



Meeting with  
The Honourable Diane McGifford  
Minister of Advanced Education & Literacy

March 10, 2008

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## Executive Summary

### Departmental Issues

#### 1. Health Professional Training in Manitoba

- As the order of government responsible for health care, the Province must ensure that all communities have access to an appropriate supply of medical professionals.
- The AMM is pleased with recent commitments to fund additional medical school and nursing education spaces at Manitoba's universities and colleges.
- Efforts to increase enrolment should target the increased inclusion of rural and northern students and those expected to practice family medicine.
- There is also a need to facilitate the training of other medical professionals such as nurse practitioners and physician assistants.
- Training is one component of a broader strategy that must include international recruitment and retention initiatives.

**Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to provide additional support for locally trained medical students as part of a comprehensive strategy to address the shortage of medical professionals in Manitoba.**

#### 2. Certification of Water and Wastewater Operators

- Municipalities continue to face obstacles in certifying operators due to the insufficiency of locally-available training.
- While there are sufficient Level I and II courses and exams available, the ongoing lack of Level III and IV courses remains a significant concern.
- Since municipalities pay the course and exam fees, it is essential to maximize the opportunity for their employees to succeed.
- The Province should also assist in minimizing the cost to municipalities by providing courses tailored to experienced operators.

**Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to provide training opportunities within Manitoba for all operator levels.**

#### 3. Training for Maintenance of Wind Turbines

- Wind energy stimulates regional economies throughout the construction process due to the increased jobs for local trades people as well as the associated purchase and rental of equipment and materials.

- The ongoing operation and maintenance of wind turbines is another important job creation outcome associated with wind energy expansion.
- Education and training to support these positions would augment local involvement in the industry.
- Investing in a locally trained, knowledgeable workforce would support future efforts to enter the component production market.

**Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to provide funding for local training opportunities related to the maintenance and production of wind turbines.**

## General Issue

### 1. Water Issues

- Water management is one of the most important issues facing Manitoba today and we believe it is important that all Ministers understand the significance of the current direction to municipalities.
- Municipalities certainly agree with the Province on the high level goals and visions laid out so far. However it is how the Province is looking to move forward in arriving at these goals that has raised concerns for municipalities.
- Conservation districts (CDs) have become the delivery mechanism of choice for water initiatives in Manitoba, however the funding for CDs has never been equal to the expectations that have been placed upon them. The *Framework for the Future* document advocates for a scenario where the Province will provide little additional funding, while increasing the expectations for CDs.
- There is real concern that the proposed changes to the funding mechanisms will seriously erode the importance of local priorities, ultimately leading to the erosion of local authority.
- By being forced to use the vast majority of the CD budget on provincially directed initiatives, there will be nothing left to deal with local priorities.
- We are also very concerned with the approach taken by the department in trying to gain feedback on the document. The questionnaire is misleading in that it does not deal with these fundamental issues, and instead focuses on support for the very general goal statements.
- We are hopeful that although the Province has moved forward unilaterally on this initiative, there is still opportunity to find a workable solution that benefits everyone.

## Departmental Issues

### 1. Health Professional Training in Manitoba

The widespread demand for health professionals in all areas of Manitoba has resulted in an increased municipal role in the health care system. Municipalities actively participate in the recruitment and retention of medical professionals and many communities are working hard to showcase themselves as attractive locations to practice medicine. At the same time, municipal efforts cannot be successful without effective training initiatives. The critical shortage of medical professionals throughout Manitoba must be addressed through a comprehensive strategy that addresses shortcomings in training, recruitment and retention. As the order of government responsible for health care, the Province must ensure that all communities have access to an appropriate supply of medical professionals.

The AMM is pleased with the recent commitment to fund an additional 10 spaces at the University of Manitoba medical school starting in September 2008. The November 2007 Throne Speech also committed to adding spaces for nursing education at Manitoba's universities and colleges. The AMM looks forward to these commitments being fulfilled since there is high demand for all types of medical professionals. It has been proven that locally trained professionals are more likely to continue practicing in Manitoba, however this is a long-term approach. Due to the aging population of many physicians, it has been predicted that shortages will only worsen over time. Therefore, the Province must consider the ability of current training levels to meet future demands as more physicians retire and ensure an adequate supply of physicians are being trained.

