



# POLICY & LOBBYING

## Lobbying Highlights

**A**s part of the AMM's yearly lobbying process, the AMM meets with individual cabinet ministers to bring forward important municipal issues pertaining to each provincial department. At each meeting, the AMM discusses areas of key concern involving municipalities and that minister's departmental portfolio. Following are some of the concerns that the AMM highlighted during this year's ministerial meetings:

### Advanced Education & Training

The AMM met with Minister Diane McGifford on March 30. The AMM highlighted the need for local courses for level 3 and 4 training for water and wastewater operators, as well as the need for a higher intake of students to Manitoba's medical school.

*The policy papers developed for each meeting are available on the AMM web site at [www.amm.mb.ca](http://www.amm.mb.ca)*

### Conservation

The AMM raised the issue of household hazardous waste and electronic waste with Minister Stan Struthers on January 26, along with the need to clean up contaminated sites. The AMM also indicated support for the new Efficiency Manitoba agency and urged the Province to ensure that those efficiency and waste reduction programs that are working continue to have the resources needed to operate effectively.

The Manitoba Municipal Efficiency Program (MMEP) was developed to support municipal governments as they reduce operating and maintenance costs by identifying and implementing energy and water efficiency measures in their facilities. The AMM urged the Province to contribute financially to the MMEP to assist municipalities to move forward with the implementation of the recommendations.

**UPDATE:** The Province has since committed funding to the MMEP and the project is now underway.

### Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives

The AMM raised the issue of long-term options for deadstock disposal with Minister Rosann Wowchuk on April 20th and options were discussed including composting, incineration, and rendering for such things as bio-diesel. The expansion of renewable energy sources was also highlighted as a method of diversifying Manitoba's rural economy.

The AMM urged the Province to continue to work with the Federal Government to provide assistance to those impacted by the current agricultural crisis and to help ease the burden on all Manitoba communities. The AMM also urged the Provincial Government to increase support for the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI). Finally, the AMM discussed concerns that there is a need for Provincial Government representation at public hearings for environmental regulation and land use regulation to respond to inquiries.

**UPDATE:** In July, the City/RM of Dauphin received Federal/Provincial/Municipal funding for an industrial wastewater treatment facility, part of the necessary infrastructure for the operation of the Rancher's Choice Beef Co-operative. On July 15, the U.S. border reopened to live Canadian cattle.

### Culture, Heritage & Tourism

The AMM met with Minister Eric Robinson on February 24 to encourage the Province to increase funding to recreation commissions and participate in a tri-partite national recreational infrastructure program. The Community Places Program is another key resource and the AMM asked the Province for greater funding for this program.



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The AMM also raised the need for a review of The Public Libraries Act. Municipalities want to ensure that citizens can access up-to-date and technological information services through libraries, regardless of where they reside. Therefore, the AMM also urged the Province to allow for the designation of parts of municipalities to regional library districts.

**UPDATE:** The AMM will be participating in the Public Libraries Review Committee, and working with the Province to demonstrate the municipal challenges of providing library services.

## Education, Citizenship & Youth

Removing education taxes from all classes of property has been the AMM's top priority this year. A meeting with Minister Peter Bjornson on March 24 discussed the urgent need to resolve this issue. Property owners are supporting a substantial portion of education services in Manitoba, resulting in a highly inequitable system. The AMM was expecting to see further reductions in the Province's 2005 Budget, however this did not materialize. The rebate on farmland is also a concern since it is overly administrative and can be cancelled at any time. Since the Province has more resources than municipalities, it should reduce the education tax burden on property owners through a five-year strategic plan.

## Family Services & Housing

The AMM met with Minister Christine Melnick on March 30 to raise the issue of province-wide access to affordable housing. The Province should increase attention to the affordable housing needs of more communities, which could be achieved through the expansion of the Neighbourhoods Alive! Program. The AMM is concerned that this funding currently flows only to Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson, and additional funding would allow program benefits to be appreciated in other communities. Municipalities are prepared to work with other orders of government on housing issues, however, housing is a federal and provincial responsibility and funding should come primarily from these sources.

