

Meeting of the  
**Association of  
Manitoba  
Municipalities**



with

The Honourable Stan Struthers

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Minister of Conservation

January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006

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## A) Executive Summary

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### Departmental Issues

#### 1. Recycling and Green Manitoba Eco-Solutions

- Green Manitoba Eco-Solutions (GMES) requires the necessary resources to create sustainable solutions for Manitoba's recycling needs. Continuing the 80:20 funding formula is a necessary component of this solution.
- It is necessary that there be permanent recycling programs for off-road tires and household hazardous and electronic waste.
- The market for corrugated cardboard has significantly diminished, resulting in many programs no longer being funded at the 80:20 target. A bridge funding program for this material would assist municipalities until a new market can be found.

**Therefore, the AMM encourages the Province to adequately fund GMES and to continue with the 80:20 funding formula. The AMM also encourages bridge funding until a permanent recycling program for corrugated cardboard is established.**

#### 2. Water and Wastewater Plant Classification and Operator Certification

- Municipalities recognize the need for proper operator certification and plant classification. To ensure the strategies are enacted properly, they need to understand the regulations.
- To meet the necessary certification levels, the Province must ensure the training opportunities are available within Manitoba.
- The AMM would like an update on the certification progress to date.

**The AMM urges the Government to provide training opportunities within the province for all operator levels, clarify the rules regarding on-site operator requirements and substituting experience for education, and provide an update on the certification process to date.**

#### 3. Improved Weed Control

- Uncontrolled weed growth along Provincial roads and highways contributes to the dispersal of noxious weeds, thus impacting municipalities and farmers through increased weed control costs and reduced crop returns.

- Proper maintenance may also reduce stagnant water, thereby reducing opportunities for West Nile virus to develop.
- Controlling the weeds at the source allows municipalities to allocate funds to the most pressing needs in the community.

**The AMM urges the Provincial Government to control weed growth along Provincial highways and roads to minimize the spread of noxious weeds.**

#### 4. Taxation on Permanent Park Residents

- Permanent residents in provincial parks, resort areas and unorganized territories utilize services from nearby communities. However, they are charged the Chief Place of Residence Levy, contributing to the Consolidate Fund for education costs.
- This amount is not equitable in terms of the services that are being used, and municipal ratepayers subsidize services park residents utilize.
- The former Minister of Conservation agreed to raise the idea of a review of taxation of permanent park residents in 2003 however to date the AMM is unaware of any progress on this review.

**Therefore, the AMM asks that the Province review the taxation of park residences and impose a taxation whereby municipalities are adequately compensated for the services that are utilized.**

## General Issues

#### 5. 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

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### 1. Recycling and Green Manitoba Eco-Solutions

Reducing waste is a growing priority for Manitobans, as demonstrated in the successes of the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation (MPSC) and the ongoing interest from AMM members in establishing permanent recycling programs for all products. At our recent Convention, recycling needs were clearly an important issue that stimulated much debate on what municipalities require to be effective environmental stewards. The Province recently announced the establishment of Green Manitoba Eco-Solutions (GMES), a one-stop agency for all recycling solutions across the province. The AMM encourages the Province to commit the financial resources necessary to enable GMES to operate effectively, so that it can create sustainable solutions for some of the critical recycling needs in the province. Maintaining the successful 80:20 funding formula is an essential component.

The recycling needs include establishing a permanent recycling program for all tires, including off-road and oversize tires. Financial incentives need to be in place to encourage the recycling of all tires in areas with distant markets. Additionally, the need for permanent household hazardous and electronic waste programs remain a province-wide necessity. Household hazardous waste poses a very real threat to the health of Manitobans when it is improperly disposed of, and without an accessible recycling program, it is all too often sent to the landfill with regular garbage, or poured down drains. As technology advances, items become obsolete quickly. No longer of value to the consumer, they are also being thrown out with regular garbage, filling landfills and causing potential harm to the environment.

