

Meeting of the
**Association of
Manitoba
Municipalities**



with

The Honourable Tim Sale

Minister of Health

February 24, 2005

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A) Executive Summary

Departmental Issues

1. RHA Review and Election of RHA Boards

- Municipalities are supportive of seeking the most effective methods for providing health care services to Manitobans, however, this has not been the case under the existing RHA structure.
- RHA boards must be accessible and accountable, and AMM members believe that this would effectively occur if RHA boards were elected bodies, rather than appointed by the Provincial Government.
- The change to elected boards is possible within the authority of the existing legislation. Since the supportive legislation is in place, an election process for RHA boards should be implemented.
- Enabling a transparent process of RHA decision making and municipal input would also support the need for accountability and allow Manitobans the opportunity to access better health care services.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to allow the election of RHA boards and to review the RHA structure in order to achieve greater accountability and transparency.

2. Physician Recruitment, Training and Retention

- Manitoba must undertake a targeted plan to allow this province to attract and retain physicians and ensure that the entry process is highly efficient.
- International physicians have the potential to make a valuable contribution to Manitoba's health care system and their participation in this province's labour force should be strongly encouraged.
- The AMM certainly supports measures that allow highly qualified physicians to enter Manitoba's health care system, however the process should be as expedient as possible in order to provide timely services to Manitobans.
- The Clinicians Assessment and Professional Enhancement (CAPE) is an issue since it has not significantly reduced the time delays associated with approving internationally trained physicians to practice in Manitoba.
- Medical school enrolment should continue to increase with a targeted focus on rural students and those aiming to practice family medicine.
- Innovative practices should effectively attract physicians throughout Manitoba and the Provincial Government should allocate additional funding to these important measures.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Province to ensure that Manitobans have local access to physicians by providing additional support for measures that make physician training more accessible to Manitoba students and

those most likely to practice in Manitoba, and by facilitating the recruitment of internationally trained physicians through reduced delays in the approval process.

3. Full Provincial Funding for West Nile virus

- As new health concerns such as West Nile virus arise, the Provincial Government must be prepared to cover the costs of the necessary additional health services.
- Although there was a low incidence of human cases of WNV in 2004 due to cooler weather conditions, evidence of WNV was still present throughout southern Manitoba.
- The increasing incidence of WNV elevates Manitoba's mosquito concerns from a municipal nuisance issue to a provincial health issue, yet municipalities are currently required to contribute 25 per cent of mosquito control costs.
- Municipalities are willing to facilitate mosquito surveillance and control, but as a health issue, should not be responsible for providing funding.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to absorb all surveillance and mosquito control costs associated with West Nile virus across Manitoba.

4. Inter-Facility Patient Transfers

- Manitobans are also facing additional health care costs when they must be transported outside the local Regional Health Authority (RHA) to access specialized medical services. This travel is necessary in order to receive specialized treatment or diagnostic testing and due to closures of local and regional services.
- All health care costs should be covered by the Provincial Government and concessions must be made for rural and remote areas that do not have local access to specialized services.
- The AMM is aware that the Provincial Emergency Medical Services Framework Steering Committee is reviewing this issue and looks forward to increased coverage for the costs of interfacility transfers.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to fully fund the ambulance costs of the interfacility transfer of patients across Regional Health Authority boundaries.

5. Community Capital Contributions to Health Projects

- The community capital contributions to health projects was raised several times with the former provincial health minister who indicated for several years that this issue was being reviewed and would soon be resolved
- The AMM is bringing this issue forward again and encourages our new Minister of Health to eliminate this policy whereby municipalities must contribute to the provision of health care services.

- Although the provincial policy does not specify that municipalities must be the only local contributor to the capital health project, municipalities are typically expected to make some portion of the local contribution.
- This is especially problematic since municipalities have no opportunity to influence financial health care decisions. Rather, they are required to contribute a set percentage to capital projects with no input as to how the funding is spent.

The AMM urges the Provincial Government to eliminate the policy of local government contributions to capital health projects and accept full responsibility for health care services.

