahone Bay	County of Antigonish	Charlottetown	Cow Head
Annapolis Royal	Port Hawkesbury	Summerside	Rocky Harbour
County of Annapolis	Town of Stellarton	Kensington	Norris Point
District of Yarmouth	Town of Trenton	Montague	Pasadena
Town of Yarmouth	Town of Westville	Stratford	Steady Brook
Municipality of Argyle	County of Victoria	Cornwall	Massey Drive
Shelburne			Glenburnie-Birchy Head-Shoal Bay
Lockeport			Massey Drive

This is the first of four newsletters that AIM Network will produce between now and December 2019 to share stories, insights and lessons from the cohort program. Stay tuned to follow the progress being made in the region.

AIM Network has also developed a knowledge mobilization program to ensure that municipalities not involved in the program can benefit from the lessons learned and progress made by the cohorts. Activities will include four webinars in 2019 and a one-day asset management awareness day in the provinces of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland (and possibly New Brunswick) in Fall 2019. The one-day conference will showcase the knowledge developed by the cohorts. See the calendar on page 2 for information about upcoming events that you may wish to attend.

Contact Daisy Foster at dfoster@aimnetwork.ca if you would like your community to be featured in the next newsletter, which will be published in late Spring 2019.

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Calendar of Events

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2019
(12:00 - 1:00 PM, ATLANTIC TIME)

Save the date! AIM Network will be hosting a free webinar open to all municipalities in the region to share lessons and experience from municipalities involved in its cohort program. A speaker from each cohort will present the roadmap they developed following their first workshop and share the first steps they are taking to make progress in asset management. Stay tuned for an email with a link to register.

SEPTEMBER 5-6, 2019
ST. JOHN'S, NL

Save the date! AIM Network is hosting the Atlantic Asset Management Conference in St. John's, NL this year. Join a wide range of municipal staff, elected officials and others in the region who will be sharing knowledge and collaborating to improve municipal asset management planning and practices.

(Continued from page 1) Daisy Foster, AIM Network's managing director says they really want to help municipalities 'integrate' asset management into the way they manage and govern and "that's why this program is hands-on – they use their own information and data to 'do' asset management with the help of facilitators".

Workshop 1 begins by helping them to assess their stage of maturity in asset management, identify key gaps and develop a roadmap that defines the steps they will take to make progress. For many small municipalities, a first step involves improving data collection and mapping of their asset inventories and building a deeper understanding of the condition of their infrastructure to support prioritization of infrastructure investments. In their first workshop, the groups also learn the fundamentals of good governance that underpin sound infrastructure decisions, one of which is to ensure accountability and transparency of infrastructure decisions at the council level. The first set of deliverables required by municipalities in the program are to develop an asset management policy that is intended to be approved by council, and a roadmap.

The second workshop supports municipalities with developing their levels of service for major service areas. Defining levels of service is an important building block in asset management, because it enables municipalities to measure their actual performance in service delivery against the desired levels of service the community wants and expects. Levels of service lay a foundation for longer term financial planning, because they can be used as benchmarks to help municipalities decide how to balance costs, risks and service levels in different service areas. They also support dialogue and engagement with the community, who can provide more informed input into how much they are willing to pay for different services. Many municipalities across Canada don't yet have a good handle on the levels of service they are delivering or should deliver, and what it might cost to adjust them, so the municipalities involved in the cohort program will no doubt become leaders in the region and mentors to other communities.

It's good practice in asset management to engage the public on levels of service, so the program also gives participating municipalities the option to join a fifth cohort focused on community engagement. This stream is led by Christina Benty, the former mayor of Golden who is a firm believer in the benefits of asset management and someone who specializes in communications that will win hearts and minds to embrace it. See the article on page 7 to learn more about the community engagement stream and lessons learned to date by the 40 or more municipal participants from 10 municipalities in Nova Scotia.

