

***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:

## Aboriginal & Northern Affairs

*The AMM met with Minister Oscar Lathlin on September 11. Highlights included:*

Delays in the treaty land entitlement (TLE) process are costly and greater incentives are required to ease the negotiation process. The TLE process in Saskatchewan offers valuable insight regarding appropriate incentives and systems to support the selection and conversion of land.

A review of the current TLE compensation structure should consider Saskatchewan's system in order to seek alternative ways of enhancing Manitoba's TLE process.

Projects to address the high cost of healthy food and promote local food production in northern communities are underway as part of the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative. However, there is a need to improve affordability of milk products. The mandate of the Manitoba Milk Prices Review Commission should be expanded to include northern communities.

***Update:*** *There are currently 6 TLEs in process and the Province will be working on them one by one. The proposed Bill 32 – The Real Property Amendment Act that was not passed last session will be reintroduced in the fall session.*

## Advanced Education & Training

*The AMM met with Minister Diane McGifford on September 11. Highlights included:*

September 1, 2006 marks the deadline for certification of water and wastewater operators. As of this date all new employees must be appropriately certified.

Courses for Level III and IV certification are only available by correspondence or by traveling out of province. Training opportunities should be available in Manitoba in order to facilitate compliance with new Provincial requirements.

With Manitoba's commitment to expanding wind energy capacity, there is an opportunity to train local people to build new facilities and perform regular maintenance. Much of this skilled labour is imported and the Province should promote the development of a local skilled labour force.

***Update:*** *The Province recognizes the need in both of these areas and is working to provide local training opportunities.*

## Agriculture, Food & Rural Initiatives

*The AMM met with Minister Rosann Wowchuk on February 22. Highlights included:*

Flooding in 2005 highlighted the need for enhanced disaster financial assistance in Manitoba. There is a need for disaster assistance to fund permanent preventive measures, rather than exclusively focusing on temporary, ad hoc initiatives.

Economic development is an important priority that requires a coordinated Provincial strategy. The Province must ensure that funding mechanisms are responsive to a range of local priorities and initiatives.

New legislation regarding land and water resource planning must be coordinated to ensure consistency across Provincial departments. Improved clarity and the enhanced use of scientific principles will increase the effectiveness of the legislation.

The new regulations must not depend on municipal governments for financing and the Province should ensure that resources are available to meet increased responsibilities.

All affected Provincial Departments, municipalities and agencies need to work together to develop a coordinated approach to effectively control weeds at the source. The Province should provide the resources to manage this important undertaking.

**Update:** AMM held an information session on economic development at the 2006 Municipal Officials Seminar to highlight the types of initiatives that occur throughout Manitoba.

## Manitoba Conservation

### **The AMM met with Minister Stan Struthers on January 25. Highlights included:**

Green Manitoba Eco Solutions (GMES) must obtain sufficient Provincial funding to maintain the 80:20 funding ratio. Permanent recycling programs for household hazardous waste and electronic waste must be established.

Training opportunities must be available within Manitoba for all water and wastewater operator levels to ensure that appropriate personnel can be hired locally.

The Province should allocate resources to coordinate the efforts of various Departments, municipalities and agencies to control weeds at the source.

The Province should review the taxation of park residences and impose taxation whereby municipalities are adequately compensated for services used by permanent park residents.

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

**Update:** GMES has put forward regulatory changes to improve tire recycling, with blue box, electronic waste and household hazardous waste to follow. The Province has committed to maintaining the 80:20 funding ratio under GMES and consulting with municipalities as new regulations are developed.

The chief place of residency fee increased by \$100 in the 2006 Budget. The Province is reviewing the fee system for provincial parks to ensure that it is responsive to the interests of all stakeholders.

## Culture, Heritage & Tourism

The AMM met with Minister Eric Robinson on January 25. Highlights included:

The Province should promote recreation by enhancing funding for the Community Places Program, increasing funding to recreation commissions and advancing a tri-partite national recreation infrastructure program.

Public libraries require increased financial support and the Province should reduce the reliance on per capita funding mechanisms.

Further options for joining regional libraries should be considered, such as allowing the designation of parts of municipalities to regional library districts.

The Province should establish a trust fund for the ongoing maintenance of the Trans-Canada Trail in Manitoba.

**Update:** The Public Libraries Review Committee submitted its final report to Minister Robinson, recommending reviewing funding mechanisms and allowing the designation of parts of municipalities to regional library districts. As well, the Province allocated \$1 million to assist the Manitoba Recreational Trails Association with the construction of the Trans Canada Trail.