Furthermore, the Province has a responsibility to provide high quality health care in all areas of Manitoba. Rural and northern communities face additional challenges in attracting health professionals and targeted efforts are required to mitigate these challenges. Therefore, efforts to increase enrolment should target the increased inclusion of rural and northern students and those expected to practice family medicine. Such target groups are crucial since rural students are more likely to practice in rural areas and family physicians are in high demand throughout rural and

northern areas. Recently, the number of rural students has been rising along with overall enrolment and this positive trend must continue.

The pervasive shortages in a variety of medical professions require that innovative approaches be pursued to address the current gaps in health care services. Therefore, there is also a need to facilitate the training of other medical professionals such as nurse practitioners and physician assistants. Coordinated teams including these medical professionals are particularly effective in rural areas where family physicians are scarce. Nurse practitioners and physician assistants are increasingly recognized as a solution for alleviating current gaps and decreasing wait times in health delivery. In addition, the AMM looks forward to the implementation of the new physician assistant masters program at the University of Manitoba. Municipalities welcome such efforts to complement physician resources and the Province should continue to pursue these alternative strategies.

Training is one component of a broader strategy that must include international recruitment and retention initiatives. Manitoba must remain competitive with Canadian and American neighbours regarding licensing procedures and ensure that there are no additional barriers to entering this province as compared to other jurisdictions. International Medical Graduates (IMGs) play an important role in Manitoba's health care system and the AMM looks forward to improved IMG recruitment as a result of the new Provincial assessment process.

As well, any effort to recruit medical professionals, whether locally or from abroad, must be complemented with efforts to retain these professionals in Manitoba. Municipal efforts to welcome medical professionals and provide local services cannot be the only incentives to remain in Manitoba. The Province has implemented the Medical Student/Resident Financial Assistance Program to enhance retention rates and these conditional grants have certainly increased the number of medical professionals practicing in Manitoba. However, the ongoing shortages suggest the need for greater action to retain medical professionals in Manitoba.

Improved access to health care is an important aspect of achieving vibrant communities throughout the Province. This cannot be accomplished without an adequate supply of medical professionals to provide a variety of health services to all Manitobans.

**Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to provide additional support for locally trained medical students as part of a comprehensive strategy to address the shortage of medical professionals in Manitoba.**

## 2. Certification of Water and Wastewater Operators

Municipalities consistently support effective water management since safe water supply and treatment support the well-being of local residents. For this reason, the AMM has supported the classification of facilities and certification of operators to regulate water and wastewater treatment services. However, since the outset there have been gaps in the operator training opportunities available within Manitoba. As a result, municipalities continue to face obstacles in certifying operators due to the insufficiency of locally-available training.

Water quality is a high priority for municipalities and hiring qualified operators is a necessary step in fulfilling this responsibility. However, many municipalities and individuals are finding the high cost of training courses and exams to be a difficult challenge. While there are sufficient Level I and II courses and exams available, the ongoing lack of Level III and IV courses remains a significant concern. In order to pursue in-class instruction for higher certification levels, students are required to travel out of province or internationally. This significantly increases the costs associated with Level III and IV certification, thereby exacerbating the challenge of finding certified operators. The local demand for these courses highlights the need for the local provision of in-class training opportunities.

Some on-line courses are available for Level III and IV, however direct interaction with instructors greatly assists in understanding this complex material. The difficulty of challenging the Level III and IV exams has led many municipalities to question the suitability of on-line courses. Since municipalities pay the course and exam fees, it is essential to maximize the opportunity for their employees to succeed. Therefore, the Province must ensure that adequate training opportunities are available within Manitoba to meet the requirements of the Provincial legislation at all certification levels.

In addition, the Province should assist in minimizing the cost to municipalities by providing courses tailored to experienced operators. Municipalities have often employed the same operators for many years, and these individuals do not require the same instruction as a new operator. Rather, these individuals tend to require a brief update as preparation to challenge the

exams. Therefore, the Province should explore alternative training formats that would meet the needs of highly experienced operators.

