

New Rural Development scholarship

Students at Brandon University's Rural Development program will benefit from \$250,000 in scholarship funding provided by Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives and the Rural Economic Development Initiative.

Brandon University is committed to initiatives that enhance rural communities, agriculture and rural development. This scholarship will assist in encouraging individuals to complete undergraduate and graduate degrees through the Department of Rural Development. Graduates from this faculty are making an ongoing contribution toward improving development in rural Manitoba.

Clarifying roles of architects and engineers

After some confusion regarding professional planning of buildings, the Provincial Government has passed Bill 7, legislation that amends *The Manitoba Building Code*, *The Architects Act* and *The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Act*. These amendments clarify which buildings must be planned by architects and which may be done by architects or engineers, and clarifies the roles of the two professions. For instance, industrial buildings, farm buildings, arenas with fixed seating capacity of less than 1,000 people and residential, office or retail buildings less than 600 square metres will not require an architect. Residential and office buildings and retail outlets over 600 square metres will require an architect, as will hospitals and public assembly buildings such as libraries, community centres and restaurants.

Physician recruitment and retention

Communities across Manitoba are facing physician shortages and need to find new ways of addressing this issue. In response, the Province recently unveiled a \$155 million plan to improve access to quality care and reduce wait times in key areas. The five-point plan to reduce wait times includes funding for more diagnostic testing; more surgeries; more health professionals; system innovation and better wait-list management; and prevention and health promotion. In addition, the Province is streamlining physician recruitment by creating a Physician Resource Coordination Office and

a comprehensive website to help health authorities recruit and retain doctors at www.healthemployment.ca. Medical student spaces are also increasing at the University of Manitoba to encourage local students to pursue careers in medicine.

Building on crime-fighting strategy

Manitoba recently announced a crime-fighting action plan designed to bolster current programs and develop safety initiatives through suppression and prevention. Measures that will be taken to deal with criminal activity include doubling the Gang Prosecutions Unit to 16 staff and increasing the current Public Safety Investigative Unit team from one to three to enforce the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* and the *Fortified Buildings Act*.

In addition to the 54 police officer positions announced in Budget 2005, 9 new Aboriginal police officers will be stationed in Northern Manitoba. Originally focused on bringing domestic violence cases to trial sooner, the award-winning Front End Project will expand to all adults in custody over the next year. Headingly Correctional Centre and the Dauphin Correctional Centre will have expanded capacity, and an interdepartmental group is looking at other options to expand capacity. Numerous preventative steps will also be taken, including an increase to this Government's 2003 election commitment to establish additional Lighthouses for youth, bringing the total to 50. In addition, the Citizen on Patrol Program (COPP) will increase from 69 to 76 groups and communities interested in establishing a group will be assisted in doing so.

Highway sign clutter targeted

In an effort to remove safety hazards from provincial roads, Bill 12 intends to streamline the process for removing illegal signs and structures along highways and update penalty provisions under the Highways and Transportation Act. The amendments would update the penalties to be in line with those under the *Highway Traffic Act* and the *Off-Road Vehicles Act* where there are no minimum fines, \$2,000 maximum fines, and imprisonment is removed as a sentencing option. Further, removal of signs and structures would no longer require contact with the owner.

Winter road safety working group

In January 2002, Calvin Wood of Waasagomach died when the snowplow truck he was operating broke through the ice during construction of a winter road. An inquest was called in 2004 and its 11 recommendations were recently released. A working group will oversee the implementation of all the recommendations and will include representatives of the Department of Transportation and Government Services, the Division of Workplace Safety and Health, Manitoba Hydro, the private sector and First Nations. The group will review and update all winter road guidelines with the intention of making recommendations to the government for mandatory regulations. A number of steps have been taken to improve winter road safety, including:

- Moving winter road routes off the ice where feasible;
- Improved evaluation of ice thickness and requiring ice thickness reports;
- Strengthening compliance with safety procedures through the immediate issuing of improvement or stop-work orders if conditions or procedures are not up to standards;
- Providing cold-weather training and ice-failure emergency survival techniques to construction workers; and
- Providing satellite phones for improved emergency communication.