The recent closures of nearby cardboard recycling facilities have diminished the market for corrugated cardboard, resulting in cardboard piling up in many communities. The loss of this market now means that many of the programs in Manitoba are no longer funded at the 80:20 target. The AMM would like to see some sort of bridge funding program for this material until such a time as a new market can be found.

Without sufficient funding for these initiatives, GMES will not be successful in achieving its mandate. Therefore, the Province must ensure that its new environmental strategy is carried out through the provision of adequate funding for this important agency. Providing the funding needed to operate effectively will also be key to gaining municipal support.

**Therefore, the AMM encourages the Province to adequately fund GMES and to continue with the 80:20 funding formula. The AMM also encourages bridge funding until a permanent recycling program for corrugated cardboard is established.**

AMM Resolution Number 76 – 2005

**Topic:** Alternative Markets for Cardboard

**Sponsor(s):** RM of Langford (Mid-Western District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS the market for corrugated cardboard has collapsed;

AND WHEREAS municipalities are now having to landfill this product;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Provincial Government to pursue alternative markets for corrugated cardboard.

AMM Resolution Number 13 – 2005

**Topic:** Bottle Return System

**Sponsor(s):** City of Thompson (Northern District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Provincial Government to implement a drink container return system similar to that which is in place in other jurisdictions to ensure that recycling of these products increases.

AMM Resolution Number 70 – 2005

**Topic:** New Recycling Levies

**Sponsor(s):** City of Dauphin (Northern District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation has over the last three years reduced the payment per tonne for materials recycled to municipalities;

AND WHEREAS the cost of recycling has increased significantly since the levies were first introduced;

AND WHEREAS there are no levies on items such as glass, newspapers, magazines and commercial cardboard;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation to review the environmental levies charged to consumers in order to make recycling viable.

AMM Resolution Number 69 – 2005

**Topic:** Permanent Household Hazardous Waste Program

**Sponsor(s):** RM of Taché (Eastern District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Provincial Government to establish an effective program to recycle paint products, glycols as well as electronic waste material so as to remove these products from local landfill sites.

AMM Resolution Number 11 – 2005

**Topic:** Funding for Recycling Off-Road and Agricultural Tires

**Sponsor(s):** RM of Armstrong (Interlake District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS many off-road and agricultural tires are deposited in waste disposal grounds for recycling;

AND WHEREAS the Tire Stewardship Board (TSB) does not have funds to recycle these tires;

AND WHEREAS the Minister of Conservation has instructed the TSB to proceed with meeting its regulatory obligations within the existing revenue structure;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Provincial Government to provide funding to the Tire Stewardship Board to recycle off-road and agricultural tires.

AMM Resolution Number 59 – 2004

**Topic:** Electronic Waste Collection Program

**Sponsor(s):** RM of Taché (Eastern District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS municipalities currently have no practice regarding the disposal of hazardous waste such as electronic equipment, paint, etc. existing at landfill sites;

AND WHEREAS a stewardship program should be in place for the purpose of disposing of this material;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government to initiate a program for the disposal of this material.

AMM Resolution Number 26 – 2003

**Topic:** Recycling for Plastic Bags

**Sponsor(s):** Town of Altona (Central District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS there are many businesses, especially grocery stores, that use plastic bags for customer purchases;

AND WHEREAS many of these plastic bags end up in the local landfill sites because there is no system to recycle them;

AND WHEREAS these plastic bags create a nuisance at the landfill sites because they tend to be blown around by the wind;

AND WHEREAS these plastic bags take many years to decompose;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government to insist that retailers use biodegradable bags or re-usable bags instead of the current plastic bags;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities work with the Provincial Government to begin an educational campaign to inform the general public about the benefits of recycling/re-using these types of nuisance items.

AMM Resolution Number 36 – 2002

**Topic:** Incentives for Tire Recycling

**Sponsor(s):** Village of Waskada (Western District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS there appears to be a lack of interest on the part of tire processors to collect used tires at locations far from their plants;

AND WHEREAS in Manitoba, active tire processors are based mainly in Winkler or Winnipeg;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province to provide financial incentives to encourage tire recycling in areas far from markets.

