



AMM Task Force on Economic Development

By Rachel Philippe, AMM Community Services Policy Analyst

During 2002-2003, the AMM struck a Task Force on Economic Development and held a number of consultative sessions with both economic development practitioners and municipalities to gain a better understanding of models now in place. Information about the assets and deficiencies was used by the Task Force to develop conclusions and recommendations for the consideration of the AMM Board of Directors, with a view to strengthening economic development capacity in Manitoba. In December 2003, the AMM published a report entitled *Creating a Vision: AMM's Report on Economic Development*. The outcome of this report is a list of 12 recommendations that are based on:

- Observations on how the organizational structure and planning processes of the economic delivery system can be improved, with particular emphasis on the need for greater cooperation and coordination across governments, communities and organizations;
- Concerns about the adequacy of funding and the need for review of governments' approaches to funding, and;
- Concerns about the ongoing ability to attract and retain staff and volunteers to lead and implement community eco-

conomic development strategies.

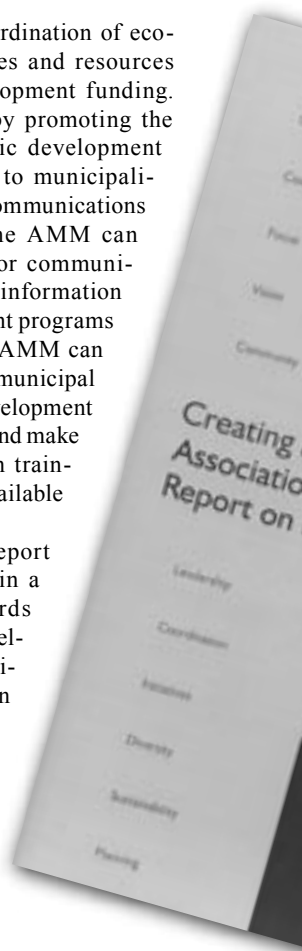
The process was intended to identify what municipalities, other levels of government and community organizations can do to improve service delivery related to economic development. The issues raised throughout these consultations suggested the need for a widespread assessment of how well the economic development process is working and what can be done to ensure the best value is received for the resources expended. The target areas identified were organizational structure and planning; funding; and human resources.

Specific roles for the AMM focused on lobbying, leadership, communication and training. The AMM has built a solid foundation of lobbying efforts and can provide input to provincial and federal

"The AMM has worked diligently at promoting the importance of economic development and making it relevant to municipalities."

governments on the coordination of economic development roles and resources and on economic development funding. Leadership can occur by promoting the importance of economic development and making it relevant to municipalities. Through existing communications vehicles and events, the AMM can provide opportunities for communities to learn and share information on economic development programs and best practices. The AMM can also support training of municipal officials in economic development principles and practices and make information available on training programs that are available for staff and volunteers.

The AMM's 2003 report constituted a first step in a broader process towards enhancing economic development delivery in Manitoba. The consultation accomplished the task of identifying opportunities and formulated several objectives for governments and economic development



organizations. A key aspect of conducting effective consultations is the ability to pursue the outcomes in a relevant manner. For this reason, a steering committee was established with representation from the three levels of government and the objective to build on the momentum from *Creating a Vision*. The committee decided to host a further session on April 30, 2005 and extended invitations to everyone who had participated in the initial process as well as other economic development stakeholders and practitioners. The intent of the April 2005 consultation was to evaluate the level of support for the AMM recommendations and to seek input on how they could be implemented. Participants were asked to complete a survey prior to the session to determine the relevance of the recommendations from *Creating A Vision* and to define priorities for the group discussions on April 30. The surveys identified four key issues: coordination; funding adequacy and responsibility; community leadership; and staffing.

Approximately 50 people attended the session, representing a broad range of economic development practitioners and representatives from the three levels of government. At the session, participants were asked to comment on the recommendations from *Creating a Vision* that pertain to the four key issues. The following discussion questions were presented:

“The process has identified opportunities for improvement that have the potential to strengthen the province as a whole.”

- What changes are needed in your region to better meet what has been proposed by AMM regarding this issue?
 - What could be done independently by your region over the next 12 months to achieve the AMM’s recommendation regarding this issue?
 - What needs to be done regarding this issue that is beyond the scope of your region? Who needs to do it?
 - What do you see as barriers to proceeding? How can they be overcome?
- This process generated lively discussion and offered a variety of constructive ideas for action by all levels of government and economic development organizations and



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“Participants in the economic development field are encouraged to review this report and assess what actions they can take independently in their regions.”

stakeholders. There were many specific suggestions regarding actions that would address the four key issues and improve Manitoba’s economic development delivery system.

These suggestions focused on the need for organizations to work together through coordinated education projects and other networking opportunities. As well, there is a need to recognize the long-term nature of economic development initiatives in funding from all levels of government. Access to resources is also required for economic development practitioners and improved communication would be beneficial. Several participants also raised the need to engage youth in order for comprehensive objectives to be achieved. While there are certainly many positive initiatives underway across Manitoba, this session and the resultant report have identified opportunities for improvement that have the potential to strengthen the province as a whole. Participants in the economic development field are encouraged to review this report and assess what actions they can take independently in their regions. The AMM will continue to assess the role it can play on a provincial scale in influencing positive change and addressing existing deficiencies. §

For a complete copy of *Creating a Vision: AMM’s Report on Economic Development* visit: www.amm.mb.ca/reports.htm.

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