**UPDATE:** There has been an increase in housing assistance funding for several communities. Arborg, Dauphin, Morden and Woodlands all received funds for key affordable housing projects.

## Health

At a meeting with Minister Tim Sale on February 24, the AMM suggested that Regional Health Authority (RHA) boards should be elected and that a review of the RHA structure is required to achieve greater accountability and transparency. The Province must also undertake a targeted plan to attract and retain physicians and ensure that the entry process for international physicians is efficient and expedient.

The Province can also ensure local access to physicians by making medical training more accessible to Manitoba students. The Province must also take on additional fiscal responsibility for key aspects of health care, by covering the costs of the additional health services associated with West Nile virus, including surveillance and mosquito control. Manitobans are also facing additional costs when they are transported outside the local RHA to access specialized medical services. Concessions must be made for rural and remote areas that do not have local access to specialized services.

## Healthy Living & Seniors

The AMM met with Minister Theresa Oswald on June 29 to raise the need for increased funding allocations for recreational programs. The final report of the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force includes five recommendations that support improved funding for recreational facilities. The Province should act on this commitment to healthy life-styles, and allocate additional funding to recreational infrastructure.

As Minister Oswald is also the Minister responsible for Seniors, the AMM raised the need to provide programming and housing tailored to the specific needs of an aging population. The Province should increase the resources available to seniors independent living programs and seniors housing initiatives.

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### Industry, Economic Development and Mines

The AMM met with Minister Jim Rondeau on January 18 to highlight the importance of supporting Manitoba's mining industry through programs such as the Mineral Exploration Assistance Program and the Manitoba Prospectors Assistance Program, and also the need to clean-up the numerous contaminated sites across Manitoba. The Province needs to commit to the Petroleum Site Remediation Initiative (PSRI) to facilitate the clean-up of abandoned petroleum tanks.

The AMM also raised the importance of continuing investments in increasing Manitoba's slaughter capacity, such as in the Rancher's Choice slaughter facility, and developing a long-term strategy.

### Justice

On February 21, the AMM met with Minister Gord Mackintosh to raise concerns with the increasing cost of police services. Municipal budgets cannot cover the increasing RCMP salaries along with the additional costs of police services. The Province should commit additional funding to police services to ensure access to effective safety and crime prevention services.

The AMM also raised concerns with municipal by-law enforcement. Municipalities should gain the authority to hire contractors to enforce municipal by-laws. The

Province is working with municipalities to address alternative by-law enforcement and the AMM is supportive of this process.

A further issue is the task of providing court security and transporting prisoners to and from court. An alternative to RCMP escorts is for Manitoba Sheriff Services to perform this duty in all municipalities. This would concentrate RCMP resources on other municipal priorities and the Province should support this change.

**UPDATE:** The RCMP released the 'D'- Direction Report, which articulates a plan for strategic changes to policing in Manitoba. Implementation should be complete in the spring of 2006 and the AMM will be tracking the effectiveness of RCMP service adjustments.

### Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation

As Minister Mackintosh is also charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act, the AMM raised the issue of inadequate compensation rates for municipal fire departments responding to vehicle fires and accidents. The Province must establish a fair rate of compensation so that municipal fire departments do not absorb the costs of responding to road emergencies. The AMM also urged the Province to re-establish the appeals committee and ensure openness and accountability for compensation claims.

**UPDATE:** The appeals committee has since met to discuss claims.

### Labour & Immigration

Minister Nancy Allan met with the AMM on February 7 to discuss several longstanding issues. The AMM raised the need for the Province to absorb the costs associated with water bombers when required by municipalities. As well, the AMM highlighted two major issues with The Workers Compensation Act and its treatment of volunteer firefighters. Further concerns included the need for MPIC policies to recognize the Province's expectation that municipal fire departments provide traffic control. This additional role should be



*The Province agreed to cover water bomber costs for municipalities.*



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incorporated into MPIC compensation rates for responding to motor vehicle accidents. Additionally, there is concern for fires on Crown lands since revenue generated by the Crown land cannot cover the municipal costs associated with firefighting.

