

Meeting of the
**Association of
Manitoba
Municipalities**



with

The Honourable Steve Ashton

Minister of Water Stewardship

February 9, 2004

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A) Executive Summary

1. Overview of New Department

- The AMM has long been advocating the consolidation of water and water-related issues into a single provincial department, and was pleased with the creation of the Department of Water Stewardship.
- Municipalities will certainly benefit from a single Provincial Department charged with the responsibility of dealing with water-related issues.
- However, the scope and staff composition of this new department remains unclear to our association.
- The Cabinet shuffle is now three months behind us, and our association is concerned that many of the initiatives that appear to be the responsibility of this new department have yet to be resumed.

Therefore, the AMM would appreciate an overview of the mandate and staff composition of the new Department of Water Stewardship. The AMM would also urge the Department of Water Stewardship to move forward with water initiatives that have been delayed as a result of the November Cabinet Shuffle.

2. Manitoba Water Strategy

- Water is one of the most important issues for Manitobans and the AMM is pleased to have had the opportunity to help create the Manitoba Water Strategy
- The Water Strategy is an important document and it is our hope that the enthusiasm that surrounds this new department will provide the impetus to move forward with this initiative quickly.
- However, responsibilities simply cannot be downloaded to municipalities as municipal budgets are already over-extended and municipalities are not financially able to take on additional responsibilities.
- Any additional administrative and financial responsibility for local-level initiatives will require accompanying Provincial support.

Therefore due to the importance of water as a natural resource, the AMM urges the Province to move forward with the implementation of the Manitoba Water Strategy recommendations, and urges the Province to provide support to municipalities for any additional administrative and financial responsibility as a result of implementing the recommendations.

3. Drainage

- Currently, the AMM has fourteen drainage related resolutions alone, and drainage is consistently raised as a concern in our visits with municipalities.
- In order to improve the drainage system in Manitoba, the Province needs to commit both adequate financing and adequate staff.
- An increase in drainage funding will allow municipalities to proceed with the drainage construction, repair, and maintenance projects so desperately needed. As the implementation of the Manitoba Water Strategy moves forward, increased funding for drainage projects is essential.
- All too often municipalities are experiencing delays in receiving permits for drainage work as there is not enough staff in place to review project applications. The Whitemud Watershed Conservation District pilot project was very successful in reducing approval times for drainage projects and the AMM is pleased that the Province has agreed to expand this model across Manitoba.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Province to make a greater financial commitment to drainage in the upcoming budget to help address the inadequacies of the current system. As well, the AMM urges the Province to increase staffing to process drainage work applications and to expand the Whitemud Watershed Conservation District pilot project model across Manitoba.

4. Lake Winnipeg Nutrient Levels and Municipalities

- The health of Lake Winnipeg is of paramount importance to all Manitobans and the AMM is pleased that the Province has taken measures to help ensure the health of the lake by exploring ways to return nutrient levels in Lake Winnipeg to pre-1970 levels.
- While there is indeed merit in reducing nutrient levels in Lake Winnipeg, the responsibility for changing current practices cannot be borne solely by municipalities. Most municipalities have limited financial resources and municipal budgets in many cases are already over-extended. Additional responsibilities may not be possible without financial contributions from the Province.
- Should the Province decide that to preserve Lake Winnipeg new legislation or regulations are required that oblige municipalities to change current practices, there must be accompanying financial support from the Province to adopt these new measures.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Province to provide financial support to municipalities should any new legislation or regulations be instituted in the process of reducing nutrient levels in Lake Winnipeg that require additional obligations from municipalities.

5. Water and Wastewater Operators Regulation

- The need for the highest water quality possible cannot be exaggerated as this directly impacts the safety and well being of all Manitobans.
- Our association was pleased that on April 22, 2003 The Environment Act Regulation 77/2003 was published requiring the mandatory certification of water and wastewater plant operators.
- However, municipalities have expressed concern that currently the Department does not have the appropriate staff in place to train and certify all operators in Manitoba and it is unclear what this means for municipalities as without adequate staff to manage this program, the August 31, 2004 deadline for certification may be unrealistic.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Department to put the appropriate staff in place to move forward with the timelines laid out in the certification regulations.

6. Drinking Water Safety Act

- A major concern for many municipalities is the safety of their drinking water supply.
- The AMM was pleased to see that the Drinking Water Safety Act was finally proclaimed on January 30, 2004.
- The Province has previously committed to consulting the AMM in the drafting of the regulations and now that the Act has been proclaimed we look forward to working with the Province in this regard.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Province to move forward and to consult with the AMM in drafting the regulations for the Drinking Water Safety Act.

