



Municipal
Assessment
Agency Inc.

Volume 13

ASSESSMENT NEWS

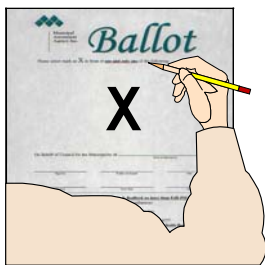
September 2002

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Mr. Gerald Thompson, Chairperson for the Nomination process, has issued a call for nominations for each of the six municipal representatives on the Agency's Board of Directors. "The selection by municipalities of their representatives on the Agency's board is an important part of the Agency's commitment to openness and transparency" said Mr. Thompson from his home in Grand Falls-Windsor. "I encourage all municipal units to participate in the governance selection process."

Nominations will be accepted at the office of the Agency's Executive Director, Sean Martin, until 5:00 PM on September 16, 2002. Ballots will be issued immediately following the close of nominations and the election period ends on October 25, 2002. Nomination forms have been forwarded to all municipal clients and additional forms may be obtained by contacting Mr. Martin at (709) 724-1532 or by email, smartin@maa.nf.ca.



MAKE YOUR MARK

Results of the election will be announced during the Agency's annual general meeting on November 1, 2002 during the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities convention in Corner Brook.

ASSESSMENT SERVICES STUDY

The Agency has contracted with the International Property Tax Institute to review the effectiveness of the present assessment service, in particular for smaller communities. Messer's Tom Johnstone and Andy Anstett will be in the province conducting a series of focus groups on September 16 and 17. The Board is hopeful that the results of the study will assist the Agency in reducing costs, while ensuring the security of locally raised revenues, particularly for smaller municipalities.

Mr. Johnstone has extensive and relevant prior experience as the CEO of the British Columbia Assessment Authority. In his recent experience on behalf of the International property Tax Institute, Mr. Johnstone has worked at the international level with various governments exploring the real property tax system and alternatives to it.

Mr. Andy Anstett has also consulted internationally with the Institute on matters of tax policy and the development of appropriate legislative tools to guide the property assessment/real property taxation processes. Mr. Anstett's background includes serving as Chair of the Manitoba Municipal Board and Ontario's Assessment Review Board.

The Board looks forward to receiving the report later this year and communicating the results to municipalities.

PILOT PROJECT PROCEEDS

In April 2002, the Municipal Assessment Agency was pleased to announce it would be mailing the 2003 assessment notices as part of a pilot project. In previous years each of the 231 municipalities served by the Agency individually mailed the notices.

The goal of the Agency is to make the mailing of assessment notices a more client friendly and cost efficient process. Some of the initiatives the project team has undertaken include a mass clean up of all addresses in the database to comply with the most up to date Canada Post Standards. This clean up is a step towards a more affordable postage rate and ensures a minimum amount of returned notices. The project team has also identified a process of pulling those notices where the address is unknown or the owner is unknown. These notices will be printed, bundled and forwarded to the municipality. A process has also been identified for eliminating the printing of notices that were normally pulled by the municipal unit, such as street intersections, valued elsewhere, etc.

The Municipal Assessment Agency reminds all municipalities to continue sending any name and address changes on a regular basis. This will ensure that the most accurate and up to date addresses are in the system when it comes time to **mail the notices on October 11, 2002**. Please ensure the Canada Post addressing standards are referred to when sending addresses to your respective assessment office for updating to the database. A copy of the Canadian Addressing Guide can be downloaded from the Canada Post website at www.canadapost.ca or can be picked up at your local post office.

“By working together the Agency and the Municipalities can ensure a more efficient notice mail out process,” said

Greg Rumbolt, Regional Manager of the Central Regional Assessment Office. A report on the addressing has been forwarded to each community for review and the committee has asked for any corrections to be forwarded by September 9, 2002 for inclusion on the 2003 roll.

Any questions on the pilot project can be directed to any of the project team members:

Team members	Telephone	Email
Greg Rumbolt	651-4460	grumbolt@maa.nf.ca
Glenn Stacey	724-1532	gstacey@maa.nf.ca
Bob Moore	724-1532	rmoore@ma.nf.ca
Andrea Kearley	724-1532	akearley@maa.nf.ca

AGENCY RECORDS SURPLUS

The Agency’s Finance Committee was pleased to report to the Board of Directors that the Agency had an operating surplus of \$74,934 for the year ended March 31, 2002.

“While the amount of the surplus is small, it is a significant improvement from the budgeted deficit \$50,000 for the year” said Finance Committee

Chairperson Dennis Kelly. Mr. Kelly presented the Committee’s report at the Board’s June 20, 2002 meeting.



Dennis Kelly

“On behalf of our clients, I thank the Committee and our staff for their diligence in containing costs during the year” said Board Chairperson Mayor Walwin Blackmore. Copies of the audited financial statements will be published later this year in the Agency’s annual report. The report will be presented at the Agency’s annual general meeting on November 1, 2002 in Corner Brook, as part of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities annual convention.