AMM Resolution Number 48 – 2001

**Topic:** Incentives for Tire Recycling

**Sponsor(s):** RM of Woodlands (Interlake District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS the Honourable Oscar Lathlin, Manitoba Minister of Conservation, has informed the Tire Stewardship Board that the provincial sales tax collected on the \$2.80 tire levy will no longer be given to the Board to fund scrap tire recycling;

AND WHEREAS this amounts to an annual decrease in scrap tire recycling funds of approximately \$150,000;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Minister of Conservation to reinstate the sales tax on the \$2.80 tire levy to the Tire Stewardship Board.

AMM Resolution Number 34 – 2000

**Topic:** Recycling Funding for Corrugated Cardboard

**Sponsor(s):** Town of Boissevain (Western District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS municipalities contribute substantial amounts of money to run recycling programs;

AND WHEREAS a large portion of the material gathered by recycling depots is corrugated cardboard which requires a large storage space;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the provincial government to increase its funding of corrugated cardboard from 25 per cent to 100 per cent under the Product Stewardship Program.

## 2. Water and Wastewater Plant Classification and Operator Certification

The protection of Manitoba's water supplies is a necessity that cannot be downplayed. The AMM recognizes the importance of proper operator certification and plant classification, however it is also necessary that these strategies are enacted properly. To do this, municipalities need to be involved in the process and be aware of and understand the

regulations. The Province has been working with Manitoba's municipalities to do this, through the AMM's representation on the Certification of Waste Water Operators Review Committee and by making presentations to municipalities at both the recent AMM Convention and at some of the 2005 June District Meetings.

For the certification process to be reasonable, it is necessary that plant operators have opportunities in the province to meet the standards. It is unreasonable to demand certification levels beyond the training capabilities of our own province. Further to this, we would appreciate an update on the certification process and its progress, including success rates.

Additionally, municipalities continue to raise questions that require clarification on the rules surrounding plant classification and operator certification. These include specifying whether it is necessary for upper-level operators to have post-secondary education or if experience can be substituted, and clarifying whether the operator of a corresponding level must be on-site at all times or may be on call. It is also unclear whether there are provisions for when the corresponding operator is sick or on holidays. It is important that these rules are spelled out clearly.

Municipalities want to work with the Province to get the system working efficiently. To do this, they need to be kept informed on these issues and have their concerns and queries responded to in a timely manner. We urge this Government to address these issues to ensure the fast-approaching September 2006 deadline takes effect as smoothly and effortlessly as possible.

**The AMM urges the Government to provide training opportunities within the province for all operator levels, clarify the rules, and provide an update on the certification process to date.**

AMM Resolution Number 07 – 2005

**Topic:** Costs of Water Plant Operator Training  
**Sponsor(s):** Town of Erickson (Mid-Western District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has passed new legislation requiring water plant operators to attain a level of training corresponding to the classification of the plant;

AND WHEREAS this new legislation will pose new costs to be absorbed by the municipal governments' already strained budgets;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Provincial Government to assume responsibility for at least 80 per cent of the training costs of new operators in order to meet the new legislated criteria.

AMM Resolution Number 48 – 2004

**Topic:** Exam Fees for Water Training Courses

**Sponsor(s):** RM of Whitewater (Western District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS small utilities have a problem keeping utility rates at a respectful level;

AND WHEREAS the cost of Water Treatment I and Water Distribution I courses were \$350.00 per course plus an additional fee of \$150.00 per course to write the examinations;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government to include the examination fee in the \$350.00 course fee.

### 3. Improved Weed Control

The control of weed growth along Provincial roads and highways is a long-standing concern for Manitoba's municipalities. Uncontrolled growth contributes to the dispersal of noxious weeds. This impacts municipalities and farmers through increased weed control costs and reduced crop returns.

The Noxious Weeds Act requires that the Province control weeds on Provincial lands. This both ensures the problem is stopped at the source and supports municipalities in allocating municipal funds to the most pressing needs in the community. Maintaining ditches and slopes may also reduce stagnant water and through this, mosquito breeding grounds as well, thereby reducing the opportunities for West Nile virus to develop.