7. Education Funding

- No issue is heard more often from our members than the concern of high property taxes as a result of the amount of property taxes dedicated to funding education.
- The AMM is pleased to be a part of the Minister's Working Group on Education Finance and would encourage the Province to move forward with the final report.
- As the recommendations of the report will not be released in time for the 2004 school budget process, the AMM would urge the Province to hold constant the current municipal and provincial contributions to education so that ratepayers are not further burdened with an increase in property taxes.

- The AMM believes that a new formula should be developed that would decrease property tax support for education while not diminishing education quality. The AMM firmly believes that the Province needs to adopt a stable and sustainable education funding ratio of 80 per cent from Provincial general revenues and twenty per cent from property tax revenue levied by local school boards. Furthermore, it is important that once an 80:20 ratio is achieved, it be maintained in future years.

The AMM urges the Province to move forward with the final report of the Minister's Working Group on Education Finance, and looks forward to discussing the recommendations with the Province, once released. The AMM further urges the Province to adopt a stable and sustainable funding ratio of 80 per cent from Provincial general revenues and twenty per cent levied by local school boards.

8. A New Deal for Municipalities

- All Manitoba municipalities have concerns about the ability of the current taxation system to meet municipal financial requirements. The root of the problem is the gap between the services that municipalities must provide and the resources at their disposal.
- In Manitoba, the infrastructure debt is approximately \$7.4 billion as municipal revenues have failed to keep pace with increasing demands for investment. Although Federal and Provincial revenues have grown significantly over the past four years, Municipal revenues have grown by only four per cent.
- Municipal governments in Canada currently earn 54% of their income from property taxation, a revenue stream that does not increase in times of economic growth. Without a change to this system, infrastructure upgrades will continue to be postponed and the infrastructure debt will only grow larger.
- The AMM hopes that the Province is willing to work with all Manitoba municipalities to access new sources of revenue- including growth revenues, and hopes the Province will respond to the needs of local governments.

The AMM looks forward to working with the Province to make a new revenue deal for municipalities a reality for local governments across Manitoba.

B) Departmental Issues

1. Overview of New Department

The AMM has long been advocating the consolidation of water and water-related issues into a single provincial department, and therefore was pleased with the creation of the Department of Water Stewardship in the November 4, 2003 Cabinet announcement. Water is a vital natural resource and of great importance to all Manitobans. Municipalities are responsible for a number of water-related services including the proper treatment and disposal of wastewater, the protection of groundwater sources within their jurisdictions and providing safe, quality water to ratepayers.

Municipalities, and Manitobans, will certainly benefit from a single Provincial Department charged with the responsibility of dealing with water-related issues. However, the scope and staff composition of this new department remains unclear to our association. The Cabinet shuffle is now three months behind us, and our association is concerned that many of the initiatives that appear to be the responsibility of this new department have yet to be resumed.

Therefore, the AMM would appreciate an overview of the mandate and staff composition of the new Department of Water Stewardship. The AMM would also urge the Department of Water Stewardship to move forward with water initiatives that have been delayed as a result of the November Cabinet Shuffle.

2. Manitoba Water Strategy

Water is one of the most important issues for Manitobans and the AMM is pleased to have had the opportunity to help create the Manitoba Water Strategy, a province-wide, thorough, and effective plan to protect and preserve our most precious natural resource. Again this year, the AMM has ranked water as one of its top five priorities for the year at its January strategic planning session. Certainly all Manitobans deserve a safe, reliable water supply, adequate flood protection, and efficient drainage systems and the Manitoba Water Strategy is the blueprint to create this reality. The Province must now move forward with its implementation.

This process has been delayed, as the Manitoba Water Strategy Steering Committee last met in early May, which in fact was the first meeting after another extended period of idleness. Following that meeting, the Steering Committee was to meet again shortly once Cabinet approved the release of the three task team reports. While a Steering Committee meeting to review these reports was finally set eight months later in November of last year, it was cancelled and has yet to be rescheduled. The Water Strategy is an important document and it is our hope that the enthusiasm that surrounds this new department will provide the impetus to move forward with this initiative quickly.