## Education, Citizenship & Youth

*The AMM met with Minister Peter Bjornson on February 15. Highlights included:*

Property taxes are an inappropriate mechanism to raise funds for education. The Province has been moving in the right direction by eliminating the residential Education Support Levy (ESL) and providing a 60 per cent rebate for farmland. However, further movement is required since there has been no change to education taxation on commercial property and the Province still relies heavily on property taxation to fund education.

The Province has committed to further changes to education funding mechanisms and municipalities are anticipating these changes in the next Provincial Budget. A long-term plan is required to shift education funding away from property taxation.

## Energy, Science & Technology

*The AMM met with Minister David Chomiak on June 8. Highlights included:*

The Province must engage in meaningful consultation with municipalities during the drafting of regulations and throughout the ongoing activities of Green Manitoba Eco Solutions.

Further investments in ethanol and biodiesel facilities are required across Manitoba to promote clean energy alternatives and local economic development.

Along with environmental benefits, wind energy also provides opportunities for economic benefits for Provincial and municipal governments. The Province should expand efforts to stimulate growth in Manitoba's wind energy sector.

Extension of cellular coverage should be addressed by governments working with private industry to meet the needs of Manitobans. The Province should adopt a more prominent role in the expansion of cellular service to remote areas.

**Update:** Wind energy projects will move forward as the Province releases a Request for Proposals for another 300 megawatts. New projects should begin in 2007-08.

*In addition, biodiesel incentives have been enhanced as the Province will no longer collect the 11.5 cents per litre fuel tax on 100 per cent biodiesel.*



**Wind energy projects will move forward in 2007-08.**

## Family Services & Housing

*The AMM met with Minister Christine Melnick on February 7. Highlights included:*

There is a need for greater accessibility to affordable housing programs for all communities. Economic development and neighbourhood revitalization programs, such as the Neighbourhoods Alive! program, should be available in more communities, while maintaining the level of funding available to Winnipeg, Brandon, and Thompson.

**Update:** Several rural communities received funding for affordable housing projects under the Canada-Manitoba Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI) including Steinbach, Ste. Anne, Dauphin, Woodlands, Arborg, Morden and The Pas.

## Health

*The AMM met with Minister Tim Sale on January 31. Highlights included:*

The effective delivery of health care services is paramount to community sustainability, but Regional Health Authorities (RHA) are falling short since they do not respond to local community needs. The Province should review the RHA structure in order to achieve greater accountability and transparency and to allow the election of RHA boards.

Greater resources must be allocated to ensure Manitobans have local access to physicians. The Province should address physician shortages by providing additional support for locally trained students, facilitating the recruitment of international medical graduates, and contributing to retention strategies to keep physicians in Manitoba.

As a public health concern, the Province should take a proactive stance on West Nile virus prevention and absorb all related surveillance and mosquito control costs.

The Province should fully fund the ambulance costs of inter-facility patient transfers across RHA boundaries.

The Province should work with municipalities to prepare for a pandemic influenza and to establish effective response mechanisms.

**Update:** 101 students started in the 2006-07 class at the University of Manitoba medical school, making this the largest class in 30 years.

## Industry, Economic Development & Mines

*The AMM met with Minister Jim Rondeau on February 15. Highlights included:*

The Province should review the 4.4-cent per tonne aggregate mining fee in order to provide municipalities with sufficient funding to address

the infrastructure challenges created by mining operations.

Future leases for gravel pit operators should include a requirement to pay property taxes, since municipalities are inadequately compensated for the current use of municipal infrastructure by operators.

There are significant health and environmental risks associated with orphaned and abandoned mine sites and the Province must commit greater resources to the timely remediation of these hazardous locations.

**Update:** The AMM is represented on a committee to review the aggregate mining fees and make recommendations on enhancing this fee structure.

## Justice

*The AMM met with Minister Gord Mackintosh on February 7. Highlights included:*

The Province should commit additional resources to police services throughout Manitoba to ensure that all communities have sufficient access to safety and crime prevention services.

Efforts to reduce youth crime should include lobbying for a federal review of *The Youth Criminal Justice Act* to deal more effectively with offenders and repeat offenders as well as to address the regional diversity of Manitoba's municipalities.

The Province should restrict the re-issuance of driver's licenses pending the payment of outstanding parking and traffic violation fines.

### Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation

Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation should provide full compensation when municipal fire departments respond to motor vehicle accidents. Compensation mechanisms should also cover traffic control services performed by firefighters.

**Update:** Acting on the resolutions passed by the membership, the AMM has been working with the Province and those municipalities most directly impacted by unpaid parking violations to find a way to allow municipalities to hold driver's licenses until parking offences are paid. The Province has been willing to review this issue and we expect to have it resolved in the near future.

As of January 2006, MPIC compensation rates increased to \$600 per incident for basic calls and to \$800 per incident for complex calls.

