

NEWS RELEASE
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**Dickinson City Administrator Kessel Hired as Deputy Commissioner at
North Dakota Department of Commerce**

BISMARCK, N.D. - Commerce Commissioner Jay Schuler today announced the hiring of Dickinson City Administrator Shawn Kessel as deputy commissioner at the North Dakota Department of Commerce.

Kessel has served as Dickinson's city administrator since January 2009. Prior to that he spent nine years as city administrator in Wahpeton. He assumes his new role as deputy commissioner on June 11.

In Dickinson, Kessel provided leadership through the largest expansion in the city's history. During his tenure, Dickinson's population grew from around 16,000 people to more than 23,000. The city also completed numerous infrastructure projects totaling more than \$250 million and formed a new department focused on community development. Dickinson was named Best Small Town in the United States in 2013 by Livability.com. Wahpeton also received City of the Year honors from the North Dakota League of Cities during Kessel's tenure.

"We're thrilled Shawn is bringing his extensive background and expertise in community development and western North Dakota to the Department of Commerce," Schuler said. "His skills and experience will boost our efforts to diversify North Dakota's economy and achieve our Main Street Initiative goals of creating healthy, vibrant communities with smart, efficient infrastructure that can attract and retain a 21st century workforce. His impressive track record of relationship building and managing the challenges of population growth and economic swings on both sides of the state also gives him a unique perspective that will serve North Dakota citizens well."

Kessel earned a bachelor's degree in social work from Moorhead State University in 1991 and a master of business administration degree in 2004 from the University of Mary. His private-sector experience includes co-owning a residential property management firm and owning a spa/salon. He also taught business ethics as an adjunct faculty member at Dickinson State University.

"I'm excited to help the Commerce Department carry out its mission of improving the quality of life for North Dakotans by leading efforts to attract, retain and expand wealth," Kessel said. "Thanks to Commissioner Schuler for this opportunity to serve our businesses and communities across the state through the valuable programs and services offered by Commerce and its partners."

Kessel is past president of the Western Dakota Energy Association, North Dakota League of Cities and North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund.

He will succeed current Deputy Commissioner Sandy McMerty, who has accepted the job of deputy tax commissioner in the office of Tax Commissioner Ryan Rauschenberger.

"We're deeply grateful for the positive impact Sandy made during her more than 10 years of exemplary service to the Department of Commerce, and we're glad her talents will remain in state government for the benefit of all North Dakotans," Schuler said.

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