

Meeting of the
**Association of
Manitoba
Municipalities**



with

The Honourable Eric Robinson

Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism

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A) Executive Summary

Departmental Issues

1) Recreation Centres and the Community Places Program

- Community facilities are invaluable since they provide opportunities to develop recreational and leisure programming that fosters healthy, safe communities.
- A report from the Conference Board of Canada concludes, “the cost to government of supporting sport is small in comparison with health spending related to inactivity.”
- The Provincial Government should act on the recommendations of the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force to improve funding resources for community centres.
- As one of the few programs that target recreational facilities, the Community Places Program must be responsive to municipal needs and provide appropriate levels of funding.
- There is mounting pressure on recreation commissions to respond to local needs and the overall cost of recreational programming is rising.
- An effective way to address the ongoing need for funding is to renew Provincial support for a tri-partite recreational infrastructure program.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to promote recreational programming by enhancing funding for the Community Places Program, increasing funding to recreation commissions and advancing a tri-partite national recreational infrastructure program.

2) Funding for Libraries

- The changing pressures on public libraries require ongoing investment through an enhanced provincial contribution.
- As its foremost concern, the Public Library Review Committee will be recommending a review of the funding formula with an aim to enhance public library resources.
- To address funding shortfalls, municipalities have been increasing their per capita levies and the Provincial Government must make a greater contribution to this endeavour.
- Funding mechanisms must function effectively to maximize the distribution of resources without penalizing municipalities for declining population.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to increase financial support for public libraries and reduce its reliance on a per capita formula.

3) Joining Established Regional Libraries and The Libraries Act Review

- Local libraries can only function effectively within a legislative framework that is flexible enough to accommodate community requirements.
- A major concern for municipalities is the current method of joining established regional libraries as defined by *The Public Libraries Act*.
- Greater flexibility must be established to allow a municipality to be divided and to allow residents to attend the nearest library, thereby minimizing the geographical barriers associated with library usage.
- The Public Library Review Committee survey results demonstrate that both municipalities and library boards perceive that there are benefits associated with changing the process of joining established regional libraries.
- Legislative revisions will only be effective if library services are improved, which requires the support of increased Provincial investments.

The AMM urges the Provincial Government to allow for the designation of parts of municipalities to regional library districts and to improve funding allocations for municipal libraries through the review of *The Public Libraries Act*.

4) Trust Fund for the Maintenance of the Trans-Canada Trail

- In working to provide residents with a variety of recreational opportunities, municipalities are committed to supporting the development of the Trans-Canada Trail.
- Although there are substantial indirect benefits, municipalities will not be achieving greater revenues as a result of the Trans-Canada Trail.
- Manitoba's section of the Trans-Canada Trail is not yet complete, however some segments are operational and timely planning for the long-term needs of the trail system is crucial to its ongoing success.

In particular, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to establish a trust fund for the ongoing maintenance of the Trans-Canada Trail in Manitoba.

General Issues

1) The Municipal Agenda

- Manitoba's municipal governments continue to take on increasingly greater responsibilities. As the importance of local community increases, it is necessary that the roles, responsibilities and resources of municipal government be examined.
- Unclear legislation, such as the Water Protection Act, concern municipal governments because the financial costs in implementing and enforcing this Act are

great. Infrastructure needs in municipalities throughout the province are at the top of municipal agendas however the municipal budgets are stretched thin.

- Some options to support municipal governments to serve their communities effectively are removing education tax from property and exempting municipal governments from the Provincial Sales Tax.

The AMM urges the Province to work with municipalities to seriously examine the roles, responsibilities and resources of municipal governments in Manitoba.

B) Departmental Issues

1) Recreation Centres and the Community Places Program

Community facilities are invaluable since they provide opportunities to develop recreational and leisure programming that fosters healthy, safe communities. These inter-related issues are priority areas for municipalities, however obtaining sufficient financial resources is often challenging. The Provincial Government must find new ways to fund these community facilities in order to achieve the benefits of a productive recreational sector. Existing programming is critical to past investments, however greater resources are required.