## Labour & Immigration

The AMM met with Minister Nancy Allan on February 15. Highlights included:

The Province should ensure that additional fire inspections are not downloaded to municipal fire departments.

Mutual aid districts require additional resources to provide appropriate training to all personnel.

All Manitobans should have access to 911 services, therefore the Province should adequately staff the Medical Transportation Coordination Centre and enact mandatory 911 legislation for all municipalities.

AMM also raised the issue of compensation for municipal fire departments responding to motor vehicle accidents and the inclusion of traffic control in the compensation rates.

**Update:** The Province passed Bill 30 – The Fires Prevention and Emergency Response Act .

## Transportation

The AMM met with Minister Ron Lemieux on April 25. Highlights included:

Increased infrastructure investment is one of the greatest needs in Manitoba and the Province must commit to a long-term plan with sustained funding to address the increasing transportation infrastructure deficit.

The discontinuation of the Bridge Cooperative Program and the Manitoba Airport Capital Assistance Program had a profound impact on many small communities. The Province should reinstate both of these crucial programs.

The Province should establish a coordinated approach for municipalities and departments to control weed growth along Provincial roads and in ditches to minimize the spread of noxious weeds.

**Update:** The Province increased its investment in highways to \$257 million in the 2006 Budget.



**Increased infrastructure investment is one of the greatest needs in Manitoba.**

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

## Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade

One of the most important provincial departments for municipalities is the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade. Because of this the AMM tries to meet on a more regular basis with the Minister to highlight key municipal issues. This year the AMM raised several key issues with Minister Scott Smith, including:

- *Federal New Deal for Municipalities*
- *New Accounting Standards for Municipalities*
- *The Municipal Agenda*
- *Changes to the Disaster Financial Assistance System*
- *Minister Meetings at AMM Convention*

The AMM will continue to keep a close relationship with this Department as it is imperative that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade has a keen understanding of both emerging and long-standing municipal issues.

***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:***

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

## Finance

The AMM met with the Minister of Finance, Greg Selinger, on February 14th, to highlight some of the key priority areas for municipalities. These included water issues and the need for increased funding for policing, recycling, and disaster financial assistance.

Other issues discussed were health, recreation funding, and the Manitoba Airport Capital Assistance Program and Bridge Co-Operative Program.

Budget Day, March 6, 2006, saw the elimination of the education support levy (ESL), and an increase to the farmland tax rebate to 60%. There was also a commitment to further reductions in upcoming budgets.

### ***The Building Manitoba Fund increased by 6% overall in Budget 2006.***

The Building Manitoba Fund increased by 6% overall. The total increase of \$7.9M includes \$3.4M for rural

Manitoba and \$4.5M for Winnipeg. \$1.7M of the rural increase was earmarked for a new Recreation Centre and Library Infrastructure Fund, with a further commitment of \$5.3M next year.

On water issues, while the drainage budget doubled from \$1.9M to \$3.8M, the AMM was disappointed that there was to be no increase in dedicated funding for the development of Integrated Water Management Plans (IWMPs).



## A New Deal for Manitoba

On November 18th, 2005 the Province of Manitoba and the Government of Canada signed an agreement on the transfer of federal gas tax revenues under the New Deal for Cities and Communities. All municipalities have signed their funding agreements and received their first payments. A total of \$167.3 million will be invested in cities and communities across Manitoba over five years by the Government of Canada through its commitment to share gas tax revenues.

Municipalities may use their gas tax funds for environmentally-sustainable municipal infrastructure projects. Eligible project categories include roads and bridges, water and sewer facilities, solid-waste management, public transit, community energy systems and municipal capacity building. Decisions on how these funds are invested will be made locally in a way that responds to the infrastructure needs of each community and results in environmental benefits such as clearer air, cleaner water and reduced greenhouse gas emissions for all Manitobans.

The Province of Manitoba is administering the federal gas tax funds made available under these agreements on behalf of Canada including making payments to individual municipalities and communities.

## The Municipal Agenda

Manitoba's municipal governments continue to take on greater responsibilities. The AMM feels it is necessary that the roles, responsibilities and resources of municipal government be examined. Some options to support municipal governments in serving their communities effectively are reducing education tax from property and exempting municipal governments from the Provincial Sales Tax. Throughout the year, the AMM urged the Province to work with municipalities to seriously examine the roles, responsibilities and resources of municipal governments in Manitoba.

The AMM has taken a close look at this issue. In response to the AMM Board's strategic planning session, at this year's Mayors, Reeves and CAOs meetings the AMM sought feedback from the membership on key issues surrounding the roles, responsibilities and resources of municipal governments in Manitoba.

