

Broadway update: fourth session of the Manitoba Legislature begins

By Tyler MacAfee, AMM Director of Policy and Communications

The fourth session of the Manitoba Legislature kicked off in October of 2005 with the Speech from the Throne. The Throne Speech highlighted a number of areas of focus for the upcoming session, including improving emergency preparedness, clean energy development, health care and doctor and nurse recruitment, crime prevention, a further reduction in education tax on farmland, building Northern Manitoba, revitalizing cities and growing Manitoba's economy.

The specifics of this vision started to take shape as the Province introduced 20 Bills. Among a number of Bills of interest to municipal government was Bill 7: *The Architects and Engineers Scope of Practice Dispute Settlement Act*. A recent court ruling in a case involving the City of Winnipeg made it necessary to enact legislation to clarify the roles of the two professions. This Bill was of great interest to the AMM as municipalities use both professions frequently, and the AMM was involved in discussions throughout the process and submitted its comments on the Bill.

A major concern for municipalities was that if both professions needed to be consulted in all building developments, it would drive up project costs. The AMM fully supported any legislation that would clarify the roles of the two professions and ensure that development would continue in Manitoba communities. The AMM felt that the final version of the Bill did, indeed, meet this need. The Bill was passed and received Royal Assent on November 30.

While Bill 7 was the only Bill of interest to municipalities that passed in this sitting, there are a number of other Bills of interest to municipalities that were introduced:

BILL 13:

The Conservation Districts Amendment Act, if passed, will provide for public representation on the board of The Conservation District Commission. The AMM is one of the participants on this board.

BILL 14:

The Water Rights Act would provide for the appointment of officers to enforce the Act and would grant them additional powers, such as the right to conduct inspections and searches.

BILL 15:

The Emergency Measures Amendment Act will allow municipalities to issue emergency prevention orders in advance of disasters. By extending many of the state of emergency powers to municipalities in advance of the disaster's onset, municipalities will have the tools necessary to deal with the impending crisis. The Bill also includes a provision where municipalities would provide greater information to the Province in disaster situations to allow officials to better assess the situation and provide assistance. There is also a commitment to improving communication within government departments.

These three Bills will be brought to the Committee stage for public input in the coming months and the AMM will be submitting its comments at this time. To view any of the new legislation, or to check on the status of these Bills, please visit <http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/homepage.html> and follow the links. §

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