**UPDATE:** The Province agreed to cover water bomber costs for municipalities. The review of The Workers Compensation Act was also completed. Provincial legislation now allows workers to obtain additional insurance to cover the remaining 10 per cent of net income, without a reduction in Workers Compensation benefits. The legislation also recognizes that volunteer firefighters often respond to the same number of incidents as their full-time counterparts and appropriate changes to provisions for collateral benefits and occupational diseases are now in place.

### Transportation and Government Services

The AMM met with Minister Ron Lemieux on January 26 to discuss transportation-related concerns. Of importance was the need to produce the final Vision 2020 report and for the Province to take action once the plan is in place. The AMM also raised the importance of reinstating the Manitoba Airport Capital Assistance Program (MACAP). The cancellation of the Bridge Co-operative Program is another concern that was raised.

The AMM discussed the need to adequately address Manitoba's increasing transportation infrastructure deficit, estimated at \$3.4 billion. A related concern is that funding that has been allocated to this Department for highway construction and repair is being returned to general revenues at the end of each year if it is unused. The AMM proposed that this money should be used in the year allocated or held over to the following construction season. The final concern discussed was the need for sufficient funding for highway repairs in urban centers.

**UPDATE:** The Vision 2020 Report has been released and the AMM recently highlighted our concerns with the Report to the Province.

### Water Stewardship

Minister Steve Ashton met with the AMM on the 25th of January to discuss water-related issues. Concerns with the Water Protection Act legislation were highlighted, notably the lack of specificity in how the legislated ideas and requirements will be implemented and the financial underpinnings of these changes. The AMM pressed the issue of not downloading the financial responsibilities to municipalities.

The AMM also raised the need for increased funding for Manitoba's growing number of conservation districts, and the need to increase funding and staffing to address drainage issues. Drainage is a key component of the Manitoba Water Strategy. As was demonstrated across the province last summer, an inefficient drainage system can have devastating impacts.

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The AMM also raised concerns with the certification of water and waste water plant operators. The deadline of September, 2006 for certification has been an issue as the Province does not have the staff or programming in place to train and certify operators. Additionally, the AMM raised the concern with the costs for the course fees and the additional examination fee.

The final issue raised was with the Drinking Water Safety regulations, and the AMM stressed that costs and responsibilities should not be downloaded to municipalities.

**UPDATE:** Since this meeting, the Water Protection Act has been passed and the regulation concerning the Water Quality Management Zones has been proposed.

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## OTHER DEPARTMENTS

### Intergovernmental Affairs & Trade

The AMM traditionally has had a close working relationship with the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs and meets with the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade on a regular basis. This year saw a new Minister in that portfolio, Scott Smith, and the AMM had the opportunity to meet with him on a couple of occasions to raise several important municipal issues including:

- 1 The Removal of Education Tax From Property
- 2 Federal New Deal for Municipalities
- 3 Planning Act
- 4 The new Building Manitoba Fund
- 5 Transfer Payments to municipalities
- 6 Neighbourhoods Alive! Program

With Scott Smith also being the Minister responsible for emergency measures, the AMM has had the opportunity to raise Disaster Financial Assistance Funding, and general issues with him.

## Finance

On January 26, 2005 the AMM presented its annual budget submission to Minister of Finance Greg Selinger. The AMM focussed on its major issues during the meeting, including the need to remove education funding from property, water related issues, and the cancellation of several important programs such as the Manitoba Airport Capital Assistance Program and the Bridge Co-operative Program.