Once municipalities have developed their roadmap and levels of service, the third workshop will hone in on another fundamental component of asset management, which relates to analyzing risk and prioritizing infrastructure investments. The prioritizing process will consider community needs, costs, and levels of service. Climate risk will also be factored into this assessment, a concern among many small communities, coastal and otherwise, whose aging infrastructure was not necessarily designed to withstand the impacts that climate change may bring. With a good understanding of climate risks and other risks to infrastructure, they will be better able to channel their funds to the most critical needs to protect public health, safety and their communities' financial sustainability.

In the fourth and final workshop, the cohort participants will develop a strategy to deal with critical infrastructure and long-term financial projections to support its implementation.

With these foundational elements in place, participating municipalities will be on the road to making the best possible infrastructure decisions for their communities. They will also be well placed to access infrastructure funding from senior levels of government, as many are now requiring municipalities to show progress on asset management in order to be eligible for funding.

Interview with Daisy Foster, Managing Director, AIM Network



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Why Bother?

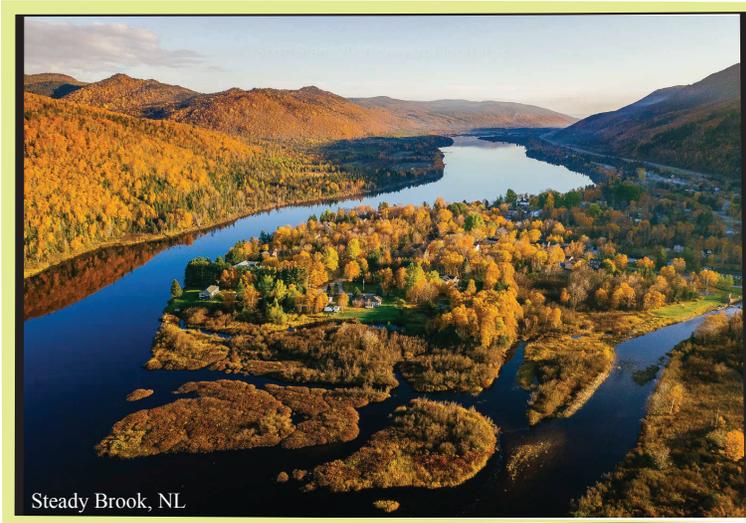
That's the headline that Mayor Donna Thistle of Steady Brook, Newfoundland felt might catch the attention of busy and hard-working municipal staff and councils who have little time to spare to read anything that comes across their desks that's not urgent or essential. She hopes it will, because in her opinion, asset management might be "the greatest gift ever given to a municipal council" and "one of the most important things that's ever happened to the country." She stands by her conviction that adopting it will change the game entirely around how Steady Brook manages infrastructure and delivers services.

Steady Brook is a small bedroom community of less than 500 residents, nestled beside the Marble Mountain protected area, which is home to the Marble Mountain ski resort in western Newfoundland. The main economic engine in the community is tourism, as it has some hotels and bed and breakfasts, a shopping complex and gas station. The community represents an almost perfect demographic curve that includes young families, teens, a significant working age population and seniors. Most residents are professionals who work nearby in larger centres like Corner Brook, whereas most of the people who work in retail and tourism don't live in the community. It's a very sought-after place to live, but the population is growing timidly and would likely grow faster if there were more housing options and if the infrastructure were there to support them.

Steady Brook Council gladly signed up two councillors and the town manager to participate in AIM Network's Newfoundland cohort. Mayor Thistle first learned about asset management after attending a presentation on it at the 2017 annual conference of her provincial association, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador. While the term asset management was new to her, the concept and the need for it were crystal clear immediately. That's because she has considerable institutional memory of the history of Steady Brook's infrastructure and the challenges associated with delivering services. She's a lifelong resident and this is her second term as mayor. In fact, her father was the first mayor of the town in 1953 when there were only 20 or 30 families there.

