

### **Library postage rate**

This summer, municipal libraries across Canada faced a substantial loss to the inter-library loan program. Under the current system, the cost of shipping books among libraries is subsidized and saves libraries in Manitoba from spending approximately \$600,000 on shipping. Canada Post proposed to eliminate the book rate after April 2006 and begin charging libraries commercial rates – an increase from 95 cents to \$14. The Canadian Libraries Association, along with libraries from across the country, called on Canada Post and the Federal Government to continue with the current subsidization. In response, National Revenue Minister and Minister responsible for Canada Post **John McCallum** has committed to continuing the book rate beyond April 2006. The continued savings will have a significant impact, since more than 90% of the country's public libraries take advantage of the subsidized shipping.

### **Award for Brandon**

During a national ceremony in Ottawa, the Canadian Forces Liaison Council (CFLC) presented an award to the City of Brandon as the Most Supportive Employer of Reservists in Manitoba. The CFLC encourages employers to grant reservists time off for military training and operational deployments without negative consequence to their civilian job status. The City of Brandon has granted three soldiers time away from their jobs to attend various levels of military training as students and instructors, as well as to participate in domestic operations and unit, brigade and area level exercises. The City of Brandon was one of 13 organizations to receive a supportive employer award during the ceremony.

### **Gatineau offers 311 service**

Citizens of Gatineau, Quebec can now make requests through a non-urgent call centre, accessible within city boundaries by dialing 311. This service also provides 24-hour access to all municipal services and information, seven days a week. Gatineau is the first city in Quebec and the second in Canada (after Calgary) to offer this service, with several other Canadian cities considering similar systems. The City expects that call centre agents will be able to provide more complete information and facilitate follow-up on citizen's requests while

reducing the number of non-urgent calls that are currently made to 911.

### **Shoal Lake natural gas**

A cost-sharing agreement under the Canada-Manitoba Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) will result in a \$1.6 million investment, whereby Shoal Lake will receive natural gas service. Each level of government is contributing one-third of the project costs. This development will complete Shoal Lake's already well-developed infrastructure base that includes transportation access by road, rail and air, as well as hydro power for industrial customers. The Shoal Lake Regional Community Development Corporation will administer the project. Under the EPA, the governments of Canada and Manitoba are working together in partnership with community stakeholders on two strategic priorities, Building our Economy and Sustainable Communities, to enhance the skills of Manitoba workers and promote economic growth and diversification in Manitoba.

### **New veterinary lab open for BSE/TSE testing**

The provincial veterinary laboratory is opening a new section dedicated to testing for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE), including chronic wasting disease in elk and deer and scrapie in sheep. The lab is located in the Provincial Government's Agricultural Services Complex on the University of Manitoba campus and received \$350,000 from the Province to renovate the area to level-two safety standards, \$102,800 from the Department of Agricultural, Food and Rural Initiatives' capital-asset budget and the Federal Government has committed \$300,000 for new specialized equipment for the lab. The facility meets all physical and operational practices for biosafety and all biocontainment requirements of a top-quality level-two laboratory. A quality-control system also ensures the safety of staff and the accuracy and traceability of test results. The lab will be staffed with one veterinarian and two medical laboratory technologists, and will provide primary test results. Any suspicious results will be sent to the appropriate national reference laboratory for confirmation.

### **Intelligent transportation systems agreement**

Under this agreement, the Government of Canada will provide funding for the acquisition and installation of eight Road Weather Information System (RWIS) stations along the National Highway System in Manitoba. The total cost of the project is anticipated to be \$520,400 with the federal contribution up to \$212,100. A joint provincial, territorial, Transport Canada and Environment Canada program, RWISs are funded by the Intelligent Transportation Systems initiative to help improve the safety, sustainability, reliability and efficiency of Canadian transportation systems. The technology will provide detailed data on road conditions in real-time allowing road crews to better plan for road maintenance. Additionally, winter driving safety will be enhanced and the overall amount of road salt used will be reduced, thereby mitigating the negative impact of road salt on the environment. RWISs consist of automated weather reporting stations with special sensors embedded in and below the road and on nearby towers. They collected detailed data on weather conditions at and near the road surface, helping weather forecasters and highway maintenance personnel predict road conditions.