**The AMM urges the Provincial Government to control weed growth along Provincial highways and roads to minimize the spread of noxious weeds.**

AMM Resolution Number 17 – 2005

**Topic:** Weed Control for Ditches

**Sponsor(s):** RM of Springfield (Eastern District)  
RM of Taché (Eastern District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS weed growth along Provincial roads and highways has been proven to contribute to the widespread dispersal of noxious weeds, which leads to increased weed control costs for municipalities and farmers, and to reduced crop returns for the agricultural industry;

AND WHEREAS the Department of Transportation and Government Services has demonstrated in some areas in 2005 that weed growth can be properly controlled;

AND WHEREAS The Noxious Weeds Act of Manitoba requires the Provincial Government to control weeds on Provincial lands;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Provincial Government to recognize its responsibility to adequately control weed growth along Provincial highways and roads in order to minimize the spread of noxious weeds.

AMM Resolution Number 09 – 2004

**Topic:** Tilling Rights-of-Way

**Sponsor(s):** RM of Lac du Bonnet (Eastern District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS agriculture producers throughout Manitoba till ditches running adjacent to fields;

AND WHEREAS this process impedes drainage for these roads and highways causing problems for the province and municipalities;

AND WHEREAS it is a good farm practice to leave riparian areas between farm land and public rights-of-way;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government to implement an educational program encouraging farmers not to till public rights-of-way.

AMM Resolution Number 48 – 2004

**Topic:** Priority for Drainage System Maintenance

**Sponsor(s):** RM of Woodlands (Interlake District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government to have higher priority given to the annual mowing and clean out of ditches that are an integral part of the drainage system.

#### 4. Taxation on Permanent Park Residents

For a number of years, the AMM has raised with this Government the need to review the taxation system for people who maintain a chief place of residence in provincial parks, resort areas and unorganized territories. Currently, these residents are charged the Chief Place of Residence Levy, which contributes to the Consolidated Fund in support of education costs. This amount however is not equitable in terms of the services that are being used. Municipal governments and municipal ratepayers in the nearby communities are forced to make up the shortfall. It is an unfair practice to require that municipal ratepayers subsidize services park residents utilize.

In 2003, then Minister of Conservation, Minister Ashton, agreed to raise the idea of a specific review of taxation of permanent park residents with the appropriate Ministers, however the AMM has not seen any progress on this action to date. The AMM now asks the Province to formally assess and impose a form of taxation on park residences and establish a collection system to ensure that the monies collected are distributed to the responsible school division and municipalities providing key services to these residents.

**Therefore, the AMM asks that the Province review the taxation of park residences and impose a taxation whereby municipalities are adequately compensated for the services that are utilized.**

AMM Resolution Number 41 – 2001

**Topic:** Taxation on Permanent Park Residents

**Sponsor(s):** RM of Kelsey (Northern District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Manitoba Municipalities continue their efforts in lobbying the provincial government to impose a form of taxation,

through actual assessment, on residences situated in provincial parks, resort areas and unorganized territories in order to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of education and municipal costs and in so doing, establish a collection system to ensure that the monies raised are distributed to the responsible school division and municipalities/towns providing other services which these residents use and currently do not pay for.

AMM Resolution Number 42 – 2001

**Topic:** Taxation on Permanent Park Residents

**Sponsor(s):** City of Flin Flon (Northern District)

**Department(s):** Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS there are an increased number of permanent year-round residences established in provincial parks, resort areas, and unorganized territory throughout the province of Manitoba;

AND WHEREAS these residents tend to use the services and facilities provided by the neighbouring municipality;

AND WHEREAS all other residents of the province of Manitoba, excluding those residing in provincial parks, resort areas, and unorganized territory, are required to contribute to the municipal costs of these services and facilities;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the provincial government to impose a form of taxation on permanent year-round residences established in provincial parks, resort areas and unorganized territory throughout Manitoba to contribute to the services and facilities provided by the neighbouring municipalities.

## C) General Issues

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### 5. 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.**