**UPDATE:** On Budget Day 2005, the AMM was disappointed that there were no further reductions in education taxes on property beyond those already announced. The AMM was also disappointed that there was no increase in funding for the Community Places Program, or for environmental enforcement officers for new planning and water legislation.

The AMM was pleased, however, to see a \$2.5 million increase to Water Stewardship initiatives, a \$6.8 million increase for the REDI grant program, an additional \$16 million in the highways capital budget, increased library grants, a commitment to more medical school spaces and 40 new police officers.

*The AMM often meets with various other groups and organizations to discuss areas of shared concern. Some of the organizations the AMM met with last year include:*



*Manitoba Hydro President Bob Brennan  
with AMM President Ron Bell*

- Manitoba Hydro
- Manitoba Telecom Services
- RCMP
- Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce
- Southern Chiefs Organization
- Keystone Agricultural Producers
- Manitoba Fire Chiefs
- Manitoba Association of School Trustees
- Manitoba Conservation Districts Association



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**T**wo major issues were raised at each provincial minister meeting this year — land use and water resource planning and education funding. A third issue, a Federal New Deal for municipalities, was a main focus of the AMM's federal lobbying for 2004/05.

## Land use and water resource planning

Planning issues were at the forefront over the past year with an extensive review of *The Planning Act* and ongoing work on new water legislation for Manitoba. Land use and water resource planning are very important for municipalities since each has wide-ranging impacts on the way municipalities function and the development that occurs within their boundaries. Both types of planning ensure that municipalities are implementing a long-term approach and considering the impacts of current actions on the future of their communities.

After the Provincial Government decided not to proceed with Bill 40 in November of 2004, there was a renewed focus on the Planning Law Review. The Technical Advisory Committee reconvened in December 2004 to continue the review of *The Planning Act*. Through representation on this committee, the AMM sought to ensure that significant authority remained at the local level and that municipal councils maintained the final say on land use planning decisions. When Bill 33: *The Planning Act* was introduced in April of 2005, the AMM was satisfied with many aspects of the legislation, including the retention of the conditional use process for livestock operations. The key outstanding issue is that the Provincial Government must establish a presence at public hearings to discuss pertinent environmental regulations.

At the same time, the Provincial Government was working on a highly interconnected piece of legislation: *The Water Protection Act*. Much of the existing concern for this legislation is due to the lack of detail regarding how it will be implemented. A movement toward watershed based planning represents a significant change and this will certainly impact municipalities. However, the extent of this impact remains unclear. The regulations are just beginning to be developed with the

*A movement towards watershed-based planning represents a significant change and this will certainly impact municipalities.*

establishment of Water Quality Management Zones and the AMM intends to continue actively participating in the consultation process to raise municipal concerns. Although there is widespread support for protecting Manitoba's water supply, the manner in which this is accomplished could have a substantial impact on municipal resources.

Along with several active resolutions on both water and land use planning, the AMM decided to initiate further discussion on these issues at the 2005 Mayors, Reeves and CAOs meetings. Throughout these sessions, municipalities consistently raised the need for Provincial Government representation at public hearings and the need to clarify aspects of *The Water Protection Act*.

Based on this feedback, the AMM will continue to push for greater representation from Department of Conservation staff at public hearings to discuss environmental regulations. In addition, as regulations for *The Water Protection Act* are refined, the AMM will work to clarify what will be expected of municipalities.

## Education Funding from Property

Education funding remained the number one concern for municipalities in 2005, as the current model of taxation is not sustainable and a new taxation model is needed. The AMM was pleased to see the Province recognize the importance of this issue with the 33% reduction in farmland property taxes in 2004, a further reduction to 50% in 2005, and a \$30 million reduction in the Education Special Levy (ESL). However,

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further action is required since municipal property taxes should be used to fund strictly municipal services, and a complete removal of education funding from all property classes is needed.

The AMM strongly supports the need for high quality education in all areas of the Province, yet maintains that other sources of Provincial revenue are more appropriate than property taxation to fund education. While every citizen should contribute to education funding, this does not occur under the current regressive system of property taxation.