It is clear municipalities will play an important role in the implementation of the Water Strategy and municipalities are committed to helping fulfill the recommendations of the report. However, responsibilities simply cannot be downloaded to municipalities. Municipal budgets are already over-extended and municipalities are not financially able to take on additional responsibilities. Any additional administrative and financial responsibility for local-level initiatives will require accompanying Provincial support.

Therefore due to the importance of water as a natural resource, the AMM urges the Province to move forward with the implementation of the Manitoba Water Strategy recommendations, and urges the Province to provide support to municipalities for any additional administrative and financial responsibility as a result of implementing the recommendations.

AMM RESOLUTION 2001 - # 28

Sponsor: RM of Alexander (Eastern District)
Topic: Recognition of Water Management Associations
Department: Manitoba Conservation
Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities request the Province of Manitoba to formally accept and recognize Water Management Associations as an alternative to Conservation Districts.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION ON 2001 - # 29

Sponsor: RM of Westbourne
Topic: Funding for Conservation Districts
Department: Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS some Conservation Districts have assumed responsibility for the provincial drainage system, and they play a major role in managing and licensing drainage works throughout Manitoba;

AND WHEREAS funding to the Conservation Districts has not kept pace with inflation and maintenance costs;

AND WHEREAS the cost of drain maintenance is a major expense to some Conservation Districts;

AND WHEREAS the provincial government no longer provides engineering and survey services to the Conservation Districts which forces the Conservation Districts to utilize funds previously used for operation in order to provide these necessary services;

AND WHEREAS inadequate funding to Conservation Districts results in increased levies to the member municipalities;

AND WHEREAS the level of funding does not adequately reflect the value of the infrastructure;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the provincial government to increase funding to the Conservation Districts at a rate of 3% of the value of the infrastructure within each District, and that this funding be indexed to the rate of inflation to allow proper maintenance of the drainage system throughout the Province.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the provincial government to renew the practice of providing engineering and surveying services to the Conservation Districts.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION ON 2001 - # 32

Sponsor: RM of Morris (Central District)
Topic: Maintenance of Natural Waterways
Department: Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS the natural waterways in the Province are designated under the responsibility of the local municipality;

AND WHEREAS these natural waterways are a cost factor beyond most municipalities' capabilities for crossings, etc.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities request that the Province accept responsibility for all natural waterways and their required crossings.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION 2001 - # 39

Sponsor: Town of Stonewall
Topic: Protection for Groundwater Sources
Department: Manitoba Conservation
Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs

WHEREAS the quality of potable groundwater has always been of great importance to the quality of life and health of the citizens of the Province;

AND WHEREAS a potable water source is essential for rural residential land uses;

AND WHEREAS septic fields and injection systems in rural residential developments are resulting in a negative impact on potable groundwater sources;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Province to strengthen the Provincial Land Use Policies to require greater protection for potable groundwater sources.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION 2002 - # 30

Sponsor: RM of Coldwell (Interlake District)
Topic: Watershed Management
Department: Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs, Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS water does not run along municipal boundaries;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Province so that all conservation districts and watershed management boards are based on watersheds.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION 2002 - # 32

Sponsor: RM of Piney (Eastern District)
Topic: Commission to Identify Water Recharge Areas
Department: Manitoba Conservation

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the AMM lobby the Province to appoint a commission to identify water recharge areas throughout the southern part of the Province, and to provide recommendations to rural municipalities to protect these areas.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION 2002 - # 33

Sponsor: RM of Roblin
Topic: Abandoned Private Wells
Department: Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS the improper closure or abandonment of private wells in a flood zone provides direct access for harmful contaminants to enter underground water supplies;

AND WHEREAS the Department of Conservation deals with issues regarding underground water supplies, such as those near waste disposal sites and lagoons;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Province to provide an adequate approval process to ensure the safeguarding of underground water supplies whenever a private well is abandoned or closed.

3. Drainage

Drainage is one of the most important water-related issues in Manitoba, and is an issue municipalities consistently raise with our association. Currently, the AMM has fourteen drainage related resolutions alone, and drainage is consistently raised as a concern in our visits with municipalities. The wet conditions incurred by Manitobans in the last decade have exposed the problems of the current system and time and again municipalities inform us that the current system is inadequate. An effective drainage system is needed in Manitoba to prevent flooding and drought situations, to protect water sources from contamination, and to preserve natural wetlands and fish habitats.

