



Meeting with
The Honourable Eric Robinson
Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism & Sport

February 7, 2008

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Executive Summary

Departmental Issues

1. Library Funding and Update on Status of Library Review

- The changing pressures on public libraries require ongoing investment through an enhanced provincial contribution.
- The AMM is appreciative of the steps that the Provincial Government has taken to improve the public library system.
- As its foremost concern, the Public Library Review Committee has recommended 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 continue to provide resources that improve public libraries across Manitoba and act quickly on the eight recommendations of the Provincial Government's Public Library Review Committee's report *Reaching our Vision: Providing High Quality, Sustainable Library Services for all Manitobans*.

2. Funding for Recreation Centres

- The AMM is seeking the Province's continued support for a tripartite recreational infrastructure program. The program would target the repair, upgrading and building of recreational facilities throughout Manitoba and Canada.
- The Federal Government has recognized the need for an increased focus on physical activity through the 2007 pre-budget submission of the Standing Committee on Finance, *Canada: Competing to Win*. The Federal Government should be encouraged to follow through on the recommendations outlined in this submission.
- The AMM acknowledges the Provincial funding initiatives that will assist in maintaining and renewing recreation infrastructure, such as the Throne Speech commitment to double funding for recreation centres across Manitoba.
- The Provincial Government should support the wide-ranging benefits of recreation and physical activity by eliminating the maximum Provincial contribution for the Community Places Program.
- Communities are working hard to maximize the life span of facilities and there are opportunities to reduce overall costs without lowering the level of service provided, such as measures to reduce operating costs.

- Improved recreational infrastructure must occur in conjunction with enhanced program development to help sustain healthy communities.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to pursue a tripartite recreation infrastructure program, to work with municipalities to reduce operating costs for recreation facilities, and fund Recreation Connections Manitoba and recreation commissions to ensure the sustainability of Manitoba's recreational facilities and programs.

3. Joint Use of Schools and Community Facilities

- Municipalities are committed to creating partnerships to enhance and expand the recreational opportunities that are available in their communities.
- The AMM has been actively involved in the Joint Use of Schools and Community Facilities Advisory Committee in order to promote enrichment, development and accomplishment through recreation and leisure activities.
- The resultant joint use of facilities and associated programming cannot solely be funded by municipalities.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to act on the recommendations of the *Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force Report* to enhance equitable access to community and school facilities in Manitoba with a primary focus on physical activity opportunities for children and youth.

General Issues

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. Library Funding and Update on Status of Library Review

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, the implementation of the recommendations made in May 2006 by the Public Libraries Review Committee in their report *Reaching our Vision: Providing High Quality, Sustainable Library Services for all Manitobans* is important to municipalities.

Libraries are changing to maintain their relevance in our technologically advancing province. There is a need to modernize public library services and increase accessibility for all Manitobans. 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. The AMM was pleased to see the commitment of funding from the Building Manitoba Fund for a \$1.1 million investment in library technology infrastructure. This will assist rural and northern libraries, however, the demand for library services in municipalities is increasing and long-term planning is needed to support them. There is an ongoing demand for up-to-date collections and special collections, such as large print books, which will continue to increase with Manitoba's aging population. The 2007 election commitment to provide \$300,000 in capital funding for libraries and \$450,000 to modernize library facilities will assist municipalities, however is not sufficient to meet the ongoing needs of all municipal libraries. The changing pressures on public libraries require ongoing investment through an enhanced provincial contribution. The Provincial Government should continue to act on the recommendations made by the Public Libraries Review Committee to allow public libraries to remain responsive to local community demands.

Municipalities have had to increase their per capita levies to address insufficient funding and the Provincial Government must also increase contributions to assist municipalities in supporting libraries. As well, 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 library 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 technology upgrades, program development and collection 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 for the health of Manitoba's communities. Municipalities are attempting to meet these critical demands, but require the support of the Provincial Government to keep pace with the changing information needs of communities.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to continue to provide resources that improve public libraries across Manitoba and act quickly on the eight recommendations of the Provincial Government's Public Library Review Committee's report *Reaching our Vision: Providing High Quality, Sustainable Library Services for all Manitobans.*

2. Funding for Recreation Centres

Frequent physical activity is known to be an effective preventive measure that lowers health risks, thereby reducing pressure on the health care system and alleviating costs associated with health care. As well, providing recreational opportunities has proven to be a successful crime prevention method and can therefore reduce the cost of policing at the local level. However, many of Manitoba's municipalities have neither the funding to invest in new facilities nor the resources to fund the repair of cultural and recreational facilities. These investments cannot be made unless municipalities obtain additional resources and the Provincial Government is a key stakeholder in this process.