The AMM believes relief is needed on all property classes, as at present, there is an unfair reliance on property owners to fund an education system that contributes so much to the prosperity of Manitoba. The AMM will continue to urge the Provincial Government to create a 5-year plan that results in the total removal of education tax from all classes of property.

### A New Deal for Municipalities

The AMM was pleased with the Federal Government's February, 2005 announcement outlining the details of the New Deal funding for municipalities.

The focus for the remainder of the AMM's fiscal year was working with the Provincial Government and other stakeholders to finalize a New Deal agreement for Manitoba. AMM's priority was to get the \$167.3 million allotted for Manitoba out to communities in the most efficient manner possible over the next five years. The AMM has always advocated a per capita method of distribution, which would see all Manitoba municipalities share equally in the funding based on population.

Since the announcement, the majority of Canadian provinces have signed agreements to get their share of the funding flowing. At time of printing, Manitoba had not yet signed an agreement.

*As the issue of education tax on property continued to gain momentum for AMM members, the need to communicate that issue to Manitoba citizens also increased. To that end, the AMM Board of Directors drafted a letter explaining the education tax issue. AMM encouraged member municipalities to send this letter to their citizens, either on its own or in their 2005 tax bill. The goal was to inform and educate Manitobans about the issue, as well as suggest ways they too can lobby the Provincial Government to work toward a solution.*

*Along with the letter, the AMM prepared a template to help members illustrate the percentage of education tax their residents are paying on their property tax bill. AMM explained that showing the tax breakdown visually in this way is likely to be more easily understood by residents and will help them to better understand the significance of the education tax portion of their tax bill.*

*Many AMM members used these materials to communicate the education tax issue to their residents. To increase the reach of this message even further, the AMM also ran the letter as an advertisement in the Brandon Sun (July 15/05) and, with support from the City of Winnipeg, in the Winnipeg Free Press (July 16/05).*

### Ticketer proclaims needs of disabled



#### Education Taxation on Property: An Issue for Everyone

Dear Citizen:  
We write to you today to draw your attention to an issue that affects every property owner in the Province of Manitoba - education funding. For several years, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM), acting on a resolution brought forward by the City of Winnipeg, has urged the Provincial Government to remove the education tax from property. There has been some positive action from the Provincial Government, but more is needed. We have asked for a Provincial five-year plan to address this issue. Why are we so concerned with the overburdening of property tax to fund education? Because:

1. The current system of charging tax on property for education is unfair and unsustainable.
2. Property taxation should be collected only for municipal services, and
3. Education has no relationship with property ownership.

As you review your 2005 property tax bill, you will note the portion of your property taxes that go to fund education. While municipalities must collect education taxes, they have no decision-making power on setting the rates. This decision is made by the province and by your local school division. The AMM is not advocating for a reduction in the quality of education in Manitoba, quite the opposite. We would like to see the education system improved. High quality education is essential to all members of society and for the benefit of the province as a whole. On this principle the Province of Manitoba must assume greater responsibility for funding education through sources other than taxes on property. Helping our property taxes to fund an ever-increasing percentage of education is unfair.

If you agree that it is time to remove the education tax off all property and to change the current system to one that is fair and equitable to all citizens, then we encourage you to take action. Make your opinion known by contacting your local MLA and writing to the Minister of Education, The Honourable Fred Steyn at 104 Legislative Building, 450 Broadway, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R4C 1V6. The AMM will continue to petition the Provincial Government to change the current system of funding education and implement a system that is fair to everyone. Your support in these efforts is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,  
Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM)



#### Volunteers

The AMM is looking for volunteers to help with our education tax issue. If you are interested in helping us, please contact us at 1-800-388-2222 or visit our website at www.amm.mb.ca. We would love to have you on board!