General Issues

1. Education Funding

- Education remains the number one concern for municipalities as the current model of taxation is not sustainable and a new taxation model is needed
- While the AMM was pleased to see the Province recognize the importance of this issue with the recent commitment in the Throne Speech of an immediate reduction in education taxes on farmland, municipal property taxes should be used to fund strictly municipal services, and a complete removal of education funding from all property classes is needed.
- The AMM strongly supports the need for high quality education in all areas of the Province, yet maintains that other sources of Provincial revenue are more appropriate than property taxation to fund education. While every citizen should contribute to education funding, this does not occur under the current regressive system of property taxation.
- The AMM was pleased with the commitment of further reductions in the 2005 Budget beyond the 50% reduction on farmland and believes relief is needed on all property classes, as at present, there is an unfair reliance on property owners to fund an education system that contributes so much to the prosperity of Manitoba.

Consequently, the AMM would like to see the Province take the opportunity presented by Budget 2005 and make a clear policy statement on its intended direction regarding the removal of education funding from property. The AMM believes a clear five-year plan is needed where the end result is the total removal of education funding from property.

2. Land Use and Water Resource Planning

- Since new water legislation is forthcoming and the Planning Act is currently under review, a municipal perspective must be represented as legislation is formulated.
- The first municipal priority for land use and water resource planning legislation is to recognize local authority.

- The need to recognize local interests pertains to the inclusion of consultation processes within land use and water resource planning legislation.
- The second municipal priority relates to the responsibilities held by the Provincial and municipal governments regarding effective land use and water resource planning.
- The AMM is concerned that municipalities, conservation districts and planning districts will be expected to take on significant administrative and financial obligations in order to provide additional services.
- The Provincial Government must consider the impacts of adding new responsibilities to their own operations since requiring all municipalities and planning districts to create a development plan will increase the demand for the ministerial approval process.
- The Provincial Government must provide support for municipalities that lack the resources to meet the new legislative requirements.

The AMM urges the Provincial Government to ensure that legislation and regulations related to land use and water resource planning are responsive to municipal concerns, including the need for local authority and a balance between Provincial and municipal government responsibilities.

B) Departmental Issues

1. RHA Review and Election of RHA Boards

Over the past decade, the health care structure in Manitoba has changed dramatically due to the establishment of the Regional Health Authority (RHA) system. Municipalities are supportive of seeking the most effective methods for providing health care services to Manitobans, however, this has not been the case under the existing RHA structure. A major concern is with the lack of accountability of RHA boards and the AMM supports the concept of electing board members rather than having them appointed by the Minister. Overall, significant changes are required, therefore the Provincial Government should conduct an extensive review of the RHA system.

The main problem with the current system is that it lacks a mechanism for municipalities to provide input into decisions made by the RHA boards. At the same time, municipalities are expected to contribute to the financial costs of certain health care services. This is evidenced through the recent requirement that municipalities located in the Assiniboine RHA will be charged for ambulances attending fire scenes. As well, the community contribution requirement for capital projects requires a municipal contribution of ten per cent to health capital projects. Through taxation, the Provincial Government has committed to addressing health concerns across Manitoba. However, municipalities are increasingly expected to pay for health care services without actively participating in the decision-making processes. This is an unfair system and must be rectified through greater municipal inclusion and greater consideration of municipal input.

At present, concerns with the current state of the health care system are being directed at municipal officials, as RHA boards are not accessible. Yet, RHA boards are accountable for the state of the health care system, not municipal governments. Therefore, RHA boards must be accessible and accountable, and AMM members believe that this would effectively occur if RHA boards were elected bodies, rather than appointed by the Provincial Government. The change to elected boards is possible within the authority of the existing legislation. According to Section 14 of *The Regional Health Authorities Act*, the prescribed number of directors will be “appointed or elected in accordance with this Act and the regulations.” This section indicates that the Minister has the discretion to decide how RHA board members are selected. Therefore, changing the process would not require an amendment to the legislation, rather it is a policy decision of the Provincial Government. Since the supportive legislation is in place, an election process for RHA boards should be implemented.