The Provincial Government has already indicated a commitment to promoting recreation as a part of healthy communities, as evidenced in the report of the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force. The findings of this report are not isolated to Manitoba communities. In fact, communities across Canada are facing the same demands for improved recreational opportunities. For this reason, the AMM is seeking the Province's continued support for a tripartite recreational infrastructure program. The program would target the repair, upgrading and building of recreational facilities throughout Manitoba and Canada. It is imperative for the Federal Government to continually be informed of the recreational needs across the country and the Provincial Government has a key role in this regard.

The Federal Government has recognized the need for an increased focus on physical activity through the 2007 pre-budget submission of the Standing Committee on Finance, *Canada: Competing to Win*. The Federal Government should be encouraged to follow through on the recommendations outlined in this submission, particularly regarding the need to ensure adequate funding for all elements of preventative programs focused on measures that will improve the health of Canadians, including physical activity choices. Municipalities across Canada have been working together through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) to highlight the national need for recreation funding. In its 2005 federal budget submission, FCM requested that \$30 million in new money be set aside from infrastructure funds to finance community/municipally managed social infrastructure initiatives including parks, play spaces, community facilities and libraries. Even with this illustration of the nation-wide concern and the

clear connection between improved recreation and lower health care costs, the Federal Government has not increased funding for recreational infrastructure. For this reason, the Provincial Government should support municipal efforts by continuing to raise the need for a tripartite recreation infrastructure program.

The AMM also acknowledges the Provincial funding initiatives that will assist in maintaining and renewing recreation infrastructure, such as the Throne Speech commitment to double funding for recreation centres across Manitoba. This is consistent with the NDP's election commitment of providing an additional \$30 million for recreation facilities, community clubs and soccer fields. Such an increase will complement the 2006 Building Manitoba Fund investment of \$7.4 million over two years for recreation and library facility projects in rural and northern Manitoba. The AMM is also appreciative of the increased funding for the Community Places Program to \$4.5 million for 2008. As one of the few existing programs that assist with the renovation, replacement or construction of recreational facilities, it is the main vehicle that provides funds to assist Manitoba communities wanting to upgrade their recreational infrastructure. When adequately funded this program will assist several communities, since so many of Manitoba's recreational facilities are aging and in desperate need of repair.

The Provincial Government is a key stakeholder in recreation initiatives and therefore has a responsibility to ensure municipalities can make suitable investments in recreational facilities and programming. However, municipalities are finding that the maximum Provincial contribution for the Community Places Program of \$50,000 is not sufficient. Given the high cost of many recreational infrastructure projects, limiting provincial funding in this manner could delay or deter municipal investment. There should also be recognition that due to escalating costs these grants are now worth less overall in real dollars. The Provincial Government should therefore support the wide-ranging benefits of recreation and physical activity by eliminating the maximum Provincial contribution.

Communities are working hard to maximize the life span of facilities and there are opportunities to reduce overall costs without lowering the level of service provided. For example, education and training programs should be developed to encourage municipalities to examine the efficiency

of their recreational facilities. The Manitoba Municipal Efficiency Program (MMEP) offers a potential starting point for such initiatives. Other possibilities include reducing the Hydro and MTS rates for publicly owned and operated recreational facilities. The AMM urges the Provincial Government to pursue means of lowering the operating costs of recreation facilities to allow municipalities to provide quality services at a reasonable cost. Decreased operating costs would enable facilities to open for additional time, thereby increasing opportunities for recreation.

Improved recreational infrastructure must occur in conjunction with enhanced program development to help sustain healthy communities. Therefore, the Province must also provide support for recreation practitioners in order to ensure a variety of programming options are available. Recreation Connections Manitoba (RCM) assists recreation practitioners in professional development, training and advocacy, however adequate funding has not been available to completely fulfill this mandate. The recent Provincial funding increase of \$15,000 was certainly appreciated, however this amount still falls short of RCM's funding requirements as identified in their business plan. Similarly, recreation commissions are also in need of additional funding. Recreation commissions are an essential component of the recreation delivery system in Manitoba, yet funding has not increased since the early 1990s. With the widespread demand for additional recreation opportunities it is crucial to fund both the infrastructure and programming that is necessary to meet these demands.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to pursue a tripartite recreation infrastructure program, to work with municipalities to reduce operating costs for recreation facilities, and fund Recreation Connections Manitoba and recreation commissions to ensure the sustainability of Manitoba's recreational facilities and programs.

