

# AMM helps bring water and

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**M**unicipalities have always been concerned with ensuring that ratepayers have safe, clean, potable water. While the tragedies of Walkerton and North Battleford helped illuminate the importance of safe water treatment systems, municipalities have long been aware of the need to ensure that their systems are safe. Municipalities have expressed the need for safe water treatment systems to the AMM on a number of occasions and this is an issue the association has been working on closely with the Province and other stakeholders for a number of years.

In early 1998, a number of key stakeholders began meeting to discuss ways of improving Manitoba's water treatment system, including the mandatory certification of water and wastewater operators. All of the stakeholders involved, including the operator's association, agreed with the concept of mandatory certification citing concerns with liability,

public health, as well as with employment standards as the need for certification. At the time of this preliminary meeting, only Ontario, Alberta and BC had mandatory certification for water and wastewater operators. Shortly after the initial meetings, the AMM canvassed its membership and found municipalities were generally supportive of any regulation that would improve the safety of these systems, many of which are municipally owned.

As the debate evolved, the AMM continued to bring the concerns expressed by municipalities to the negotiations. The proposed regulation was drafted and redrafted with the AMM providing valuable input at every stage. The AMM has always taken the position that, while the technology in this field makes the treatment systems more complex and of better quality, the entire system is still only as good as those that operate it. A state-of-the-art system is only of value if there is



# wastewater regulation to Manitoba

a well-trained and capable operator available to operate it. It is because of this reality that the AMM has pushed strongly for the educational component of the program. The AMM's lobbying efforts have also helped to get this issue included in the new Manitoba Water Strategy.

The AMM was, therefore, extremely pleased with the April 22, 2003 release of The Environment Act Regulation 77/2003 Water and Wastewater Facility Operators Regulation. The highlights of the new regulation include:

- a classification and certification process developed by the Association of Boards of Certification (ABC) and used by several provinces and most US states;
- a standard system that will allow certified operators to move between provinces without impediment;

- a categorization of all facilities as either water distribution, water treatment, wastewater collection or wastewater treatment;
- a further subclassification within this categorizations as either a small system or class 1 to 4;
- six classes of operator's certificates – operator-in-training, small system and classes 1 to 4 – for each category of facility;
- a timetable for those operators who have completed the voluntary training to obtain an operator's certificate; and
- a system that will ensure that all operators of a facility will be certified and that the certification level of the operator-in-charge at a facility will match the classification level of that facility.

Municipal owners, as well, should be aware of certain key timeframes:

- Owners of existing facilities have until August 31, 2004 to apply to have their systems classified.
- Facility classifications and operator certificates are to be renewed every five years.
- Owners of facilities will have to ensure that only certified operators are employed after September 1, 2006.

The AMM is extremely pleased with the new regulation, and it is a direct result of a great deal of cooperation and extensive negotiations with the Province and other key stakeholders. The Water and Wastewater Facility Operators Regulation is truly a success and will help to ensure that all Manitobans benefit from clean, safe potable water for future generations.