These concerns raise the need to evaluate the effectiveness of the RHA system from various perspectives. Accountability is the most pressing concern and the Provincial Government has committed to this process in the past. In 1999, a discussion document entitled “Achieving Accountability” was published with the explicit purpose of defining accountability relationships within Manitoba’s health care system. Part of the commitment to accountability is that the Provincial Government and the RHAs have accepted the responsibilities that are clearly defined in *The Regional Health Authorities Act*, which includes providing for the delivery of health services and ensuring reasonable access to health services. This type of responsibility should not be passed on to municipalities since health care is a Provincial service and responsibility. However, financial demands are increasingly being downloaded to municipalities. Furthermore, this document identifies an

accountability relationship between the public and RHAs, however there are insufficient opportunities for the public to evaluate RHA service provision. RHAs would be more accountable to the public if there was an election process for RHA boards. Enabling a transparent process of RHA decision making and municipal input would also support the need for accountability and allow Manitobans the opportunity to access better health care services. The AMM believes that there are gaps in the effectiveness of the current system and requests an extensive review of the RHA structure on the basis of accountability and transparency to ratepayers.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to allow the election of RHA boards and to review the RHA structure in order to achieve greater accountability and transparency.

AMM Resolution Number 61 – 2004

Topic: RHA Review

Sponsor: RM of Pipestone (Western District), RM of Winchester (Western District)

Department: Manitoba Health

WHEREAS since the beginning of September 2004, some Regional Health Authorities have been attempting to download ambulance costs and services onto municipalities;

AND WHEREAS although Regional Health Authorities have assured municipalities that they will not shut down volunteer ambulance services, they have shown by policy set in mid-September in a particular RHA, that it will be extremely difficult to recruit and retain enough volunteer attendants to keep the service going;

AND WHEREAS municipalities are not being consulted in an open and honest manner of the plans of the Regional Health Authorities that are affecting our citizens;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government to do a full review of the Regional Health Authorities functionality, staff morale, and spending accountability.

AMM Resolution Number 54 – 2003

Topic: Election to the Regional Health Authority Board

Sponsor: Town of Rivers (Western District)

Department: Manitoba Health

WHEREAS the Board members of the Regional Health Authorities are appointed by the Provincial Government at present;

AND WHEREAS communities would be better represented if Board members of Regional Health Authorities were elected by the people;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government to have Board members on Regional Health Authorities elected not appointed.

2. Physician Recruitment, Training and Retention

Another wide-ranging health issue is the need for additional health care professionals across Manitoba. This issue is evident across Canada, therefore Manitoba must undertake a targeted plan to allow this province to attract and retain physicians and ensure that the entry process is highly efficient. International physicians have the potential to make a valuable contribution to Manitoba's health care system and their participation in this province's labour force should be strongly encouraged. In the fall of 2004, 87 students enrolled in the first year of the medical program at the University of Manitoba as a result of an increased number of acceptance offers. This trend should continue with a targeted focus on rural students and those aiming 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 areas. To achieve these goals it is necessary to improve the communication links between the University of Manitoba, the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Provincial Government in order to review medical student requirements. This will ensure that funding for additional students will definitely result in increased student enrolment. Increasing the number of doctors trained in Manitoba will encourage students to remain in the province after graduation and will begin to address the severe shortage of physicians.

The AMM is appreciative of the Provincial Government's efforts to address the shortage of doctors in Manitoba through its recognition of locally-trained physicians as critically important to recruitment efforts. Another beneficial step has been the Medical Student/Resident Financial Assistance Program that provides conditional grants to students studying medicine in Manitoba or to physicians establishing a practice in Manitoba upon graduation. Facilitating the process for recruiting internationally trained physicians will also