The importance of drainage cannot be underestimated. Along with being a key component of the Manitoba Water Strategy, increased funding for drainage could help reduce crop insurance claims as well as Disaster Financial Assistance claims. With the current state of crop prices, many Manitoba farmers have begun to diversify their farm practices in new and creative ways. Several of the new crops being grown in Manitoba are sensitive to standing water. The economic benefits of these attempts to diversify Manitoba's agriculture sector could be lost if the Province is unable to solve the drainage issues that have led to the problem of standing water on fields.

In order to improve the drainage system in Manitoba, the Province needs to commit both adequate financing and adequate staff. The AMM was pleased to see additional funding for drainage in the 2003 Provincial Budget, fulfilling the commitment made by the Premier at the 2002 AMM Annual Convention. While this additional funding is certainly helpful, greater funding is needed still. An increase in drainage funding will allow municipalities to proceed with the drainage construction, repair, and maintenance projects so desperately needed. As the implementation of the Manitoba Water Strategy moves forward, increased funding for drainage projects is essential.

Lack of funding is not the only drainage concern raised by our membership. All too often municipalities are experiencing delays in receiving permits for drainage work as there is not enough staff in place to review project applications. This problem will only be compounded as the implementation of the Manitoba Water Strategy moves forward and a greater number

of applications are submitted. The Whitemud Watershed Conservation District pilot project was very successful in reducing approval times for drainage projects and the AMM is pleased that the Province has agreed to expand this model across Manitoba. However, this expansion must take place quickly in order to reduce delays in issuing drainage permits for the upcoming construction season.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Province to make a greater financial commitment to drainage in the upcoming budget to help address the inadequacies of the current system. As well, the AMM urges the Province to increase staffing to process drainage work applications and to expand the Whitemud Watershed Conservation District pilot project model across Manitoba.

AMM RESOLUTION 1995 - # 24

Sponsor: RM of Birtle (Mid-Western District)
Topic: Drainage Projects
Department: Manitoba Natural Resources

WHEREAS municipalities and landowners are finding it difficult to obtain a licence from the Department of Natural Resources to construct drainage works;

AND WHEREAS individuals are proceeding with such works without a licence or authorization;

AND WHEREAS it would appear that the Water Resources Branch of the Department of Natural Resources are understaffed in comparison to the size of their regions;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Union of Manitoba Municipalities request that the Department of Natural Resources – Water Resources Branch review their present structure and recommend that a number of local boards be established to review applications submitted for licences to construct drainage works.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION 1996 - # 33

Sponsor: LGD of Mountain, RM of Russell
Topic: Drainage Works
Department: Manitoba Natural Resources

WHEREAS drainage construction works carried out in the Province of Saskatchewan can create drainage problems, silting and erosion in downstream municipalities in the Province of Manitoba;

AND WHEREAS drainage construction works by upstream municipalities in Manitoba can create drainage problems, silting and erosion in downstream municipalities in the province;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Union of Manitoba Municipalities:

1. Request the Province of Manitoba to enter into discussions with the Province of Saskatchewan to determine the impact of works in Saskatchewan on water courses in Manitoba, with a view to determining what remedial works might be required to reduce the consequences of these works;

2. Request that the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Environment utilize the existing legislation of the Water Rights Act and the Environment Act to ensure that upstream drainage works in Manitoba and Saskatchewan do not negatively affect downstream municipalities in Manitoba.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION 1998 - # 35

Sponsor: RM of Russell
Topic: Municipal Authority for Drainage Works
Department: Manitoba Natural Resources, Manitoba Rural Development

WHEREAS in recent years, there has been an increase in drainage by landowners to create more arable land;

AND WHEREAS with this increase in drainage, a concern has arisen as to where the water ends up; in most cases it is just moved from one neighbour to another without proper channels for the water to flow to natural runways;

AND WHEREAS municipalities are upsizing culverts to allow the larger volumes of water to get away quickly;

AND WHEREAS in the past number of years individuals and municipalities have suffered damage due to poor water management;

AND WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba is considering amending legislation to give municipalities more authorization when it comes to jurisdiction over illegal drainage;

AND WHEREAS municipalities should not be expected to enforce legislation that is made by the Province;

AND WHEREAS the provincial legislation is adequate and we believe it is the responsibility of the governments that make the laws to enforce them;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Union of Manitoba Municipalities request that the Province implement stricter enforcement of drainage to alleviate the problems of flooding and financial burdens to individuals, municipalities and governments.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION 1999 - # 57