In August 2005, the Conference Board of Canada released the report “Strengthening Canada: The Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada,” which cites ways that recreational opportunities positively impact community health and safety. The report found that estimates of health care spending in Canada due to physical inactivity range from \$2.1 to \$5.3 billion annually and that increasing sport participation could significantly reduce national health care costs. Similarly, Obesity Canada estimates that a ten per cent decrease in the number of inactive Canadians would save \$150 million per year in direct health care costs, and a further \$5 billion in indirect costs. The Conference Board report concludes, “the cost to government of supporting sport is small in comparison with health spending related to inactivity,” and this finding should be a significant incentive for Manitoba’s government to invest in recreation. Furthermore, the report indicates that sports, outdoor pursuits and constructive leisure activities are a well-established feature of initiatives whose aim is to divert offenders and young people at risk away from crime. The study asserts that sport reduces juvenile crime by providing young people with challenge, adventure and a sense of purpose, demonstrating that investment in recreation has many indirect advantages. These

findings are relevant for Manitoba since many communities are seeking ways to reduce youth crime rates and promote healthy living.

The linkages between recreation and community health and safety confirm that the Provincial Government is a key stakeholder in recreational infrastructure and programming.

Committing to the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force was an excellent indication that the Provincial Government recognizes its role in promoting active living and supporting community-based recreational initiatives. The Task Force Report includes five recommendations related to recreational facilities and access, including the need to target improved funding for such facilities. The Report should be a reasonable indication of the current recreational needs due to the province-wide consultation that was conducted.

Therefore the Provincial Government should act on these recommendations to improve funding resources for community centres.

Established provincial programming must be recognized for its essential investment in various types of community facilities. The Community Places Program has been a key source of funding and municipalities were appreciative of the increased program allocation for 2005. With so many community projects in need of funding, the Community Places Program must maintain this high level of funding in the coming year. As well, the program could be further enhanced by increasing the maximum allowable grant beyond \$50,000. This maximum allocation is an insufficient contribution for new construction projects and the major investments required for repairs or upgrading. As one of the few programs that target recreational facilities, the Community Places Program must be responsive to municipal needs and provide appropriate levels of funding. The Provincial Government should examine the

effectiveness of the Community Places Program and consider revising the funding limitations to make a greater impact on the communities it serves.

Local recreation commissions are another important resource for recreational initiatives. They are mandated to provide all local recreation programming and to promote active and healthy lifestyles among residents. This includes managing sporting facilities as well as community centres that provide leisure activities for local residents. Facilities management also encompasses the repair and maintenance of arenas, swimming pools, parks and other recreational infrastructure. Provincial funding has not increased since 1992 and recreation commissions require additional resources in order to continue providing this array of services. There is mounting pressure on recreation commissions to respond to local needs and the overall cost of recreational programming is rising. Municipalities are required to meet these rising costs since the Provincial Government has not increased its contributions in over a decade. It is time to acknowledge the important role of recreation commissions by improving Provincial support mechanisms.

In addition, an effective way to address the ongoing need for funding is to renew support for a tri-partite recreational infrastructure program. The Provincial Government has been supportive of this concept in the past and municipalities would welcome a program that focuses on the repair, upgrading and building of recreational facilities throughout Manitoba and Canada. Recreational program development is currently hampered since recreational infrastructure across the province is in desperate need of repair. The competitiveness of municipalities is partially dependent on their ability to provide a range of leisure opportunities that will attract individuals, families, professionals and businesses. As an

integral part of building healthy communities, recreation services require additional sources of funding from all stakeholders. Therefore, municipalities will support the Provincial Government in petitioning the Federal Government for a tri-partite recreational infrastructure program.

All recreational opportunities are essential to the health and well-being of communities. Access to a variety of recreational activities helps to attract vibrant individuals and families and encourages them to remain residents over the long term. Recreational infrastructure is not only a key factor in the competitiveness of Manitoba's municipalities, but also has the potential to impact health care and policing expenditures across the Province.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to promote recreational programming by enhancing funding for the Community Places Program, increasing funding to recreation commissions and advancing a tri-partite national recreational infrastructure program.