Rewards for responsible land stewards

The Ecological Goods and Services pilot project, a three-year federal-provincial project, supports farmers in maintaining existing wetlands and riparian and natural areas, and provides for permanent cover on fragile cultivated lands. Farmers in the RM of Blanshard will receive a financial incentive to develop and maintain natural environments on their land, integrated with their agricultural lands. The central idea is to help farmers preserve and protect natural and fragile areas of land that have lower agricultural values, but can provide environmental benefits for all Manitobans. Through the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF), up to \$75,000 will be provided this fiscal year for delivery preparations, and additional funding support is available in subsequent years.

Other funding participants include the RM of Blanshard and the Delta Waterfowl Foundation. The Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation (MASC)

will administer the project. Lands that have been enrolled under Greencover Canada and Manitoba's Riparian Tax Credit Program are not eligible for this program. The RM of Blanshard lies within the Little Saskatchewan River Conservation District. It was chosen for the pilot project because its landscape is typical of agro-Manitoba, and local landowners and local governments have indicated significant support. The University of Manitoba will evaluate the pilot project.

Environmental Youth Corps projects

The Environmental Youth Corps (EYC) encourages voluntary participation in activities that help improve and protect Manitoba's environment. Projects must relate to environmental protection, enhancement, rehabilitation, conservation and resource management. Projects are eligible for up to \$5,000. Thirteen projects involving 655 young people will be funded \$28,825. Some of the projects that have been funded include:

- Morris School (Morris) - \$5,000 to involve 150 youth in establishing an outdoor classroom;

- Indian Springs School (Swan Lake) - \$4,350 to involve 67 youth in a schoolyard-enhancement project planting a shelterbelt of shrubs and trees and establishing a walking trail and seating area;
- Pine Dock Community Council (Interlake) - \$2,000 to involve eight youth in a waste-minimization project by distributing recycling boxes and helping to collect and sort recyclables;
- The Croatian Community Centre in Lockport - \$3,000 to involve 72 youth in a greening project establishing walking trails, spreading soil and planting trees and shrubs;
- Decker Colony School - \$500 to involve 45 youth in a greening project by constructing birdhouses and assisting in planting a shelterbelt of 1,000 trees and shrubs; and
- Town of Neepawa - \$3,625 to involve 60 youth in an enhancement project planting native trees and shrubs at a community garden, participating in community cleanup and composting initiatives, and constructing birdhouses and feeders from recycled materials. ♻️

UPCOMING EVENTS

February

- 20-21 AMM Municipal Visits (Interlake District)
- 27-28 Municipal Officials Seminar – Brandon Keystone Centre

March

- 1 AMM Education Session – McCandless Tramley & Roger Bouvier – Brandon Keystone Centre
- 13 Mayors, Reeves & CAOs Meeting – Northern District
- 14 Mayors, Reeves & CAOs Meeting – Parklands District
- 20 Mayors, Reeves & CAOs Meeting – Mid-Western District
- 21 Mayors, Reeves & CAOs Meeting – Western District
- 22 Mayors, Reeves & CAOs Meeting – Central District
- 23 Mayors, Reeves & CAOs Meeting – Eastern District
- 24 Mayors, Reeves & CAOs Meeting – Interlake District

April

- 3-5 AMM Municipal Visits (Central District)
- 5-7 AMM Municipal Visits (Western District)

Don't forget to mark these dates on your calendar!

Don't be in the Dark

Be prepared for that Winter Storm.

Winter snow, high winds, and ice buildup can cause power outages. Keep these emergency tips in mind:

- ▶ Have a flashlight, candles and matches handy.
- ▶ Put extra blankets in a convenient place.
- ▶ Keep a portable radio and extra fresh batteries in an accessible spot.
- ▶ Post emergency phone numbers by your telephone.
- ▶ Store a few spare jugs of drinking water.
- ▶ Tell the rest of your family where all the above items are located – don't leave them in the dark.

Manitoba Hydro