Steady Brook owns and maintains many assets like community sewer and water, fire hydrants, a playground, and a community building. It also has a new town hall, fire hall, a new fire truck coming, a loader back haul, two pick-up trucks and paved roads to maintain.

One of its unique infrastructure challenges relates to meeting the desired level of service for water. The town is responsible for maintaining a water and sewer system built more than 30 years ago. It shares responsibility for delivering those services with Marble Mountain, which has a separate governance structure. The water system has served the community well for three decades, but one of its less desirable features is the yellowish colour of the chlorinated water. While it's considered safe to drink by Canadian standards, it does have above the recommended level of THMs (the byproduct that is



Steady Brook, NL

created when chlorine is mixed with organic materials). It is a suspected carcinogen that has some residents concerned. About ten years ago, council began searching for a solution and thought they'd found one in artesian wells. After about four or more years of searching and drilling, the town found a theoretical supply that just barely met the projected demand. Community pressure led council to proceed with an application to the province that was approved for funding to install a new water storage system.

Unfortunately, the town has learned the hard way that demand was higher than expected and the supply doesn't meet the demand. The system also requires fairly sophisticated professional skills to operate and maintain, a cost that the council hadn't factored in when it decided to proceed with the project. So right now, residents have blended water that's sometimes yellow and

many blame the council for the current problems. One of the solutions that council is now considering is to filter the abundant surface water that comes from Marble Mountain. This is being considered now because the costs of filtering have come down significantly since when they first started exploring alternative solutions.

The challenges the town currently faces with the water supply and system beg the question of whether the council would have made the decision to proceed with the artesian well project had good asset management practices been in place to consider the full costs, risks and service needs of the community. When asked why she was motivated to adopt asset management and participate in the cohort program, Thistle pointed to what she felt were the same challenges felt everywhere in small communities. Institutional knowledge is lost at an

alarming rate, largely because the salaries that councils feel are manageable to pay staff are quite low, which causes regular turnover. While Steady Brook has been fortunate to have staff stay longer, the turnover rate is two to three years. And like in other communities, new councils come on board without the knowledge or history behind why decisions were made or a clear understanding of the condition of their infrastructure or the risks associated with it.

From her perspective what will be most valuable is the hard data the town will finally have on which council can base decisions.

Steady Brook will be using GIS to map the location of all of its assets and will adopt a lifecycle management approach to better understand what skills and resources are needed to operate and maintain them over their full life and when they should be replaced. She is relieved that successive councils won't have to say, "we think it's time to replace this asset." She has no doubt that the institutional knowledge gained from doing asset management will help support long-term planning instead of crisis management.

Thistle is looking forward to learning from the other municipalities in her cohort. She also feels that Steady Brook has a lot to share, because even though it's a small town, its infrastructure is as sophisticated as that of a larger community.