AMM Resolution Number 15 – 2004

Topic: Increased Funding for Recreational Commissions

Sponsors: RM of Beausejour (Eastern District)

Department: Manitoba Culture, Heritage & Tourism

WHEREAS provincial funding for recreation commissions has not increased since 1992;

AND WHEREAS the cost of administering recreational programs in our communities continues to rise;

AND WHEREAS the average cost a municipality spends on recreational facilities is approximately \$69/capita;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Province of Manitoba to increase its contributions to recreation commissions.

AMM Resolution Number 55 – 2001

Topic: Funding for the Community Places Program

Sponsors: Town of Neepawa (Mid-Western District), Village of Elkhorn, RM of North Cypress (Western District), Town of Rivers.

Department: Manitoba Culture, Heritage & Tourism

WHEREAS the Manitoba Government has promised that 25% of VLT profits would be distributed to rural Manitoba through direct grants, 10% through economic development programs such as REDI, and 15% through the Community Places Program;

AND WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba has decreased the amount of funding to the Manitoba Community Places Program since 1987;

AND WHEREAS the maximum allowable grant under this program is \$50,000 and the average grant awarded is \$13,750 per project;

AND WHEREAS this program is one of the few to assist with the renovation, replacement, or construction of recreation facilities within the Province of Manitoba;

AND WHEREAS it is a known fact that recreation facilities are ageing and in need of some major capital dollars as demonstrated by the over \$10 million dollars in annual requests for a program of \$2.6 million;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Province to: increase the amount of available funds in the Manitoba Community Places

Program; and, increase the maximum funds allowable under the grant guidelines to better reflect the true costs of major capital projects.

AMM Resolution Number 21 – 2000

Topic: Infrastructure Grants for Recreational Facilities

Sponsors: RM of St. Andrews (Interlake District)

Department: Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs & Trade

WHEREAS recreational facilities in the province are aging and many need upgrading;

AND WHEREAS grants to recreational associations have been reduced and municipal governments are financially unable to totally support these upgrades;

AND WHEREAS some municipalities need to provide new recreational facilities;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the AMM lobby the Federal and Provincial Governments to establish a tri-partite infrastructure program for recreational facilities in need of repair and upgrading, and also for new facilities that are required.

2) Funding for Libraries

Public libraries constitute an important educational resource and information centre for many communities. Municipalities rely on public libraries to promote literacy and support educational opportunities for local residents. Therefore, ensuring the availability of sufficient funding is a priority for many municipalities. At the same time, the Provincial Government has a key role in providing financial resources for public libraries and the current levels of support must increase.

The AMM is currently participating in the Public Libraries Review Committee, which will make several recommendations on ways to modernize public library services and increase accessibility for all Manitobans. After undertaking an extensive feedback process, the Committee identified shifting demands on public libraries toward greater technological usage. For instance, patrons expect to access high speed internet through public libraries and meeting this demand requires an investment in both technology and staff qualifications. There is an ongoing demand for up-to-date collections and the demand for special collections, such as large print books, will continue to increase with Manitoba's aging population. The changing pressures on public libraries require ongoing investment through an enhanced provincial contribution. As its foremost concern, the Committee will be recommending a review of the funding formula with an aim to enhance public library resources. The Provincial Government must act on this recommendation to allow public libraries to remain responsive to local community demands.

To address funding shortfalls, municipalities have been increasing their per capita levies and the Provincial Government must make a greater contribution to this endeavour. For the past

two years, the Provincial Government has increased funding for libraries including an increase of \$80,000 in library grants available in 2005. Any increase in funding is beneficial to public libraries, however, when divided among all public libraries in Manitoba this increase has a limited impact. Furthermore, municipalities are concerned that the existing per capita funding formula is continually penalizing public libraries whose communities are affected by rural depopulation. For instance, library operating costs related to facilities management remain constant regardless of municipal population, therefore it is difficult to maintain a high standard of programming and service when the libraries grants are declining along with population figures. As funding is reduced, a greater percentage of the total funding must be allocated to cover these operating costs, leaving fewer resources for program development and collections improvements. A continuing reliance on a per capita formula will cause the quality of some rural libraries to deteriorate, thereby leaving gaps in service in those areas. The AMM believes all Manitobans should have access to high quality educational opportunities and responsive libraries are required to accomplish this goal. Therefore, funding mechanisms must function effectively to maximize the distribution of resources without penalizing municipalities for declining population.