### **Ministers release Western transportation strategy**

The Western Transportation Ministers Council takes a leadership role in articulating the infrastructure and policy needs for an efficient, integrated, safe and equitable Western Canadian transportation system. The strategy addresses all four modes of transportation – air, road, rail and marine – and identifies the priorities and actions necessary to ensure that transportation is integrated, efficient and modernized. The total cost of the projects identified is more than \$14 billion over the next 20 years, with more than \$10 billion of that total associated with highway infrastructure. With a reasonable level of Federal Government investment, the strategy could be achievable within the next decade.

### **Skills-assessment tools for Northern Manitobans**

The Manitoba government has committed \$175,000 to enhance services and increase coordination to support train-

ing initiatives in the North. This funding will support larger-scale training and employment programs that have been ongoing in Northern Manitoba over the past several years. Proposed northern hydroelectric development is providing new training and employment opportunities and the funding will be used at two pilot sites: Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and Tataskweyak Cree Nation.

Goals include developing common assessment and evaluation tools and processes, and incorporating essential skills assessment into training programs. Additionally, Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) will be introduced as a tool to identify and assess core skills that have already been learned. This investment will help build community training and employment capacity by speeding up the training process.

**Program to support farmers seeking skills and learning**

The Canadian Agriculture Skills Service (CASS) will help beginning and established farmers and their spouses or partners increase their family income through improved farm practices or increased off-farm income. More than \$6.5 million will be made available to Manitoba farmers over the next three years to help cover the costs of training, books, tuition, course materials and where necessary, additional costs. The goal is to help farm families develop new skills required for an increasingly complex business environment, to capture new opportunities in agriculture and take advantage of employment in value adding or other rural businesses in Manitoba. The CASS program is being delivered in Manitoba through a partnership between Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives and Manitoba Advanced Education and Training. It will be available in Manitoba until March 2008. For further information, contact the nearest GO centre, call 1-866-668-CASS (2277) or visit [www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/programs](http://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/programs) or [www.agr.gc.ca/ren\\_e.php](http://www.agr.gc.ca/ren_e.php).

**ANNOUNCING**

**2006 Manitoba Planning Conference**  
*Forging New Paths Together*

March 15-17, 2005  
Canad Inns Portage la Prairie

For further information go to:  
[www.ptgplanningdistrict.ca](http://www.ptgplanningdistrict.ca)

**Manitoba Good Roads Association**

The executive was elected at the Annual General Meeting in February. **John Holland** is returning for another term as president. Vice President is **Darlene Fisette** and Past President is **Brian Nedohin**. The Urban Directors are **Murray Rinn** and **Paul Chapman**. The Rural Directors are **Ron Michalishyn**, **Wallace Ducharme**, **Lawrence Morris**, and **Brian Schwartz**. The Chairman of the Judges Committee is **Roger Dennis**, the Corporate Representative is **Bob Omeniuk** and the Highways Department representative is **Steve Wopnford**.

The **Gravel Road Design and Maintenance** course is being offered this year in cooperation with Red River College and Assiniboine Community College (ACC). Courses will be held: Nov. 7 & 8 in Swan River, Nov. 9 & 10 in Dauphin and Nov. 17 & 18 in Brandon. The fee is \$250 for MGRA members and \$325 for non-members. Call ACC at (204) 725-8701 to register.

The Annual General Meeting and Annual Awards Banquet will be Sunday, February 26<sup>th</sup> at the Royal Oak Inn in Brandon. Mark your calendars so you don't miss this great event!

Box 1354  
Portage La Prairie MB R1N 3N9  
Phone (204) 239-1035  
Fax (204) 239-1054  
[mgra@mts.net](mailto:mgra@mts.net)



**www.callb4udig.mb.ca**

In Winnipeg, call 480-1212.  
Outside Winnipeg, call your local Manitoba Hydro district office.