Interview with Donna Thistle,
Mayor of Steady Brook, NL



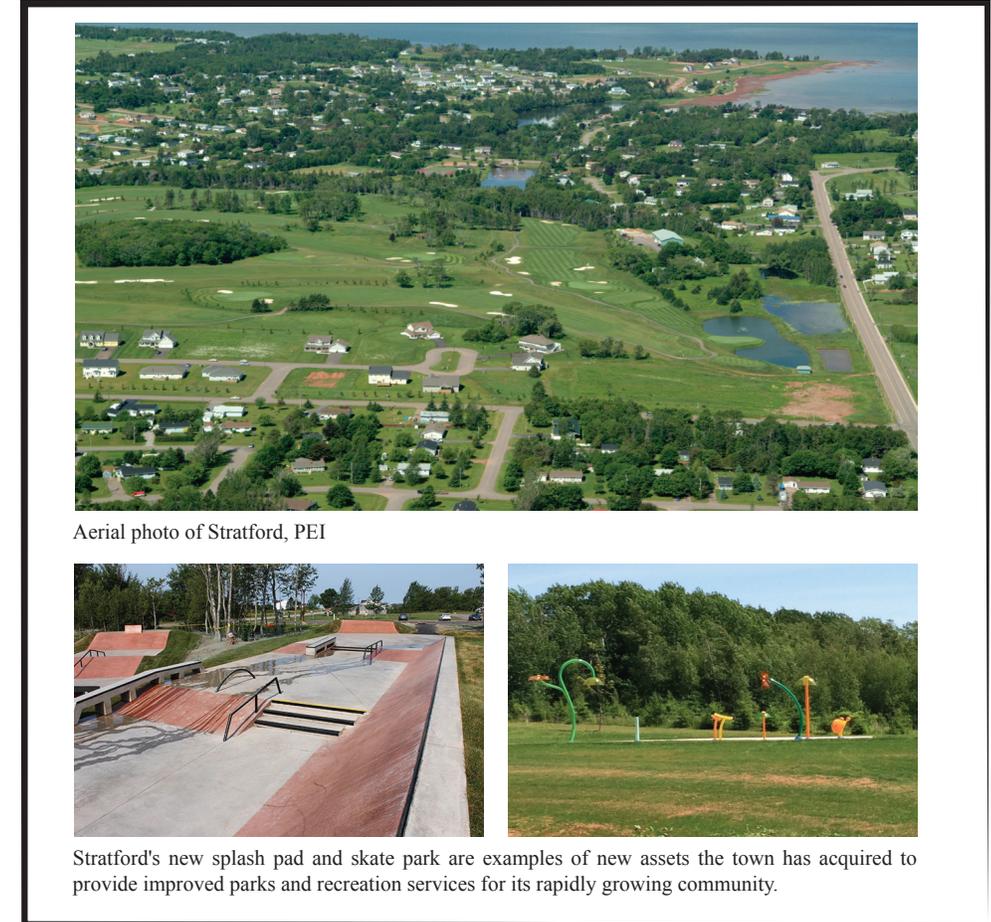
ASSET MANAGEMENT WILL HELP A GROWING COMMUNITY TO SET PRIORITIES

WITH A POPULATION that has now reached over 10,000 residents, and the fastest growing municipality in Atlantic Canada, Stratford, PEI is located across the Hillsborough River from the capital city of Charlottetown. While most of its assessment base is residential, the town expects to see a boom in commercial development over the next few years with 2018 having already set a record for commercial development. This change to the assessment base is seen as positive with Stratford being viewed as a desirable place to live. Residents range from the older, more mature to young professionals starting out to families with children living at home. As well, seniors on a fixed income would like to age in the community, but there are few options for them to live within the community when they are ready to give up their larger, family home.

As a newer community, Stratford doesn't have the challenge of dealing with aging infrastructure that many communities in the region are struggling with. Instead, its challenge lies in managing growth and prioritizing decisions around all the new infrastructure the population needs and would like to have. With funding secured from both the provincial and federal governments, the town is currently undertaking a large wastewater treatment project to be able to serve the growing population.

Kim O'Connell is Stratford's director of finance and she believes that their adoption of asset management is coming at a very good time. She has no doubt that the biggest benefit will come from being able to make better financial decisions based on knowing all the resources that will be required to manage new infrastructure over its full lifecycle. The town has already acquired quite a few big ticket items, like a new splash park and skate park, a new emergency services building under construction which will include fire, RCMP and emergency services, and a new school is also in the pipeline. They are aware that they won't be able to do everything the community wants and will need to have an objective way to make decisions about trade-offs.