A report was compiled and was the focus of President Bell's presentation at the June District Meetings. The report found that there is a real need to take a serious, meaningful look of the roles, responsibilities and resources of municipal government in this province to maximize resources and ensure the best delivery of service while dealing with the growing infrastructure deficit.

This report also provided a starting point for all municipal associations from across Canada, including the AMM, to commission a major study looking at this very issue. This study will provide a detailed examination of the relationships between municipalities and their respective provincial governments across Canada. We anticipate the final report in April of 2007, and hope its findings further open the door to a realignment of fiscal responsibilities amongst governments.

### ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESOURCES OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IN MANITOBA

*Final Breakout Report*



June, 2006



# Policy & Lobbying

**W**ater – the very word sets off a fury of emotions for elected officials. While it is the ‘essence of life’, ‘nature’s hidden treasure’, ‘nature’s magician’ or any other catch phrase of the week, water is a critical issue for municipalities. Municipal officials are proud to be leaders in water conservation and protection efforts, but at the same time there is trepidation with some of the emerging regulations and growing expectations.

The AMM has spent much of the last year working on key municipal water issues and in April presented the Province with the AMM Water Issues Paper. Highlighting six principal issues, the paper provides a synopsis of the most pressing areas in need of attention and clarification.

The first issue highlighted is the need for meaningful stakeholder input into the development of the provincial water policy. There is no doubt that municipalities and conservation districts will be key partners in the implementation of any plan, so it is imperative that they are consulted throughout the process. The expectation is for meaningful consultation beyond simply sharing the plan with municipalities once it is developed internally.

The second issue is the need for a long-term plan that municipalities and CDs can work in conjunction with in order to meet mutually beneficial objectives. The success of the entire water management system rests on this plan, so it is critical that it is developed quickly in conjunction with municipalities and CDs.



**Water – the very word sets off a fury of emotions for elected officials.**

The third issue is the financial costs of water initiatives. Municipalities cannot be seen as the funding agencies for Provincial water objectives and it is essential that the financial implications of these policies be considered during development. Municipal budgets are stretched too thin, and no matter how effective a plan may be it will be useless unless it can be implemented.

The fourth issue is Integrated Watershed Management Plans (IWMP) and the need to address those groups that are not part of conservation districts, including crown lands, First Nations and non-participating municipalities. Watersheds are certainly the most logical basis for

water planning, however conservation districts are not based on watersheds so this discrepancy needs to be taken into consideration.

The final two issues highlighted in the paper is the need to update the antiquated Conservation Districts Act and the need for realistic timelines for the implementation of these requirements.

The AMM will continue to push for the resolution of these issues in order to ensure that municipalities have input into Manitoba’s water vision and that the end vision is reflective of the needs of municipalities and the realities they face.

The AMM looks forward to the Department’s formal response to the issues identified in the paper.

## Lobby Days—April 11 & 12

On April 11 & 12, 2006, the AMM organized the 2nd annual Lobby Days at the Manitoba Legislature. This year, the AMM met with the NDP caucus as a group, and individually with Conservative and Liberal MLAs. Three topics were raised at each meeting: The Municipal Agenda, Education Tax, and Water Issues.

**Municipal Agenda** The AMM introduced this topic by explaining that as Manitoba's municipal governments continue to take on increasingly greater responsibilities, it is necessary that the roles, responsibilities and resources of municipal government be examined.

There was recognition of the challenges all municipal governments face. The need for funding to flow to municipalities to meet the huge infrastructure challenges was also well understood by all parties.

***The need for funding to flow to municipalities to meet the huge infrastructure challenges was also well understood by all parties.***

**Education Tax** The AMM explained that education taxation will remain a priority until the reliance on local property taxation to fund education is reduced. The AMM expressed appreciation for the



**Hugh McFadyen, Leader of the Official Opposition, and AMM Central Rural Director Doug Dobrowolski**

valuable first steps that the Provincial Government has taken to address this issue by reducing education taxes on certain classes of property. However, reductions in education tax should be available to all property owners.

The AMM also stressed that municipalities are committed to supporting high quality education and do not advocate an overall reduction in education spending.

The AMM continues to urge the Provincial Government to create a comprehensive five-year strategy to increase its share of funding for education, thereby reducing the current reliance on property taxes.

All parties agreed that education tax is still a major issue.

**Water Issues** Municipalities are supportive of water protection efforts, however there are a number of outstanding issues that need to be addressed. These issues were presented during Lobby Days and are also contained within a recent Water Issues Paper (see p. 18). The AMM urged the Province to address the issues raised to make Manitoba's water protection initiatives a success.



**The Honourable Rosann Wowchuk with AMM Parklands Urban Director Rene Maillard**