Sponsor: RM of Dauphin (Parkland District)
Topic: Drainage
Department: Manitoba Natural Resources

WHEREAS Manitoba Natural Resources, Water Resources Branch, has fragmented certain drains, creeks, and rivers into areas they service and maintain and leave other areas to the land owner or municipality, which results in these drains not functioning to their top capacity and causing severe flooding and channel changes;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Province of Manitoba to make the Water Resources Branch or the Local Conservation Districts responsible for maintaining these drains from the head waters to the streams mouth.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION 1999 - # 59

Sponsor: RM of Dufferin
Topic: Drainage Licenses
Department: Manitoba Natural Resources

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba has the authority to issue licenses to individuals and corporations for drainage projects;

AND WHEREAS municipal corporations are aware of the impact which proposed drainage projects will have on properties downstream;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the AMM request the Province of Manitoba consult with and receive written approval from the local municipal corporation before issuing a drainage license.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION 2000 - # 26

Sponsor: RM of Lac du Bonnet (Eastern District)
Topic: Road Damage from Springs on Provincial Land
Department: Manitoba Conservation
Manitoba Highways and Transportation

WHEREAS drainage is one of the prime concerns of municipalities;

AND WHEREAS municipalities have drains that adjoin provincially owned property;

AND WHEREAS activities permitted by the Province can directly contribute to the water flow in municipal drains;

AND WHEREAS the Province does not take responsibility for damage to municipal roads and drains caused by natural springs and seasonal runoff from Provincial land;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government to take responsibility for the maintenance and repair of roads and drains that are damaged due to natural springs and runoff from Provincial land that directly affects municipal drainage.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION 2000 - # 27

Sponsor: RM of La Broquerie (Eastern District)
Topic: Third Order Drains
Department: Manitoba Conservation

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government to acquire the right-of-way of those portions of all third order drains that they do not already own.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION 2001 - # 30

Sponsor: RM of Morris (Central District), RM of Rosser, RM of Macdonald
Topic: Provincial Maintenance of Drains
Department: Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS inadequate drainage of agricultural land is a major concern to both the farming community and to municipalities;

AND WHEREAS municipalities continue to improve drainage to keep pace with the expectations of the farming community;

AND WHEREAS the Department of Conservation has made little attempt to maintain drainage systems for which they are responsible;

AND WHEREAS the financial loss due to improper drainage not only affects the farming community, but reduces the revenues that would be generated to the federal and provincial governments;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Province to undertake work on their drains to provide proper and adequate drainage;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Province to improve and upgrade drains that are the jurisdiction and responsibility of the Department of Conservation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Province to provide additional funding that would allow for the maintenance of provincial drains to provide efficient drainage of land in the agricultural areas of the province.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION 2001 - # 31

Sponsor: RM of St. Andrews, RM of Bifrost, and RM of Coldwell (Interlake District)
Topic: Maintenance and Infrastructure Works Regarding Provincial Waterways
Department: Manitoba Conservation
Manitoba Transportation and Government Services

WHEREAS Manitoba Conservation has a responsibility to provide maintenance and infrastructure works regarding provincial waterways and associated water resources;

AND WHEREAS Manitoba municipalities have been made aware that capital (infrastructure development) funding for the Department of Conservation has gradually declined over the years;

AND WHEREAS the lack of funding and maintenance of the Provincial Land Drainage System and Provincial Highways' ditches has dramatically reduced the operating efficiency of these ditches;

AND WHEREAS as a consequence of this withdrawal of funding, essential drainage projects have been neglected, resulting in a detrimental impact on the overall drainage system;

AND WHEREAS Manitoba Conservation has requested all municipalities prepare and submit long-range drainage plans to the Department for the purpose of coordinating these municipal plans with those of the Department;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Province to immediately re-examine and reinstate capital funding for drainage projects required in the Province;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities continue to lobby the provincial government to give funding to the Water Resources Branch of Manitoba Conservation for provincial drainage works within municipalities;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities continue to lobby for additional funding from Manitoba Transportation and Government Services to improve and maintain the drainage standards of Manitoba highways ditches;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities continue to lobby the provincial government to improve provincial drains;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities also lobby Manitoba Conservation to prepare and make available to all municipalities provincial long-range programs/projects regarding provincial drainage works.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION 2001 - # 33

Sponsor: RM of Fisher (Interlake District)
Topic: Access to Municipal Drains
Department: Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS municipal drains have been constructed in the past and have not been legally registered;