be a key component of this effort. The AMM certainly supports measures that allow highly qualified physicians to enter Manitoba's health care system, however the process should be as expedient as possible in order to provide timely services to Manitobans. Reviewing the process with an aim to be competitive with our Canadian and American neighbours will ensure that physicians trained outside Manitoba can begin working in our province as soon as possible. As well, the Clinicians Assessment and Professional Enhancement (CAPE) is an issue since it has not significantly reduced the time delays associated with approving internationally trained physicians to practice in Manitoba. Exams can only be taken at certain times throughout the year and the results can take up to eight weeks to be posted. Candidates can only apply for a visa once a passing mark is confirmed, which creates considerable delays in the process. Furthermore, Regional Health Authorities must incur the travel costs that are required every time candidates write the exams. With advancing technology, this process could be improved or measures could be implemented whereby the candidates could write the exams in their country of origin. This issue was raised with Minister Chomiak on June 2, 2004, and he committed to provide the AMM with an update on efforts to improve the process. The AMM is requesting that this commitment be fulfilled since the recruitment of international physicians can assist in filling vacancies across Manitoba.

Innovative practices should effectively attract physicians throughout Manitoba and the Provincial Government should allocate additional funding to these important measures. The health of our communities has wide-ranging effects on the competitiveness and sustainability of all communities, and providing local access to high quality health care services across the Province is a vital part of this process.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Province to ensure that Manitobans have local access to physicians by providing additional support for measures that make physician training more accessible to Manitoba students and those most likely to practice in Manitoba, and by facilitating the recruitment of internationally trained physicians through reduced delays in the approval process.

AMM Resolution Number 22 – 2004

Topic: Physician Recruitment

Sponsors: RM of Alexander (Eastern District)

Department: Manitoba Health

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 Association of Manitoba Municipalities 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

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

Department: Manitoba Health

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 36 – 1997

Topic: Physician Recruitment and Retention

Sponsors: Town of Deloraine (Western District)

Department: Manitoba Health

WHEREAS the difficulties in the recruitment and retention of physicians in northern and rural Manitoba continue to escalate;

AND WHEREAS we are competing with very generous offers made to physicians from other provinces and the United States;

AND WHEREAS recently announced salary opportunities in Northern Manitoba have created further competition within the province;

AND WHEREAS the Province of Saskatchewan has advertised a provincial signing bonus of \$25,000 to attract physicians to rural and northern areas of their province;

AND WHEREAS rural and northern communities in this province are creating tremendously competitive and expensive barriers to physician recruitment and retention, with many different kinds of incentives, bonuses, etc.;

AND WHEREAS if more reasonable equities are not maintained throughout the province and also between provinces, Manitoba may find itself in the unenviable position of no new physicians entering the province and an additional exodus of physicians;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the UMM lobby the Department of Health to establish new physician remuneration funding policies, and provincially funded recruitment and retention incentives to assist in attracting and retaining physicians in the province of Manitoba.

3. Full Provincial Funding for West Nile virus

A key health priority is assigning responsibility for West Nile virus (WNV) surveillance and prevention costs. As new health concerns such as this arise, the Provincial Government must be prepared to cover the costs of the necessary additional health services. The proliferation of this issue was highlighted by the recently passed AMM resolution asking that the Province fully fund all prevention and treatment costs. Municipalities strongly supported this resolution on the basis that health care prevention is the Provincial Government's responsibility.

Although there was a low incidence of human cases of WNV in 2004 due to cooler weather conditions, evidence of WNV was still present throughout southern Manitoba. With the exception of northern Manitoba, birds across all regional health authorities tested positive for WNV suggesting that the threat will remain in Manitoba for years to come. With a return to average summer temperatures throughout the province, the mosquito population will increase, therefore creating a greater threat of human WNV cases. For instance, in 2003 there were 141 confirmed human WNV cases and a warmer summer in 2005 is likely to produce a similarly high incidence of WNV in humans. Trends have indicated that the WNV threat only increases over time and therefore will pose a growing health threat to Manitobans.

Municipalities cannot fund the additional costs that are required for increasing mosquito surveillance and control, therefore the Provincial Government must commit funds to fully cover these costs in 2005.