BOARD MEETS IN LABRADOR

In keeping with its policy of making the Board accessible to all clients, the Board of Directors met in L'Anse au Loup Labrador on June 20, 2002. Highlighting the meeting was the presentation of the audited financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2002. In addition to the Board meeting, both the Finance and Audit Committee and Public Relations and Policy Committee met on the evening of June 19, 2002. The Public Relations and Policy Committee also sponsored a "Meet & Greet" event with the municipalities of southern Labrador. "It is important that the members of the Board be available to all Agency clients," said Board Chairperson Mayor Walwin Blackmore.

NLFM CONVENTION

The Municipal Assessment Agency will be a sponsor of this year's Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities convention to be held in Corner Brook from October 31 – November 3, 2002. During the convention, on Friday November 1, 2002, the Agency will conduct its annual general meeting, highlighted by the announcement of the results of the election for the Agency's Board of Directors. The Board look forward to discussing the property tax system in Newfoundland and Labrador with convention attendees.

FEE STRUCTURE REVIEW

Municipalities are reminded that the Agency's Board of Directors is still open to comments on the draft report on the Agency's fee structure. A summary of the draft report is available for viewing on the Agency's website at www.maa.nf.ca/news/feereport. The Board will be reviewing the comments and will consult with municipalities on the impact of any proposed changes.

MEET THE BOARD

Mr. Gerald Thompson of Grand Falls-Windsor is one of two citizen representatives on the Agency's Board of Directors.

Mr. Thompson was born and raised in Botwood and is married to Ruth Pelley, formerly of Bishop's Falls. They have four children, Wayde, Peter, Kellie and Jim and seven grandchildren.



Gerald Thompson

Mr. Thompson is the manager for Dick's and Company Basics in Grand Falls-Windsor and is active within the business community. He is president of the Exploits Regional Chamber of Commerce and Chairman of the Exploits Valley Economic Development Corporation. Mr. Thompson is also a member of the Central Retail Advisory Committee.

Gerald is also active within the community with Memorial United Church, Masonic Lodge Northcliffe, and the Crohns and Colitis Foundation. In the past he has been actively involved with minor sports, the scouting movement, Lions, and the Royal Canadian Legion. He has been recognized with a Canadian Service Medal and the Exploits Regional Chamber of Commerce President's Award in 1998-99 and 2000-01.

When he finds a spare moment Gerald enjoys oil painting and collecting and reading Newfoundland and Labrador literature.

ORIENTATION VIDEO AVAILABLE

Municipalities are reminded that copies of "**Property Assessment: A Co-operative Approach**" an award-nominated video are available at the Agency's offices. The

video, produced by Hindsight Productions, is designed as an introduction to property assessment in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly for elected officials and municipal administrators. To obtain a copy, please contact our Business Manager, Clar Simmons at (709) 724-1532 or toll-free 1-877-777-2807 or one of our regional managers.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLAN

With the hiring of a cooperative student from Memorial's School of Business Administration, the Agency has started the development of a strategic communications plan.

Melanie Paul of Musgrave Harbour has been hired to assist with the completion of the communication plan.

"Communication involves informing clients of our activities and listening to client concerns. This plan should improve our information processes and our response to client issues," said Sean Martin, Executive Director. A draft of the plan should be available for stakeholder review early in the new year.

SALES INFORMATION IMPORTANT

The staff of the Agency are continually researching and reviewing sales information to keep abreast of changes that develop in any local market. The sales investigation process is vital as this determines the value levels in each community. All parties involved in this process play an important role.

Property owners, or their solicitor, are required by the Assessment Act, (Section 45) to notify the clerk in writing of the sale or transfer of real property within one month of the transaction. The notification is to include the particulars

of the sale. In many municipalities this information is required prior to the issuance of a tax certificate on the property. This ensures the tax account is current. This process is particularly important for the assessor as not all sales are registered and obtaining sales information on such properties can otherwise be difficult and time - consuming. The property owner has a responsibility to ensure the clerk is informed of the transfer.

Municipal staff record any transfers and forward notification to the Agency's regional office of the transaction. If a copy of the deed is enclosed with the change form, the assessor can begin the investigation of the sale. If, however, it is not forwarded or it is unclear from the change form if the property is a sale. Agency staff must crosscheck the information against the Registry of Deeds. Since it may take another month or more for a sale to be listed with the registry this delays the assessor's investigation.

The assessor investigates the sale transactions and completes the market analysis based on their findings. Since all sales are not registered, important information may not be available for the assessor to include in the sales analysis unless identified by the municipal staff. The lack of such information may cause unnecessary problems for the property owner, the municipality and the assessor.

ASSESSMENT NEWS is a publication for the clients of the Municipal Assessment Agency. Please forward any comments or suggestions to:

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