Municipalities are undoubtedly incurring additional costs as a result of these requirements and the Province has an opportunity to minimize these extra costs by making appropriate training available for all levels of certification. To achieve a consistently safe water supply across Manitoba, the Province must work with municipalities to ensure that individuals can obtain the required qualifications in an efficient manner.

**Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to provide training opportunities within Manitoba for all operator levels.**

### **3. Training for Maintenance of Wind Turbines**

There is growing support among municipalities for implementing environmentally friendly practices, which has led to a demand for additional wind energy production in Manitoba. The St. Leon wind farm has generated considerable local benefits and many communities across the province are interested in pursuing opportunities associated with the generation of wind energy.

Wind energy stimulates regional economies throughout the construction process due to the increased jobs for local trades people as well as the associated purchase and rental of equipment and materials. Landowners also gain a lucrative source of annual revenue, as demonstrated by the St. Leon project which will provide \$9 million to approximately 50 landowners over a 25 year period. Municipal and Provincial tax revenues also rise substantially due to the increased assessment value. The Province should continue to support the expansion of wind power across Manitoba due to the economic development opportunities it creates.

The ongoing operation and maintenance of wind turbines is another important job creation outcome associated with wind energy expansion. The electrical components of wind turbines require ongoing maintenance which creates opportunities to employ local residents. Education and training to support these positions would augment local involvement in the industry. In addition, the more Manitobans gain knowledge related to turbine components, there may be additional opportunities to manufacture components locally. Currently, turbine components must be shipped to Canada from Europe. Investing in a locally trained, knowledgeable workforce would support future efforts to enter the component production market. Manitoba Hydro is exploring the feasibility of additional wind farms across the province which demonstrates the opportunities available to support complementary industries and services. Manitoba's ability to participate in these additional opportunities will be stimulated through the development of adequate technical training courses.

**Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to provide funding for local training opportunities related to the maintenance and production of wind turbines.**

## General Issue

### 1. Water Issues

Each year the AMM includes a top issue as a general agenda item for its meetings with all individual Cabinet Ministers. This year the AMM Board is taking municipal concerns with the current Provincial direction on water-related issues. The reason we are taking this issue to all Ministers is to let each Cabinet Minister know the importance of this issue to municipalities and our primary concerns. We believe this is one of the most important issues facing Manitoba today and we believe it is important that all Ministers understand the significance of the current direction to municipalities.

The AMM has always been a willing partner on water initiatives whenever asked. The AMM was one of the most vocal advocates for the creation of a single department to deal with water initiatives. The AMM has also participated on a number of provincial direction-setting initiatives, including the Manitoba Water Strategy. Municipalities know firsthand the importance of properly managing water and have always been willing to do what is needed. Clean drinking water, safely managed wastewater, and proper drainage and water management are all priorities for municipalities, just as they are for the Province.

Municipalities certainly agree with the Province on the high level goals and visions laid out so far. However it is how the Province is looking to move forward in arriving at these goals that has raised concerns for municipalities.

Throughout the last number of years municipalities have been raising concerns with how all of the new directions announced by the Province will be funded. Most recently the Province released *Framework for the Future*, a discussion document on the future of conservation districts in the province, which is most alarming. Conservation districts (CDs) have become the delivery mechanism of choice for water initiatives in Manitoba, however the funding for CDs has never been equal to the expectations that have been placed upon them. This document advocates for a scenario where the Province will provide little additional funding, while increasing the expectations for CDs.

One of the greatest strengths of CDs is that they are locally driven, with boards comprised of local residents making decisions based on local priorities. However there is real concern that the proposed changes to the funding mechanisms will seriously erode the importance of local priorities, ultimately leading to the erosion of local authority. This new proposal is to link limited provincial funding with provincial priorities, taking away a local CD's ability to use provincial funding for locally decided priorities. By being forced to use the vast majority of their budget on provincially directed initiatives, there will be nothing left to deal with local priorities. While we certainly expect there to be similarities between provincial and CD priorities, any flexibility in addressing local priorities will be lost.