Furthermore, the increasing incidence of WNV elevates Manitoba's mosquito concerns from a municipal nuisance issue to a provincial health issue, yet municipalities are currently

required to contribute 25 per cent of mosquito control costs. As a provincial health issue, the Provincial Government should provide these services, not municipalities. An effective strategy will be particularly important for 2005 due the expected increase in WNV from 2004. As part of this strategy, communications must be facilitated in order to inform municipalities of required mosquito control services in a timely manner. In the past, there have been issues regarding mandatory mosquito control in certain areas and inadequate communication with municipalities. These concerns should be minimized through coordinated communications strategies. Municipalities are willing to facilitate mosquito surveillance and control, but as a health issue, should not be responsible for providing funding.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to absorb all surveillance and mosquito control costs associated with West Nile virus across Manitoba.

AMM Resolution Number 23 – 2004

Topic: Full Provincial Funding for West Nile virus

Sponsors: City of Dauphin (Parklands District)

Department: Manitoba Health and Healthy Living

WHEREAS West Nile virus (WNV) has been spreading across Canada in the last few years;

AND WHEREAS all viral issues are health concerns and are therefore the jurisdiction of the Province of Manitoba;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government to fully fund all prevention and treatment costs associated with West Nile virus.

AMM Resolution Number 46 – 2002

Topic: West Nile Mosquito Surveillance

Sponsors: Town of Russell (Mid-Western District)

Department: Manitoba Health and Healthy Living

WHEREAS the Province has had confirmed positive tests of West Nile virus in both birds and horses;

AND WHEREAS spraying or larvaciding for the entire province is cost prohibitive;

AND WHEREAS proper surveillance of mosquito populations must be completed throughout the province in order to identify potential high-risk areas which would require control measures such as fogging or larvaciding;

AND WHEREAS municipalities can provide resources by means of personnel to help with the surveillance of mosquito populations;

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

1. Ensure sufficient resources are provided for 2003 to accommodate mosquito population surveillance;
2. Implement province-wide surveillance at the beginning of the 2003 mosquito season; and
3. Provide training, equipment and expertise to municipalities to help establish surveillance programs throughout the province.

4. Inter-Facility Patient Transfers

Manitobans are also facing additional health care costs when they must be transported outside the local Regional Health Authority (RHA) to access specialized medical services. In these cases, health insurance only covers the cost of transporting patients across RHA jurisdictional boundaries if the patient returns to the originating RHA within 24 hours. Not only do patients face the burden of traveling large distances to access medical care, but the costs incurred are higher than individuals can bear. However, this travel is necessary in order to receive specialized treatment or diagnostic testing and due to closures of local and regional services. This concern also extends beyond patient transfers, since some patients are being charged for ambulance transfers to hospitals just to see a physician. This is especially frustrating since in many cases, the community of origin has the required facilities but its emergency rooms have been closed and services have been discontinued. All health care costs should be covered by the Provincial Government and concessions must be made for rural and remote areas that do not have local access to specialized services.

The AMM is aware that the Provincial Emergency Medical Services Framework Steering Committee is reviewing this issue and looks forward to increased coverage for the costs of interfacility transfers. The most important recommendation of this Steering Committee should be to preserve the fundamental principle of equality. The current system unfairly penalizes individuals based on place of residence, and this inequality should be corrected. Manitobans deserve equal access to health care and the health insurance system should promote this equality. While individuals cannot afford the additional costs, the Provincial Government has the resources to pay 100 per cent of these costs and should accept this responsibility. The AMM looks forward to the Steering Committee report and urges the

Province to support the principle of equal access to health care when making decisions regarding interfacility patient transfers.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to fully fund the ambulance costs of the interfacility transfer of patients across Regional Health Authority boundaries.