Stratford got involved in the cohort program partly because of a new municipal government act that requires municipalities to have an asset management plan in place to be eligible for government funding, so of course compliance with the act was a huge driver. But leadership is also coming from the top of the municipality's administration. Stratford's CAO, Robert Hughes is a champion of asset



Aerial photo of Stratford, PEI



Stratford's new splash pad and skate park are examples of new assets the town has acquired to provide improved parks and recreation services for its rapidly growing community.

management. He sits on the board of the AIM Network and also participates on the technical committee for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Municipal Asset Management Program. He has been driving the process forward and supportive of having all key staff in the municipality involved. Along with O'Connell and Hughes, Stratford's deputy CAO, director of recreation, culture and events, its infrastructure coordinator and a project manager are all participating in the program.

O'Connell likes the fact that the program allows them to talk to other municipalities that are going through the same issues. She knows asset management is a challenging topic for many municipalities and believes it's helpful to be doing this in a group. The cohort works together to come up with an approach they can all benefit from, which provides assurance that they are going in the right direction. O'Connell mentioned that they have been spending quite a bit of time on asset management over the years, so some of the content in the first cohort workshop wasn't new to them. She said the most valuable aspect was the templates provided and the

support of the facilitators and their municipal peers.

The town's first step in its roadmap will be to link all of the information they have about their assets in GIS to their financial information. O'Connell says that while they've always been compliant with the Public Sector Accounting Board's financial reporting requirements for tangible capital assets, they haven't linked individual assets to financial information, a step that's needed for improved asset management planning. They are also developing a policy and a strategy. PEI had municipal elections in the Fall, and half of the council is new to municipal politics and brand new to asset management. Staff will be giving them time to get oriented with existing policies, and O'Connell anticipates they'll bring their asset management policy to council to approve in the Spring of 2019.



Interview with Kim O'Connell, Director of Finance, Stratford, PEI



Robert Hughes, CAO, Stratford, PEI

COMING TO TERMS WITH AGING INFRASTRUCTURE

FIVE YEARS AGO, staff and Council of the Town of Westville, Nova Scotia were quite concerned about the financial viability of the town. As an established community with half century old infrastructure, the town was starting to experience the signs of its age. They were seeing a significant increase in water leak repairs and had experienced some infrastructure failures, which was a wake-up call that more investment would be needed as assets were coming due for replacement. For a small community of about 3,900 people with no real industrial base, the ability to sustain their service levels was uncertain.

Westville is in the northeastern part of the province in Pictou County, and while small businesses are the main source of local employment in town, most residents work outside town at other factories and industries in the County, or commute to work in Truro and Halifax. The population has been steady with reasonable growth, but overall it is an aging community, even though it has one of the youngest populations in Pictou County.

The town has quite a few assets to manage and by far its biggest challenge relates to managing and replacing its aging linear assets. The town owns and maintains about 85 km of roads, the second most of any community in the province, trailing only the Town of Truro. It shares a regional sewer and wastewater treatment services with six other municipalities and purchases its water from another municipality. The water is stored in a reservoir and chlorinated before distribution. It also has its own police department, which can be costly to maintain the required and expected level of service.

According to Westville's CAO, Kelly Rice, over the last five years they've made administrative and operational changes that have resulted in some very positive gains and they finally feel like they're going in the right direction. Part of that confidence stems from the progress they're making with asset management. Rice and the other members of Westville's Asset Management Committee involved in the cohort program were pleasantly surprised when they did their asset management assessment, because they didn't really identify any major gaps in data and information. They realized they already had a lot of groundwork done and it turned out to be a very positive experience, rather than disheartening. They were also pleasantly surprised when they looked at their levels of service during their second workshop, because they scored much higher than they expected.

The northern Nova Scotia cohort that Westville is a part of is the farthest along in the program, so Westville has already completed its roadmap and has a draft policy ready to go to council to review. They

have the terms of reference developed for their Asset Management Committee and were already beginning to prepare a workshop for council. A second term councilor is actively involved in the cohort program and the mayor is fully on board with asset management, so the workshop is meant bring the whole council up to speed on what they're doing and why it's so important.