AMM Education Tax Ad,  
Winnipeg Free Press — July 16, 2005

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## Lobby Days — April 19 & 20, 2005

The AMM has a mutually respectful relationship with government and is in a unique position to have the opportunity to meet with each Provincial Cabinet Minister individually each year as well as the Premier and the entire Cabinet. Not only are top departmental issues raised at each meeting, but general issues also, such as the need to remove education funding from property. While the AMM is confident that the Provincial Cabinet is aware of top municipal issues, government is more than just Cabinet and this is why the AMM undertook a new initiative this year — Lobby Days. Following an initiative developed by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the AMM set up meetings with the ‘backbench’ Members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly to raise three top municipal issues. The issues were *the need to remove education funding from property, water and land use planning, and the New Deal for municipalities.*

During Lobby Days the AMM met with every Conservative and Liberal MLA individually and with both the NDP Rural and Northern Caucus and Winnipeg Caucus. The AMM was pleased to hear that many on Broadway agreed that education funding needs to be removed from property, as this has been a top issue for the AMM for several years. There is no doubt that everyone in the Legislature now knows the AMM’s position on this issue.

*“...many on Broadway agreed that education funding needs to be removed from property.”*

It was also important to provide a municipal perspective to the MLAs on the issues surrounding planning in Manitoba. With revisions to the Planning Act introduced this legislative session, and the Water Protection Act still under debate at the time of the meetings, it was crucial for MLAs to understand the implications this legislation will have on municipalities and the need to ensure responsibilities, especially financial responsibilities, are not downloaded to municipalities.

The AMM also took the opportunity to clarify our position on the Federal New Deal and the need to get the funding out to municipalities quickly. The AMM was pleased to hear near unanimous support for a per capita distribution formula for Manitoba’s share of the New Deal for municipalities.

There is no doubt that Lobby Days was a success. The AMM will not only be looking at ways to improve the process for next year, but also for other new and innovative ways to ensure the municipal agenda is known by all in government.

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*Members of the AMM Board of Directors talk with Stuart Murray, Leader of the Official Opposition*



*AMM Board of Directors meet with the NDP caucus during 2005 Lobby Days*

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## Flood Damage Meetings — August 12-22, 2005

In late summer, 2005, the AMM made the decision to hold a series of regional meetings across the province to help gauge the extent of the damages from this year's extraordinary spring and summer flooding. These wet conditions have had a very real and serious impact on many communities in the province and the AMM felt it was necessary to hear first hand from community leaders what is needed to help.

There are a number of permanent provincial and federal programs in place to deal with wet conditions, and the AMM wanted to hear how well these were working and if gaps existed between what these programs are willing to cover and what is really needed this year.

The meetings were held in five different areas of the province, all of which were greatly impacted by the wet conditions:

**Aug. 12, 2005 — Hamiota**

**Aug. 12, 2005 — Deloraine**

**Aug. 18, 2005 — Lockport**

**Aug. 22, 2005 — Elie**

**Aug. 22, 2005 — Letellier**

The AMM also held a conference call with the Council from the RM of Kelsey in Northern Manitoba, to hear the concerns in that region.



*AMM Regional Flood Meeting,  
Hamiota, Manitoba*



*Head table at the Elie Regional Flood Meeting.  
L. to R.: Joe Masi, AMM; Ron Bell, AMM; David Rolfe, KAP;  
Garry Wasylowski, AMM; Doug Dobrowolski, AMM;  
and Rick Martel, AMM.*

Feedback was obtained during the meetings on several specific topics: Agriculture, Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA), Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), and Water Related Issues.

The AMM prepared a report upon completion of the meetings, entitled "Report on Flooding and Wet Conditions in Manitoba." This report included recommendations and was forwarded to both the Provincial and Federal Governments. It is available on the AMM web site at:

[WWW.AMM.MB.CA](http://WWW.AMM.MB.CA)

*The AMM thanks Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP) and several local MLAs for finding the time in this difficult year to attend each of these meetings to hear about the needs of Manitobans.*