AND WHEREAS municipalities are responsible for the maintenance of their drains;

AND WHEREAS a landowner can interfere with access onto property for the purpose of maintaining municipal drains that have not been registered;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the provincial government to legislate authority for a municipality to enter upon that portion of land necessary for maintaining and/or improving municipal drains.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION ON 2001 - # 34

Sponsor: RM of Bifrost (Interlake District), RM of Headingley
Topic: Delays in Issuing Drainage Permits
Department: Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS Drainage work in Manitoba is regulated by The Water Rights Act which requires a licence from the Province to undertake any work related to any drainage system including maintenance activities such as ditch clean-outs and culvert installation;

AND WHEREAS Regional Water Managers have the responsibility to review and process the licence applications and are responsible for very large regions;

AND WHEREAS the Regional Water Managers are clearly unable to meet the demands for licences from both the public and private sector, resulting in unreasonable delays in obtaining licences, licences being granted after the work is performed, and a significant amount of work proceeding without licences;

AND WHEREAS the delay in issuing permits is delaying municipal drainage works;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Province to appoint a Committee of Provincial and Municipal Representatives to undertake a review of the licensing process with a view to either:

- a. Amending the legislation to limit the conditions in which licences are required, or
- b. Assigning additional staff to process licence applications within a reasonable time frame, or
- c. Both of the above.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION ON 2002 - # 51

Sponsor: RM of Springfield (Eastern District)
Topic: Increasing Provincial Funding and Staffing for Drainage
Department: Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS staffing levels of Manitoba Conservation are proving inadequate to provide timely approval of applications for licences under The Water Rights Act;

AND WHEREAS funding levels for the proper maintenance of provincial drains are grossly deficient;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the AMM lobby the Province to remedy the shortfalls of staffing and funding within the Department of Conservation.

CARRIED

AMM RESOLUTION 2003 - # 22

Sponsor: RM of Woodlands (Interlake District)
Topic: Drainage Licences for Manitoba Transportation
Department: Manitoba Conservation, Manitoba Transportation and Government Services

WHEREAS municipalities and property owners are required to apply for drainage licenses from Manitoba Conservation before engaging in any drainage works;

AND WHEREAS Manitoba Transportation and Government Services is not required to apply to Manitoba Conservation before engaging in drainage works;

AND WHEREAS it is necessary for Manitoba Transportation and Government Services to apply for drainage licenses to Manitoba Conservation in order to have proper drainage control;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government to have all government departments apply for drainage licenses in the same manner as municipalities and property owners before commencing drainage work.

CARRIED

AMM Resolution 2003 - # 23

Sponsor: RM of Westbourne (Mid-Western District)
Topic: Provincial Water Retention Policy
Department: Manitoba Conservation
Manitoba Finance

WHEREAS water is one of the most important natural resources in Manitoba;

AND WHEREAS water is a necessity for sustaining life and industry throughout Manitoba;

AND WHEREAS increased drainage and land clearing has reduced the ability of aquifers to adequately recharge in the spring and throughout the year;

AND WHEREAS it should be the responsibility of all residents of Manitoba to conserve and protect our water supply;

AND WHEREAS areas of the Province are experiencing an increasing demand for water to sustain and improve agricultural industries;

AND WHEREAS there are no incentives for landowners to conserve moisture and preserve areas well-suited to water retention projects;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government to develop a Water Retention Policy to ensure aquifers are adequately recharged in periods of spring runoff and heavy moisture conditions;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT this policy include Environmental Tax Credits for those property owners who are willing to preserve wooded areas and maintain water storage projects on their property.

CARRIED

4. Lake Winnipeg Nutrient Levels and Municipalities

Lake Winnipeg is an important part of Manitoba, providing economic benefits, recreational services, and transportation links to Northern parts of the province. Lake Winnipeg has become a major tourism destination and in fact, has come to be a very symbol of Manitoba. It is because of this that the health of Lake Winnipeg is of paramount importance to all Manitobans. The AMM is pleased that the Province has taken measures to help ensure the health of the lake by exploring ways to return nutrient levels in Lake Winnipeg to pre-1970 levels. In order for this goal to be met however, the Province will need support from all affected stakeholders, including municipalities.

