

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR MANITOBANS WITH DISABILITIES

Manitobans with disabilities receiving social assistance continue to experience difficulty in securing employment.

The Honourable **Gord Mackintosh**, Minister of Family Services and Housing, Minister Responsible for Persons with Disabilities and The Honourable **Greg Selinger**, Minister of Finance recently announced that \$7 million will be invested in marketAbilities, a new program under the Rewarding Work strategy.

Dauphin's Almost New Store is the first project to receive funding through marketAbilities. The second-hand variety store will provide employment to more than 18 low-income, unemployed disabled individuals including those on income assistance.

Other programs receiving funding are:

- The Independent Living Resource Centre will receive \$90,000 for the five-week training program for independent living attendants. This allows up to 150 new graduates each year to support people with disabilities in securing employment and participating in community life.
- The specialized marketAbilities team through community employment programs will provide persons with disabilities with employment.
- The Sara Riel Work Placement Force program will receive \$191,000 to enhance job-search and placement services, work site and job-retention supports, along with counseling and referrals.
- The Income Assistance for Persons with Disabilities benefit will increase \$25 to \$105 per month effective January. This is a \$6 million investment for the 17,300 persons currently receiving income assistance and will help in their cost of living expenses.

- A commitment of the provincial civil service diversity strategy is to increase the qualified persons with disabilities in civil service to 5% by 2012 from the current 2.8%. The long-term goal is 7%.

## FOOD PRODUCTS FOR BOOMERS AND ELDERLY

The Honourable **Rosann Wowchuk**, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives recently announced \$80,000 in provincial funding to the Food Development Centre in Portage la Prairie and the University of Manitoba for a two-year research project to design and develop food products for baby boomers and older consumers.

The focus will be to use Manitoba grown crops in the development of these products, providing fortified, enriched and enhanced foods to better meet their nutritional needs.

Slowing the progression of chronic illnesses using functional foods may lead to a decrease in health care costs and an increased quality of life as consumers age.

This research project has the potential to result in healthier adults, increased economic activities and employment and the production of nutritional ingredients such as omega-3 fatty acids and oat/flax varieties leading to higher economic returns for Manitoba farmers.

This project should be completed and the results available by 2009.

## FISH HABITAT MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT SIGNED

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Fish Habitat Management on February 7. One of the MOU's provisions is to establish a FCM-DFO Working Group on Fish Habitat Management to be co-chaired by a member of the FCM's Rural Forum along with a DFO representative. AMM President **Ron Bell** has been named the FCM co-chair.

The MOU's goal is to build collaboration between the federal government and Canadian municipalities in the application of the fish habitat protection provisions of the *Fisheries Act*. FCM has been lobbying for an improved working relationship between DFO and municipalities on ensuring municipal projects are undertaken with clear criteria from DFO that are reasonable and cost-effective.

## PRESERVATION OF MANITOBA'S PUBLISHED HERITAGE

The Honourable **Eric Robinson**, Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport recently announced changes to *The Legislative Library Act* which strengthens the library's mandate to collect and preserve all items published in Manitoba.

Manitoba's first lieutenant governor **A. G. Archibald** established the Legislative Library over 123 years ago. The library is home to the most complete collection of Manitoba publications available for research. Included in the library are government documents, newspapers, magazines and books published in Manitoba. People from across the country along with the students, teachers, historians and businesses of Manitoba make use of the library.

Changes to The Act will:

- Establish the Legislative Library as the official library for the deposit of Manitoba Government publications;
- Put into law the requirement for departments and agencies to give the library specified numbers of copies of publications for the purposes of access, preservation and sharing; and
- Clarify the definition of publication to make it clear that it applies to all formats, including electronic.

**FINES FOR DAMAGING HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Honourable **Ron Lemieux**, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation recently announced a proposed change to the *Highway Traffic Act* that would result in charging drivers or owners of vehicles that collide with bridges and structures.

Under the current *Highway Traffic Act* there is nothing dealing directly with damaging infrastructure. The proposed changes could carry a maximum fine under the act of \$5,000.

Phase two of the plan includes enhanced ability to recover costs along with helping to prevent such collisions with more driver education and awareness, enhanced monitoring and hands-on enforcement.

**CHANGES TO MANITOBA'S BUILDING CODE STANDARDS**

The Honourable **Nancy Allan**, Minister of Labour and Immigration, recently announced changes to Manitoba's building code regulations under *The Buildings and Mobile Homes Act*. These changes will improve fire safety and energy efficiency in new homes.

New home construction requirements as a result of these changes to the regulations include:

- A heat detector in an attached garage, connected to the home smoke alarm system;
- A fire-resistant rated common wall between the attached garaged and the living space, making Manitoba the first Canadian jurisdiction with this requirement; and
- Increased insulation or "R" values for new home construction.

The AMM is represented on the Manitoba Building Standards Board, which provides advice to government on Manitoba building, fire and plumbing codes.

**MORE DOCTORS BEING TRAINED AT U OF M**

The Honourable **Theresa Oswald**, Minister of Health and The Honourable **Diane McGifford**, Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy recently announced a \$3 million investment for the University of Manitoba's faculty of medicine. This results in the expansion of 10 more seats starting in September 2008, bringing the total number of students entering into medicine up to 110. Additional doctors graduating will help to address the challenges of the current health care system and will improve patient care across Manitoba. 



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