

POLICY & LOBBYING

LOBBYING HIGHLIGHTS—FEDERAL

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TASKS FOR THE AMM EACH YEAR IS TO GET KEY MUNICIPAL ISSUES ON THE PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL RADAR. TO ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL, THE AMM USES A VARIETY OF METHODS AND TOOLS, INCLUDING MEETING WITH MINISTERS AND OTHER ELECTED OFFICIALS, COMMENTING DURING REVIEWS OF LEGISLATION OR ON PROPOSED DIRECTIONS, AS WELL AS MEETING WITH OTHER KEY STAKEHOLDER GROUPS.

FEDERAL BUDGET CONSULTATION

The Federal Budget Consultation session in Portage la Prairie was held on October 6, 2006. The AMM presented to the Finance Committee its areas of concern including fiscal balance, infrastructure programming and disaster financial assistance.

The AMM urged the Federal Government to engage provincial/territorial and municipal governments in a review of the roles, responsibilities and resources of all Canadian municipal governments. Lobbying efforts also focused on the need for increased resources through the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Program (MRIF), the Prairie Grain Roads Program (PGRP), the National Water Supply Expansion Program (NWSEP), and to develop a tripartite program for recreation infrastructure funding. The AMM also urged the Federal Government to allocate funding for a national early warning system for severe weather events, maintain levels of funding for disaster financial assistance, and raise the compensation rates for the use of municipal equipment and labour in disaster recovery efforts.

Federal Budget Day, March 19, 2007, saw the government's intention to take a fair and principled approach to fiscal balance. This included making support for provinces and territories long term, predictable and principles-based. This will be completed through renewed and strengthened equalization

transfers; a commitment to equal per capita support for the Canada Health Transfer and Canada Social Transfer; and over \$16 billion in new funding for infrastructure, including \$8.8 billion that will be available to municipalities through the Building Canada Fund (BCF).

The budget also saw increased investments to preserve the environment and modernize the health care system. This included the creation of the National Water Strategy which will provide \$93 million over two years to improve the quality of water in Canada's rivers, lakes and oceans. As well, a \$2 billion investment will be made over seven years to support renewable fuel production, including biofuels.

VERTICAL FISCAL BALANCE – SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL FINANCE

The AMM presented to the Senate Standing Committee on National Finance on May 16, 2007. This was an opportunity for the AMM to discuss the issue of fiscal balance on the national stage.

The AMM addressed the issue of vertical fiscal balance. The presentation indicated that municipal governments only have access to limited resource streams and therefore do not have the revenue tools they need to meet new expectations and responsibilities. The decay of community infrastructure and a reduction in program delivery is a direct result of limited

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resources and increasing responsibilities. This is not sustainable and consequently it is necessary to undertake a review of municipal government to create a fiscal balance between all orders of government.

The AMM recommended that the Committee develop a long-term plan to eliminate the municipal infrastructure deficit and clarify roles and responsibilities of all orders of government. These

strategies will begin to address the problems associated with vertical fiscal balance.

CHAIRMAN OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT

The AMM met with the Honourable Merv Tweed, MP Brandon Souris and Chairman of the Standing Committee on Transport, on August 13, 2007 to discuss ongoing concerns regarding rail line abandonment, including:

- harmonization of federal and provincial discontinuance legislation
- changes to the timelines for discontinuance
- compensation requirements specified under the federal legislation
- impacts on road infrastructure following rail line abandonment and the associated costs for municipal and provincial governments
- economic development opportunities that will be lost with rail line abandonment, and
- environmental impacts that are not adequately addressed through the federal or provincial discontinuance processes.

Northern rail lines were also specifically discussed, as increased road infrastructure funding will not be suitable in northern Manitoba as there is only a limited road network. Rail companies need to provide appropriate levels of service so shipping and passenger transportation is adequate.

AMM POSITION PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD AT WWW.AMM.MB.CA

Mr. Tweed indicated that the Federal Government will be reviewing The Shipping Act in Fall 2007 to examine levels of service requirements. This will be an opportunity for the AMM and its membership to address rail concerns at the national level.

PRAIRIE ASSOCIATION OF RURAL MUNICIPALITIES AND PRAIRIE URBAN MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

The AMM continues to be involved in activities with the urban and rural municipal associations in Saskatchewan and Alberta. This partnership strengthens the lobbying activities of prairie municipalities.

For the first time on May 3-4, 2007 all five prairie municipal associations came together to address common issues. This meeting addressed a number of the AMM's key concerns including fiscal balance, the Prairie Grain Roads Program and water protection initiatives.

The AMM will continue to meet with neighbouring municipal associations, both urban and rural, to strengthen the voice of western Canadian municipalities.

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FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES

Another effective lobbying avenue for the AMM is the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). As the principal voice for municipalities at the Federal level, FCM is an important avenue for the AMM to advance Manitoba municipal issues.



Here are a few highlights from the AMM's involvement with the FCM over the last year.

FCM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Manitoba is well represented on the FCM Board with five seats, including an automatic seat for the AMM President. The FCM Board meets four times a year and helps set the focus of the organization's national lobbying efforts.

This year Manitoba has an additional voice on the Board as the current FCM President is Manitoba's own Gord Steeves, Councillor for the City of Winnipeg.

FCM LOBBY DAYS

One of the main activities of the FCM each year is its Lobby Days. Similar to the AMM Lobby Days, the FCM organizes small group meetings with Members of Parliament and municipal representatives to help highlight municipal issues.

In conjunction with the FCM's Lobby Days, the AMM organizes a Manitoba evening where Manitoba Members of Parliament have an opportunity to discuss Manitoba municipal issues with some of the Manitoba delegates.

FCM CONVENTION

Like the AMM Convention, the FCM Convention is a key event on the municipal calendar. It provides a great venue to develop a better understanding of key issues from across the country through workshops, seminars, and networking with delegates from all provinces and territories.

FCM PRAIRIES, YUKON, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES & NUNAVUT REGIONAL COMMITTEE – MANITOBA MEMBERS

PRESIDENT RON BELL, AMM

COUNCILLOR BOB BODNARUK, RM OF SPRINGFIELD

COUNCILLOR MARC MARION, RM OF DESALABERRY

COUNCILLOR JEFF MCCONNELL, TOWN OF VIRDEN

COUNCILLOR GORD STEEVES, FCM PRESIDENT -CHAIR / PRÉSIDENT(E) CITY OF WINNIPEG

COUNCILLOR RUSS WYATT, CITY OF WINNIPEG