Reducing nutrient levels in Lake Winnipeg will not only positively affected the lake itself and the accompanying industry, but it will also provide a model that can be used to improve the condition of the many smaller lakes in Manitoba. An overabundance of nutrients in a lake can lead to excessive algae growth, a decrease in the number and diversity of fish and invertebrates in the lake, and can render the water unfit for human or animal consumption and recreational use.

While there is indeed merit in reducing nutrient levels in Lake Winnipeg, the responsibility for changing current practices cannot be borne solely by municipalities. The Province is currently exploring options to reduce nutrient levels entering the lake and our membership has expressed concern to our association that the bulk of this responsibility may fall to municipalities. Most municipalities have limited financial resources and municipal budgets in many cases are already over-extended. Additional responsibilities may not be possible without financial contributions from the Province. Should the Province decide that to preserve Lake Winnipeg new legislation or regulations are required that oblige municipalities to change current practices, there must be accompanying financially support from the Province to adopt these new measures.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Province to provide financially support to municipalities should any new legislation or regulations be instituted in the process of reducing nutrient levels in Lake Winnipeg that require additional obligations from municipalities.

5. Water and Wastewater Operators Regulation

The mandatory certification of water and wastewater operators is another important water-related issue for Manitoba municipalities. The need for the highest water quality possible cannot be exaggerated as this directly impacts the safety and well being of all Manitobans. Our association was pleased that on April 22, 2003 The Environment Act Regulation 77/2003 was published requiring the mandatory certification of water and wastewater plant operators. The AMM was actively involved in developing this regulation that requires all operators be trained by August 31, 2004, and only certified staff employed by September 2006.

However, municipalities have expressed concern that currently the Department does not have the appropriate staff in place to train and certify all operators in Manitoba. It is unclear what this means for municipalities and without adequate staff to manage this program, the August 31, 2004 deadline for certification may be unrealistic.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Department to put the appropriate staff in place to move forward with the timelines laid out in the certification regulations.

6. Drinking Water Safety Act

A major concern for many municipalities is the safety of their drinking water supply. The tragedies that have occurred in other municipalities across Canada have highlighted the importance of ensuring that municipal drinking water supplies are safe. The AMM was pleased that the Province took these incidents to heart and passed the Drinking Water Safety Act in 2002 to address this issue. Our association was happy to have had the opportunity to provide input into the Act, as this is a major issue for municipalities.

The AMM was pleased to see that the Drinking Water Safety Act was finally proclaimed on January 30, 2004. Now that the Act has been proclaimed, the corresponding regulations will need to be drafted. The Province has previously committed to consulting the AMM in the drafting of the regulations and now that the Act has been proclaimed we look forward to working with the Province in this regard.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Province to move forward and to consult with the AMM in drafting the regulations for the Drinking Water Safety Act.

AMM RESOLUTION 2001 - # 39

Sponsor: Town of Stonewall
Topic: Protection for Groundwater Sources
Department: Manitoba Conservation
Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs

WHEREAS the quality of potable groundwater has always been of great importance to the quality of life and health of the citizens of the Province;

AND WHEREAS a potable water source is essential for rural residential land uses;

AND WHEREAS septic fields and injection systems in rural residential developments are resulting in a negative impact on potable groundwater sources;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Province to strengthen the Provincial Land Use Policies to require greater protection for potable groundwater sources.

CARRIED

c) General Issues

1. Education Funding

An ongoing and important issue for Manitoba municipalities is education finance. The AMM is pleased to be included as a part of the Minister's Working Group on Education Finance and is pleased that the Province is including a municipal voice in its review. The final report of the working group was expected originally in October 2003 but has been delayed and the AMM would encourage the Province to move forward with this report. As the recommendations will not be available in time for the 2004 school budget process, the AMM would urge the Province to hold constant the current municipal and provincial contributions to education so that ratepayers are not further burdened by an increase in property taxes. After the final report is released, our association looks forward to reviewing the recommendations of the working group and to collaborating with the Province to develop a new and sustainable system of education finance in Manitoba.

It is crucial that the Province take action, as no issue is heard more often from our members than the concern of high property taxes, as a result of the amount of property taxes dedicated to funding education. The NDP election promise to phase out the Education Support Levy (ESL) over the next five years is welcomed, as this will partly assist in reducing the tax burden. The AMM acknowledges the efforts the Province has made so far, and we are pleased to see that a \$27 million reduction in the ESL has been achieved since 1999. However, the AMM believes that a new formula should be developed that would decrease property tax support for education while not diminishing the quality of education. Local schools are required to provide up-to-date learning tools, including current teaching materials and computer hardware and software, and the AMM does not believe that reducing property tax support for education should compromise the quality of education that Manitoba youth receive.