Rice was quite proud of the progress the town is making and was quick to point out a whole range of activities the town is planning to undertake in the coming months. She's confident they'll be able to link the financial information they have about their assets and the resources required for them to this year's capital budget planning. And within the next few months they plan to do a public awareness campaign. The campaign will likely roll out in two phases. Over the

short term, the focus will be on acquainting the public with asset management and its benefits. Rice also believes they'll be able to fill in any blanks they have on the condition of their linear infrastructure and core assets by the end of this fiscal year, which for the town is March 31st, 2019.



Main Street, Westville, NS

Westville's roadmap sets out a path for the next 10 years, and work planning for the next two or so years is already well underway. In that timeframe, the town will develop the second phase of its public engagement strategy. Rice's intent is that it will enable them to go out to the public every couple of years to inform them of their progress, help them to understand what the current infrastructure priorities are and enable them to provide input. And the town is just starting to work on developing a long-term financial plan, which she imagines will get done within the next two years. By 2021, she expects they will have a long-term (25 years) asset management plan for their roads, water and wastewater services, which they plan to integrate into the town's overall strategic plan.

Rice's praise for the cohort program couldn't have been clearer when she added, "I truly believe that this process that we've been working through with AIM is one that I would highly recommend to any municipality that has not already completed their asset management plan. I would highly recommend that they reach out to AIM...it's been a really good experience for us and has really gotten us on our way."

Interview with Kelly Rice,
CAO of Westville, NS



Stewards of Photographer's Paradise

NORRIS POINT is a small community of less than 700 people located on the shore of Bonne Bay in western Newfoundland in Gros Morne National Park. It's known for its welcoming atmosphere and abundant beauty, which is why it's often referred to as a photographer's paradise.

Like many small communities along the northern peninsula, its population is aging and has declined slightly since the last official census was done, but not by nearly as much as some of the other communities in the area. Jennifer Samms, the town clerk-manager is thankful for the growing tourism industry in the Gros Morne National Park, which has supported the town's transition to tourism following the decline of the fishery. The town has been fortunate to see some new, younger families who have fallen in love with the area move in, including some doctors, which have typically been hard to attract.

When Samms was interviewed for this article, her region had just experienced a severe windstorm the day before, which knocked out

power for a day in some areas of the province and took a roof off a building in Port-au-Basques, located a couple of hours away. It's no longer unusual for her community to see wind gusts of 120 – 140 km/hour and three or four years ago they completely lost one of their buildings. The town has been noticing different patterns in the climate over the years, which have led to more severe coastal erosion and risks or even failure

of some infrastructure, as roads and banks have washed away. The town's water infrastructure is also at risk, because the main water and sewer pipelines are located close to the shore.

The town is just getting started with asset management after learning about it over the last couple of years at municipal workshops and conventions. Council has been very eager to jump on board and get involved. That's because they are aware of the gaps in knowledge they have about their infrastructure, which limits their ability to prioritize

decisions. The town's maintenance supervisor has been there for 20 years, but all of the town's knowledge has been in his head and not on paper. Similarly, the previous town clerk/manager was there for 35 years and Samms found that when she started in her role a lot of knowledge about the town was lost when she retired. They didn't have much information on what they owned, how old it was, and what the costs would be to replace it.

Even though climate change is bringing risks to their infrastructure, it's the age of it that's their biggest challenge. They've realized that even though they have funding to replace their main water line, there's much work to do. When they initially started attending asset management workshops, the seven neighbouring communities in the Gros Morne area decided to forge ahead together because there were so many similarities between them and they appreciated the peer support. Since then, a few of the smaller ones have dropped off, most likely because of lack of resources, but the four larger communities have persevered and joined AIM Network's cohort program.