These are very fundamental issues that need to be discussed and dealt with in order for the CD program to work in Manitoba. However we are very concerned with the approach taken by the department in trying to gain feedback on the document. The questionnaire is misleading in that it does not deal with these fundamental issues, and instead focuses on support for the very general goal statements. We feel the information gained from the questionnaires will only provide part of the picture, while many of the more fundamental issues are not addressed.

The AMM has a long history of working together with the Province, and over the last few years we have worked closely on numerous issues. While often we have differing opinions about what is best, we have been able to work together to find solutions to challenges and with the end result being what is best for all Manitobans. We are hopeful that although the Province has moved forward unilaterally on this initiative, there is still opportunity to find a workable solution that benefits everyone.

## Appendix A – Active Resolutions

### **AMM Resolution Number 34 - 2005**

#### **Topic: Physician Recruitment Strategy**

Sponsor: Town of Churchill (Northern District)

Departments: Manitoba Health & Healthy Living

WHEREAS Manitoba is experiencing a chronic shortage of medical professionals and doctors throughout the Province, affecting the ability of all Manitobans to access adequate medical services;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Provincial Government to aggressively recruit medical professionals and doctors through marketing, recruiting incentives and all other means available to the Province.

### **AMM Resolution Number 22 - 2004**

#### **Topic: Physician Recruitment**

Sponsor: RM of Alexander (Eastern District)

Departments: Manitoba Health & Healthy Living

WHEREAS municipalities are very concerned that the pre-emptive practice imposed by the College of Physicians & Surgeons resulting from a complaint to the Human Rights Commission of requiring all potential physicians to write an exam prior to practicing medicine here is damaging this Province's ability to attract doctors, especially in rural areas;

AND WHEREAS the municipality certainly recognizes and appreciates the College of Physicians and Surgeons for the critical role they play in protecting and establishing the medical standards for all Manitobans, it remains disappointed that this decision was arbitrarily imposed and not discussed with stakeholders and that consideration of a phasing in of required testing was not considered;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Provincial Government to reconsider this matter in order that Manitoba becomes consistent with other provinces, where the above noted requirement is not yet required until determined by virtue of law.

### **AMM Resolution Number 28 - 2003**

#### **Topic: Doctor Training in Manitoba**

Sponsor: Town of Arborg, RM of Bifrost (Interlake District)

Departments: Manitoba Health & Healthy Living

WHEREAS the non-availability of doctors in rural Manitoba has reached crisis proportions;

AND WHEREAS spaces at our universities are very limited with no guaranteed accessibility for Manitoba students;

AND WHEREAS Manitoba students consequently need to go to other countries to train in the medical profession;

AND WHEREAS Manitoba students who train in other countries are required to write special tests to return to set up practice in Manitoba even though they are permitted to practice in the United States and some other Canadian provinces without these entry tests;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT all necessary steps to ensure and increase spaces at Manitoba universities for doctor training be immediately implemented to adequately address the needs of rural Manitoba;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Provincial Government be aggressively persuaded to help make doctor training more affordable for Manitoba students;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT if entry tests are deemed necessary for Manitoba doctors trained out of country, that the appropriate governing body ensure that the tests be set up in such a manner that those new doctors can write the tests and have the results within 10 days to alleviate additional expenses incurred attributable to that delay in obtaining results.

**AMM Resolution Number 08 - 2006**

**Topic: Class 3 & 4 Water Plant Operators Training**

Sponsor: Town of Russell (Midwestern District)

Departments: Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS a number of small urban communities currently operate lime soda ash filtering water plants;

AND WHEREAS the complexity of the chemical process involved in the operation of lime soda ash plants has resulted in many of the facilities being designated as Class 3 or Class 4 water treatment facilities as per provincial legislation;

AND WHEREAS municipal employees have expertise and ability in operating lime soda ash plants sufficient to create consistent potable water for communities but may not have the educational and theoretical background to pass certification exams;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Provincial Government to ensure that training beyond courses designed to pass certification exams be offered so that Class 3 or Class 4 water plant operators can obtain sufficient background and knowledge to effectively and efficiently operate the facilities.