The AMM firmly believes that the Province needs to adopt a stable and sustainable education funding ratio of at least 80 per cent from Provincial general revenues and a maximum of 20 per cent from property tax revenue levied by local school boards, a formula recommended by our own Task Force that examined this issue in great depth. In addition, it is important that

once the 80:20 ratio is achieved, it be maintained in future years. It is clear that the current system is not sustainable, and the AMM urges that the reform of education funding be substantive and fair. The AMM again expresses its appreciation for being a part of the Minister's Working Group on Education Finance and looks forward to the release of the final report in the near future.

The AMM urges the Province to move forward with the final report of the Minister's Working Group on Education Finance, and looks forward to discussing the recommendations with the Province, once released. The AMM further urges the Province to adopt a stable and sustainable funding ratio of 80 per cent from Provincial general revenues and twenty per cent levied by local school boards.

2. A New Deal for Municipalities

A relatively new and emerging issue for municipal governments in Manitoba concerns a new revenue deal for municipalities. Although the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has been calling for a new system of municipal finance for some time, the City of Winnipeg has initiated substantial discussion on this issue in Manitoba. The AMM believes this discussion has important ramifications for all municipal governments as all Manitoba communities have concerns about the ability of the current system of taxation to meet municipal financial obligations. Manitoba's prosperity and quality of life is determined largely by the health of its municipalities. Vibrant, sustainable communities are crucial to attracting the skilled, creative people who are key to this province's success. However many municipalities across Manitoba are struggling; their resources have not kept pace with their growing responsibilities for physical and social infrastructure.

The root of the problem is the gap between the services that municipalities must provide and the resources at their disposal. Municipal revenues have failed to keep up with the increasing demand for infrastructure investment. Across Canada as a whole, over the past four years, federal government revenues have increased sixteen per cent, provincial/territorial revenues increased twenty-one percent and municipal revenues only four per cent. Canada's core municipal infrastructure debt has been estimated at about \$57 billion and growing at a rate of \$2 billion annually. In Manitoba, the infrastructure investment debt hovers in the range of \$7.4 billion: \$3.4 billion for Manitoba's highway system; \$2 billion for rural municipal infrastructure; \$1 billion for rural land drainage; and \$1 billion for Winnipeg's infrastructure deficit.

Infrastructure debt passes on the costs of today's use and consumption of infrastructure to future generations, limiting their ability to meet impending infrastructure needs. Furthermore, failure to address the infrastructure debt breaches the principles of sustainable development. Infrastructure should be regarded as an investment and not solely as a payment or cost. However, it does require sustained investment, effort and organization to be maintained properly.

It is clear that the current situation is unsustainable and municipalities must gain access to new revenue sources. Municipal governments in Canada currently earn 54% of their revenue through property taxation, a revenue stream that does not increase in times of economic growth. In Manitoba, increasing school division levies have resulted in municipal governments maintaining current levels of property taxation to respond to ratepayer demands. This leaves municipalities with less revenue to maintain property services; without a change to this system of taxation, infrastructure upgrades will continue to be postponed and the infrastructure debt will only grow larger. Manitobans know that their municipal governments are accountable and responsive. They want the order of government closest to them to have access to new sources of revenue and they want the tax burden on municipalities lowered. Municipal governments are in an ideal position to deliver many services, however, increasing municipal responsibilities have resulted in more demand for services with less revenue to meet these demands.

This is an important debate for all municipal governments in Manitoba, and one that should involve the input of all stakeholders. At the federal level, there has been some indication that municipalities will receive a greater share of the GST rebate than is currently provided. Furthermore, there are suggestions that municipalities may receive a portion of the federal fuel excise tax, an exciting prospect for municipal governments in Canada and one supported by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. There is much that the Province of Manitoba can do as well, and the decision to pass all fuel tax collected from municipalities back to local governments is a good starting point. However, there is much more that needs to be done to address the growing infrastructure needs of municipal governments in Manitoba. The AMM hopes that the Province is willing to work with municipal governments to access new sources of revenue- including growth revenues, and hopes the Province will remain responsive to the needs of local governments. The AMM looks forward to consulting with the Province to make this new deal a reality for all municipalities in Manitoba.

The AMM looks forward to working with the Province to make a new revenue deal for municipalities a reality for local governments across Manitoba.