Libraries contribute to the information sharing and creative development that is essential in Manitoba's communities. Municipalities are attempting to meet these critical demands, but require the support of the Provincial Government through increased funding for public libraries.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to increase financial support for public libraries and reduce its reliance on a per capita formula.

AMM Resolution Number 16 – 2004

Topic: Review of Library Funding

Sponsors: Village of McCreary (Mid-Western District), RM of Blanshard (Mid-Western District), RM of Shell River (Parklands District)

Department: Manitoba Culture, Heritage & Tourism

WHEREAS provincial library grants are calculated based upon population;

AND WHEREAS population in many rural areas has been declining and has resulted in decreased provincial funding for many rural public libraries;

AND WHEREAS decreased provincial funding has resulted in increased municipal funding and difficult operational challenges for rural public libraries;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government to undertake a review of rural public library funding formulas in an effort to ensure the future of Manitoba's rural public libraries.

AMM Resolution Number 55 – 2004

Topic: Increased Funding for Libraries

Sponsors: RM of Birtle (Mid-Western District)

Department: Manitoba Culture, Heritage & Tourism

WHEREAS the level of provincial funding for rural libraries has not been adequately raised since 1994;

AND WHEREAS this is putting an ever-increasing burden on municipalities to contribute more to the operation of regional libraries;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government for increased funding to assist libraries in their valuable work across the province.

3) Joining Established Regional Libraries and The Libraries Act Review

Local libraries can only function effectively within a legislative framework that is flexible enough to accommodate community requirements. Facilitating access to public libraries for all Manitobans requires allowing municipalities to pursue alternative arrangements with their neighbours. Some municipalities do not contribute to library investment in their communities because they are faced with legislation that creates barriers to participation. Therefore *The Public Libraries Act* must be reviewed in order to support municipalities in determining the most appropriate way for local residents to access public library services.

A major concern for municipalities is the current method of joining established regional libraries as defined by *The Public Libraries Act*. Currently, a municipality seeking to partner with a neighbouring municipality for library services must make contributions based on its entire municipal population. However, the resultant travel time required of some residents could hinder a significant portion of that municipality from utilizing the neighbouring library. If a municipality chooses not to participate since the service is not beneficial for the entire municipality, all residents will be subjected to non-resident fees at neighbouring libraries. A potential solution is to allow a portion of a municipality to join a neighbouring municipality's library. Department staff has indicated that some alternative arrangements are already available, such as reciprocal borrowing and non-resident fee reimbursement. However, greater flexibility must be established to allow a municipality to be divided and to allow residents to attend the nearest library, thereby minimizing the geographical barriers associated with library usage. This change would enable more municipalities to engage in library services as well as facilitating library usage for Manitobans.

This issue has received considerable attention through the Public Libraries Review Committee process, and the AMM is pleased with the direction the Committee is taking. The survey results illustrated that there is widespread support for the concept of allowing a portion of a municipality to join established regional libraries. In particular, the results demonstrate that both municipalities and library boards perceive that there are benefits associated with changing the process of joining established regional libraries. Furthermore, at its recent meeting, the Committee ranked a recommendation related to this issue among its top five recommendations in terms of importance. Given its importance to municipalities and library stakeholders, the Minister should review *The Public Libraries Act* with an aim to incorporate this change.

A review of *The Public Libraries Act* should also examine methods of improving funding mechanisms for public libraries. The current per capita funding formula is insufficient for responding to the current demands. The AMM has consulted with Manitoba Public Library Services to discuss the feasibility of ward based library membership and is committed to further examining this issue through a review of *The Public Libraries Act*. Such revisions will only be effective if library services are improved, which requires the support of increased Provincial investments. Therefore, establishing appropriate and responsive funding mechanisms will be an important part of *The Public Libraries Act* review and the AMM is prepared to work with the Provincial Government to seek solutions to this ongoing issue.