3. Joint Use of Schools and Community Facilities

Municipalities are committed to creating partnerships to enhance and expand the recreational opportunities that are available in their communities. The development of joint use facilities presents a significant opportunity for municipalities, recreation centres, community buildings, libraries and schools to work together along with other orders of government and stakeholders to offer greater recreation options to Manitobans. Pursuing such partnerships leads to cost efficiencies since infrastructure is available to meet a variety of community demands for recreation.

The AMM has been supportive of two key initiatives that should assist in furthering these goals, with the associated allocation of resources. First, the AMM appreciated the recommendations in the 2005 *Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force Report* that targeted increasing recreational opportunities for children and youth. The Report identifies extensive opportunities to increase levels of physical activity by using existing school structures to expand programming outside of school usage. Municipalities are interested in pursuing these arrangements and the Province has a role in ensuring recreation opportunities are available on an equitable basis.

Secondly, the AMM has been actively involved in the Joint Use of Schools and Community Facilities Advisory Committee in order to promote enrichment, development and accomplishment through recreation and leisure activities. However, the resultant joint use of facilities and associated programming cannot solely be funded by municipalities. The Province continues to have a role in funding recreation infrastructure in schools as well as other community resources such as libraries and recreation centres. Municipal governments cannot unilaterally sustain the funding that would be required for these new arrangements. It is necessary to ensure that costs are not downloaded and access to recreation can be equitable for all users.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to act on the recommendations of the *Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force Report* to enhance equitable access to community and school facilities in Manitoba with a primary focus on physical activity opportunities for children and youth.

General Issues

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 12/06

Topic: Recreation Connections Funding

Sponsor: Town of The Pas (Northern District)

Department: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism

WHEREAS it is recognized that the Municipal Governments of Manitoba, as the closest Government to the people, are responsible for the delivery of recreation services to their residents;

AND WHEREAS Municipal Governments spend considerable financial resources to deliver recreation services to their residents on an annual basis;

AND WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba has a policy outlining the provincial responsibility to support the recreation delivery system and its practitioners;

AND WHEREAS the most effective and efficient way to support and strengthen the recreation delivery system is to fund Recreation Connections Manitoba to the level outlined in the business plan developed by Recreation Connections and the Province of Manitoba;

AND WHEREAS the Manitoba Government takes a lead role in supporting this organization and developing and nurturing partnerships with the key stakeholders in the recreation delivery system;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to support municipalities and practitioners of the recreation delivery system by funding Recreation Connections to the level identified in their business plan in order to fulfill and fully support the recreation delivery system in accordance with their existing policy.

AMM Resolution Number 19/05

Topic: Trust Fund for Maintenance of Trans-Canada Trail

Sponsor: RM of St. Andrews (Interlake District)

Department: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Manitoba Finance, Finance Canada

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.

AMM Resolution Number 16/04

Topic: Review of Library Funding

Sponsor: Village of McCreary (Midwestern District), RM of Blanchard (Midwestern District), RM of Shell River (Parklands District)

Department: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and 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 55/04

Topic: Increased Funding for Libraries

Sponsor: RM of Birtle (Midwestern District)

Department: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and 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.

AMM Resolution Number 55/01

Topic: Funding for Community Places Program

Sponsor: Town of Neepawa (Midwestern District), Village of Elkhorn, RM of North Cypress, Town of Rivers (Western District)

Department: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism

WHEREAS the Manitoba Government has promised that 25 per cent of VLT profits would be distributed to rural Manitoba through direct grants, 10 per cent through economic development programs such as REDI, and 15 per cent 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 aging and in need of some major capital dollars as demonstrated by the over \$10 million in annual requests for a program of \$2.6 million;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province to:

- a) Increase the amount of available funds in the Manitoba Community Places Program; and,
- b) Increase the maximum funds allowable under the grant guidelines to better reflect the true costs of major capital projects.

AMM Resolution Number 42/00

Topic: Joining Established Regional Libraries

Sponsor: City of Steinbach (Eastern District)

Department: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and 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."