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## Throne Speech 2008

**In November** it was back to business for Manitoba's MLAs as the Speech from the Throne was delivered on November 20. The theme of this year's speech was "steady as she goes" despite projections that Manitoba's economy will grow in 2009 and the province is well positioned to weather the impacts of a global economic slow-down.


While the Throne Speech failed to provide any new initiatives for municipalities and any new hope to seriously take on the ever-growing municipal infrastructure deficit, it did reinforce some previous funding commitments such as the personal care home in Neepawa, the Portage la Prairie Multiplex and affordable housing units in Brandon.

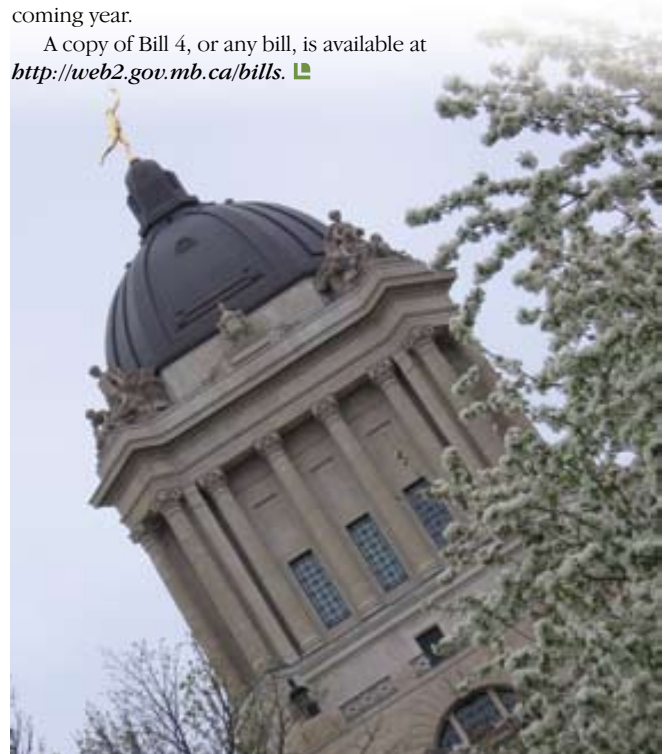
The Throne Speech also committed to a \$4.7 billion provincial infrastructure investment plan over the next four years. Municipalities will have to wait to see if and how this funding trickles down to their communities. While so far it appears that this funding will not be used to deal with the \$7 billion municipal infrastructure deficit,

it is expected to create roughly 40,000 new jobs directly and 34,000 jobs indirectly.

While the municipal infrastructure deficit was overlooked in the speech, there were positive signs in other areas for municipalities. The speech offered up more funding for police officers and hiring of Crown prosecutors, a commitment to a new police act, enhanced workers compensation for firefighters, poverty reduction and new child-care programs in schools. Plastic bags also made it into the speech, with a commitment to bolster recycling programs and ban bags that do not conform to composting or recycling standards.

Eight government bills were introduced before the session adjourned on December 4. Of most interest to municipalities is *Bill 4: The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act*, a revised version of a bill introduced last session. This revised bill will allow for the designation of properties as community revitalization properties, meaning increases in its assessment value are subject to a community revitalization levy that is imposed at the same rate as, but in lieu of, taxation for school purposes. Money raised by the levy is paid into a new Community Revitalization Fund that is used to make grants to help revitalize communities and neighbourhoods; to encourage economic, social and cultural development; and to preserve heritage properties. As with all bills of municipal interest, the AMM will be tracking its progress once session resumes in the coming year.

A copy of Bill 4, or any bill, is available at <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills>. 







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