The diversity of Manitoba's communities creates challenges in designing legislation to suit all circumstances. Municipalities want to ensure that all citizens can access up-to-date and

technological information services through libraries, regardless of where they reside.

Therefore, an updated act that facilitates library usage by all residents would be a beneficial change for Manitoba. Therefore municipalities should obtain the freedom to join more than one library board and the autonomy to divide grants at the municipal level.

The AMM urges the Provincial Government to allow for the designation of parts of municipalities to regional library districts and to improve funding allocations for municipal libraries through the review of *The Public Libraries Act*.

AMM Resolution Number 42 - 2000

Topic: Joining Established Regional Libraries

Sponsors: City of Steinbach (Eastern District)

Department: Manitoba Culture, Heritage & Tourism

WHEREAS Section 29(4) of The Public Libraries Act states in part: the Council of a municipality "may by by-law, require the proper officers of the municipality to negotiate and execute on behalf of, and in the name of, the municipality, an agreement";

AND WHEREAS this wording implies that such an agreement is certainly to be entered into in the name of the whole municipality;

AND WHEREAS residents within certain wards of a municipality have indicated that they desire to form a regional library together with their neighbouring library member municipality;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the AMM lobby to have The Public Libraries Act amended to allow Council of a municipality "to pass a by-law permitting its proper officers to negotiate and execute on behalf of, and in the name of, part or all of a municipality, and agreement."

4) Trust Fund for the Maintenance of the Trans-Canada Trail

In working to provide residents with a variety of recreational opportunities, municipalities are committed to supporting the development of the Trans-Canada Trail. Recreational trails provide year-round services to local residents as well as promoting tourism. Belonging to the Trans-Canada Trail network will have a positive impact on many of Manitoba's communities, therefore municipalities are looking forward to enjoying the completed trail system.

Although there are substantial indirect benefits, municipalities will not be achieving greater revenues as a result of the Trans-Canada Trail. At the same time, local trail agencies and recreational organizations will request assistance from municipalities for the purpose of maintaining the local portion of the trail. Manitoba's section of the Trans-Canada Trail is not yet complete, however some segments are operational and timely planning for the long-term needs of the trail system is crucial to its ongoing success. Many local organizations are willing to conduct the trail maintenance, which will require a significant reliance on volunteers. Even with volunteers willing to donate their time, there are still equipment costs associated with maintenance activities and municipalities cannot be solely responsible for these incremental expenses. For this reason, the Provincial Government should establish a trust fund to provide for the ongoing maintenance of the Trans-Canada Trail in Manitoba.

The AMM was pleased to learn that the Manitoba Recreational Trails Association (MRTA) has received provincial funding to conduct the consultation necessary to develop a trail maintenance plan. The important task of trail maintenance must be well-coordinated in order to be effective and a consistent plan is fundamental to achieving this goal. Along with the

consideration of the MRTA recommendations, the Provincial Government should also examine the feasibility of establishing a funding mechanism for trail maintenance.

In particular, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to establish a trust fund for the ongoing maintenance of the Trans-Canada Trail in Manitoba.

AMM Resolution Number 19 - 2005

Topic: Trust Fund for Maintenance of Trans-Canada Trail

Sponsors: RM of St. Andrews (Interlake District)

Department: Manitoba Culture, Heritage & Tourism

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the AMM lobby the Federal and Provincial Governments to create a trust fund to provide for the maintenance of the Trans-Canada Trail in the Province of Manitoba.

C) General Issues

1) The Municipal Agenda

Municipal government is playing a more important role in the every day lives of Canadians. No longer is the local council seen as merely the local tax collector and tertiary service provider. Today, municipal governments have greater responsibilities, often playing a leading role in key areas that are not traditionally municipal in nature, such as health care and environmental protection. As the importance of the local community grows municipal government, as the level of government closest to the people, is becoming more important. As a result, it is critical that a serious examination be undertaken of the roles, responsibilities and resources of municipal government in Manitoba.

