

LOBBY DAYS

Urban Vice-President Shirley Kalyniuk, President Ron Bell, Rural Vice-President Doug Dobrowolski, and the rest of the AMM Board of Directors took their top issues to the halls of the Manitoba Legislature during Lobby Days in April.



The AMM blitzed the Manitoba Legislature once again in an effort to inform MLAs about top issues facing municipalities. During the fourth annual “Lobby Days”, held on April 22-23, 2008, the AMM met with the NDP caucus as a group, and with Conservative and Liberal MLAs on an individual basis.

Since the first Lobby Days took place in 2005, the event has become a critical part of the AMM’s annual lobbying activities. The AMM meets annually with each Provincial Cabinet Minister to advocate municipal issues, but the opportunity to meet with members outside Cabinet is less frequent. As AMM President Ron Bell explains, “The government doesn’t end at the Provincial Cabinet. Bringing the entire NDP caucus, as well as the Official Opposition, up to speed about municipal concerns opens the lines of communication. That can only benefit municipalities.”

However, municipalities aren’t the only ones to benefit from Lobby Days. MLAs are elected by the people, and it’s important that *they* are knowledgeable about municipal issues when interacting with their constituents.

This year, fiscal balance and water protection - the AMM’s two most critical issues – were the focus of Lobby Days. It is estimated that Canadian municipalities only receive 8 cents of every tax dollar, with 42 cents going to the provinces and 50 cents to the Federal Government, and that creates a fiscal imbalance. Yet municipalities are being asked to take on a whole gamut of water protection issues, without knowing who is going to pay for these initiatives, or how.

President Bell thinks the message was heard loud and clear. “These two issues have been the highest priority concerns of Manitoba municipalities for two years running. We needed to ensure these topics continue to be high on everyone’s radar and I think we achieved that.”