Norris Point has a very small staff and has ensured that the senior staff, the mayor and a councillor are actively engaged in the program. They are at a very early stage, just starting to gather information, learn how they can improve it and develop a policy and plan to move forward. When asked what part of the program she felt she would appreciate the most, Samms says she's thought about this question in many different ways. She believes it really depends on where you sit and what your role is in the municipality. Council wants to know exactly what they need to do, something to show them where the needs are going to be in the next several years, whereas the maintenance staff want the GIS maps and data to facilitate their work. For her, the benefit will come

from being able to provide better information to Council to help guide their decisions, for example, to help inform what type of funding they need to go after. As far as the community goes, she says she doesn't believe they are aware yet of what the town is doing related to asset management and only a small portion of the community typically comes out to community meetings. They expect that council is taking care of things. That

said, she does think that climate change will be an anchor issue that will get people out, as many people are concerned about what might confront them in the years ahead.

Samms was looking forward to participating in the first workshop of her cohort to develop the town's policy and roadmap, which was scheduled for December 10th.



Norris Point, NL is known to many as photographer's paradise

Interview with Jennifer Samms,
Town Clerk-Manager, Norris Point, NL



BUILDING BRIDGES WITH THE COMMUNITY

THE NEED TO co-create and to educate were two powerful motivating factors that led the District of Yarmouth, Mahone Bay, and Lockeport to join the optional community engagement stream of the cohort program. They are among 10 participating municipalities from Nova Scotia that are navigating the big culture change that asset management requires. As they begin to better understand the state of their infrastructure and the resources that will be required to deliver services now and into the future, they know that trade-offs will be required and they will need their community's help in setting priorities.

The community engagement stream of the program is organized around three workshops and is being led by Christina Benty, the former mayor of Golden, BC and someone who now specializes in communications and engagement around asset management. The first workshop took place in late November and established the context for community engagement; why it matters, what good and bad engagement looks like, and what are the respective roles of council and staff. The second and third workshops will take place in 2019 and will support the cohort in developing projects, tools, and resources to engage the community. Participants will be able to learn from each other and share their pitfalls and successes.

Benty firmly believes that council, municipal staff and the community have a collective responsibility towards one another and that it can't be an us and them relationship. She reminds participants that the core (and only) responsibility of council is stewardship and governance over the assets that provide services so that future generations can enjoy the same or better level of service as we do today.



Aerial view of Lockeport, NS



Christina Benty is leading the community engagement stream of the cohort program

And she helps them to understand how to navigate that reciprocal relationship in such a way that it allows communities to move forward. That is done through a combination of educating the community about asset management and finding ways to involve them in priority setting.

From Victoria Brooks' perspective, the community engagement program is coming at a good time for the District of Yarmouth. She has been its CAO since May, and a key goal of hers is to help council be good stewards of its assets. Brooks learned about AIM Network's cohort program at the 2018 Atlantic Asset Management Conference in Moncton in September, and it completely opened her eyes. She knew right away that asset management would provide council with the type of policy and structure they needed to support them in making good decisions. There are three major infrastructure projects being considered that the District would share with a couple of other municipalities – a retrofit of the ferry terminal that's used seasonally to transport tourists to and from Maine, maintenance and energy investments at the regional airport and the addition of services at the Mariner's Centre. She said that if they were to do it all they are looking at about \$100 million in upgrades.

While council sees the value of these large projects and leveraging partnerships for them, they are also aware of the local needs and wishes of the community. That means they need to find a balanced approach to meet both their large scale and micro needs. Brooks wants to be able to provide an objective way to support council in its decisions, and that means understanding what the demand and willingness to pay is for service levels. Brooks believes that at this stage if they named the key assets being debated, the community would be aware of them, but she doesn't believe that citizens have taken the time to add up the cost of what they're asking for. She wants the community to understand those costs and help the district to prioritize to avoid any skewing of the asset investment.