Nationally through the work of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, municipal governments have been able to secure a full rebate of the GST and the New Deal for Communities or 'Gas Tax Rebate.' Community issues have become front and centre on the nation stage, and the AMM is pleased with the recognition by the federal government of the importance of local government and the need to put resources in the hands of the level of government that delivers key services.

Provincially, municipal government in Manitoba has seen some advances as well. Most recently the Province announced the new Building Manitoba Fund that will link municipal grant money to provincial gas tax revenues. Manitoba is also unique in that the Provincial Government shares a percentage of income tax with municipalities through the Provincial/Municipal Tax Sharing agreement.

While these initiatives are certainly positive, more is needed. Many of the resolutions currently being worked on by the AMM deal with issues of funding, or more specifically inadequate funding levels. A serious discussion of the resources available to municipalities needs to be undertaken. However for this discussion to be fruitful, it must be raised within the greater context of what are and what should be the responsibilities of municipal government.

Municipal government in this province has embraced taking on additional responsibilities as these have been seen to be for the betterment of the local community. Many municipalities have gone to great lengths to help provincial RHAs recruit physicians. Municipalities have undertaken projects to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve the environment. Yet there are limits to how much municipalities can do with their current revenue streams.

We have consistently heard from the Province that Manitoba municipalities have it better than almost every other province when it comes to funding transfers from provincial governments. However, this discussion is meaningless without also discussing what municipal governments are responsible for. If municipalities are expected to take on additional responsibilities it is imperative that new revenue sources are made available.

For example, a major concern for municipalities is the financial implications of the recently passed Water Protection Act. While the intent behind this legislation is laudable, the overwhelming lack of detail, especially in the area of responsibilities and finances, has many municipal governments concerned. Municipal Governments cannot take on the financial

costs associated with implementing and enforcing this Act. The Municipal budget is already stretched too thin.

The current municipal infrastructure deficit in Manitoba further compounds the need to re-examine the resources available to municipalities. Communities are facing crumbling roads, deteriorating community centres and inadequate water treatment facilities. It is estimated that Manitoba's infrastructure deficit is \$7.4 billion, which includes \$2 billion in rural municipal infrastructure and \$1 billion within the City of Winnipeg. These are staggering numbers when compared to the revenue streams available to these municipalities. When only 7 cents of every tax dollar goes to municipalities, it is evident there is a lack of resources to deal with this deficit.

This is why the AMM has been advocating for a 5-year plan to significantly reduce the reliance on property tax to fund education. Currently the property tax base is the principle source of revenue for municipalities. However, this tax base is diminished when education tax takes up well over 50%. Equally concerning is the continuing increases year after year which force municipalities to seriously consider any municipal tax increases, as there are limits to what local residents are able to withstand. The AMM fully supports maintaining and improving the quality of education in Manitoba, however the current system of education taxation is not sustainable and in reality it is hurting local communities by limiting municipal resources.

In addition to the removal of education tax from property, there are other options to provide greater revenue to municipalities. For example, the Provincial Government can follow the

lead of the Federal Government with the GST and exempt municipal governments from the Provincial Sales Tax. Not only would this leave more money in the hands of municipalities, but it would significantly reduce the costs of many major infrastructure projects freeing up valuable funding for other areas of need. This would represent a significant shift away from the current tax and return system to a new system that allows municipalities to retain resources for community needs.

Strong communities are the foundation of a strong province and a strong Canada. As the Association that represents all incorporated municipalities in Manitoba we understand this. The AMM has long been advocating for municipal governments to look at ways of improving how they do business to ensure strong, sustainable communities across Manitoba. We also hear first hand the challenges communities are facing and we see the implications provincial actions are having on municipalities. It is for this reason that we believe it is time to take a closer look at the resources available to municipalities and what are the roles and responsibilities of municipal government in Manitoba.

The AMM urges the Province to work with municipalities to seriously examine the roles, responsibilities and resources of municipal governments in Manitoba.