Brooks is fortunate to be able to share ideas with Dylan Heide, who recently moved from his position as CAO of Shelburne to become CAO of the Town of Mahone Bay (all are in the southern Nova Scotia cohort). For him the community engagement piece is the most interesting aspect of the program. When Shelburne began working on asset management, he knew that with little staff capacity it

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(Continued from page 7) would take a long time to do all the required mapping, data collection, financial analysis, etc. He saw that Shelburne had an advantage as a small community because of its closeness to the people. He wondered how they could get the public involved to inform better decisions while staff were building its asset management system. In fall 2017 Shelburne put out its first community survey to get a baseline of what the community expects in terms of services, its ratings of different asset categories, and willingness to pay for services. The input is beginning to inform council decisions and the town now publishes an annual report card. Heide says what's been surprising is that the community is more willing to invest in itself than they would have expected. He is now working to adopt similar processes in Mahone Bay.

Heide agrees with Benty that educating the community about its infrastructure is a top priority. In Shelburne he hosted a regular infrastructure tour that showed people what they had and what things cost. In Mahone Bay, he plans to develop a video that will be used for public education.

Heide says Mahone Bay has recently adopted another unique aspect of Shelburne's approach, which is to include members of the public on its asset management committee. He believes that when your town has a very

small staff, it makes more sense to integrate asset management into existing management structures. So Shelburne's asset management committee essentially acts as an advisory go-between, connecting staff, council and the community. The public members of the committee help to identify questions for surveys that matter to the community and to interpret what the quantitative data is saying; in-person community engagement sessions are also planned.

Joyce Young is the treasurer of Lockeport and one of the most important learnings she took from the first workshop was to keep in mind that their essential services are their priority. Lockeport is a tiny community of 531 people, where about 44% of the residents are over age 60. Staff and council tend to think with their hearts, so if they have a handful of people coming to them telling them they want to do something, then they want to do it. But she now sees that they've got to get the community to understand what is going on under the ground and what the big risks are to their services.

One of those big risks is climate change, which Young says is Lockeport's worst enemy. The town is located on an isthmus and the only link to the mainland is a causeway. About 13 years ago, Natural Resources Canada told them the causeway would be flooding within 50 years as a result

of storm surges and sea level rise. The impacts are happening faster than expected, and now they believe a storm could flood them out within 10 years. Fortunately, they have funding from the National Disaster Mitigation Fund to have engineers design a solution – but once designed the town will have to find a way to fund it.

Young knows that the town needs to keep the community informed and to encourage them to be part of the decision-making process. She values what she is learning about developing clear, concise communications and the importance of getting the community's input. She now believes they may need to distribute an entirely separate community newsletter about their infrastructure and asset management. The community engagement stream of the program will be helping to steer her along the way. Young was clearly thrilled with the first workshop and felt fortunate to have been able to opt into the community engagement stream when she said, "we're the lucky ones, it was an awesome opportunity and we got so much out of it."



Victoria Brooks, CAO
District of Yarmouth

Dylan Heide, CAO
Town of Shelburne

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AIM NETWORK SUPPORTS EFFORT TO INCREASE RECOGNITION OF NATURAL ASSETS IN THE CANADIAN PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTING FRAMEWORK

AIM Network was one of 33 organizations, including municipalities, non-profit organizations, academia and other regional asset management communities of practice that endorsed a recent submission to the Canadian Public Sector Accounting Board, led by the Municipal Natural Assets Initiative, to increase the recognition of natural assets in Canadian public sector accounting standards.

Currently, no public sector entity can place natural assets on its balance sheets, which means that there is no direction to municipali-

ties or standards around how to inventory or value natural assets that provide core municipal services, such as water filtration or stormwater management. This omission is becoming problematic as it is increasingly recognized that natural assets are key infrastructure that can support Canadian communities in building resilience to climate change impacts from extreme weather, and should be accounted for and managed alongside conventional, grey infrastructure. The submission provides several key recommendations, including to prioritise

the inclusion of natural assets in Canada's accounting framework and to engage stakeholders working to measure and manage natural assets so that their research, operations, and lessons learned can inform PSAB's deliberations.

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