AMM Resolution Number 35 – 1999

Topic: Interfacility Patient Transfers

Sponsor: City of Brandon (Western District)

Department: Manitoba Health

WHEREAS hospitalized patients of rural Manitoba do not have immediate access to specialized medical treatment equipment in their own Regional Health Authority Hospitals;

AND WHEREAS these patients must be transferred by land/air ambulance to a Health Centre in order to receive the necessary specialized treatment or diagnostic testing;

AND WHEREAS insured health benefits for the costs of the land/air ambulance are only covered if the patient returns to the transferring Regional Health Authority Hospital within a twenty-four hour time frame;

AND WHEREAS such interfacility transfers are a direct result of doctor referrals and depend on the availability of equipment and scheduled use of such equipment which is not within the control of the patient;

AND WHEREAS such costs continue to escalate and cause undue hardships on vulnerable Manitobans;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities strongly urge the Minister of Health to immediately investigate and address this situation in order to allow for all Manitobans to receive the best possible level of care available without incurring additional costs for interfacility transfers whereby Manitoba Health would cover 100 % of all costs for interfacility transfers.

5. Community Capital Contributions to Health Projects

Many municipal concerns regarding health care have been recurring for several years and relate to the need to ensure effective health care services for Manitobans. This is characteristic of the community capital contributions to health projects since the former provincial health minister had indicated for several years that this issue was being reviewed and would soon be resolved. The AMM is bringing this issue forward again and encourages our new Minister of Health to eliminate this policy whereby municipalities must contribute to the provision of health care services.

Local communities should not be required to contribute to the costs of health care service since it is the responsibility of the Provincial Government. However, communities are required to fund at least 10 per cent of all health capital projects within their communities. This system unfairly burdens municipalities that do not have the additional resources to commit to capital health projects. Although the provincial policy does not specify that municipalities must be the only local contributor to the capital health project, municipalities are typically expected to make some portion of the local contribution. Furthermore, regardless of whether it is the municipal government or the local residents that are required to fund these costs, the financial burden is still being downloaded from the provincial government to local communities. This policy must be reversed and local communities should no longer be required to contribute funding to capital health projects.

Ensuring that Manitobans have access to appropriate health care facilities is an important consideration, and municipalities are not suggesting that investment in health care service is not required across the province. The key concern is that health care is a provincial

responsibility, yet municipalities are continually expected to contribute to various aspects of health care services. This is especially problematic since municipalities have no opportunity to influence financial health care decisions. Rather, they are required to contribute a set percentage to capital projects with no input as to how the funding is spent. This situation is exacerbated by the requirement that municipalities must fund 100 per cent of any change order regarding the health capital project. Such a policy restricts the ability of municipalities to predict project costs since additional costs can arise unexpectedly. As a result, the combination of these policies places a significant burden on municipalities and limits their ability to respond to local priorities.

This issue has been raised with the Provincial Government several times over the past four years and the AMM has been told repeatedly that solutions are being sought and alternative arrangements being reviewed. Therefore, the AMM is seeking an update on the status of the policy review that examined alternative funding sources for health capital projects

The AMM urges the Provincial Government to eliminate the policy of local government contributions to capital health projects and accept full responsibility for health care services.

AMM Resolution Number 51 – 2003

Topic: Community Capital Contributions to Health Projects

Sponsor: Town of The Pas (Northern District)

Department: Manitoba Health and Healthy Living, Manitoba Finance

WHEREAS the provision of health care and health services is the responsibility of the Province;

AND WHEREAS The Regional Health Authorities Act has no provision for local government authorities to be involved in plans for regional health authorities capital projects, yet requires a 10 to 20 per cent community contribution to capital projects, creating a financial commitment from a municipality;

AND WHEREAS municipal ratepayers already contribute to Healthcare through Provincial taxation;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government to remove the community contribution requirement for capital projects of the Manitoba Health Capital Planning Branch.

C) General Issues

1. Education Funding

For 2005, the AMM has identified education funding to be its top priority. The ongoing need to shift education funding away from property taxes was demonstrated when our membership passed a resolution requesting that the Province develop a new taxation model that removes school tax levies from all properties. The current model is not sustainable and further action must be taken to relieve the pressures on municipal property taxes.

The recent Throne Speech included a significant first step that was much appreciated by the AMM membership. A 33 per cent reduction in farmland property taxes will assist an agricultural community that has experienced ongoing pressure as a result of BSE and consecutive years of poor weather conditions. The prospect of a further reduction in the 2005 Budget to 50 per cent will also lessen the negative impact of past years. This commitment of \$33 million over two budget years is an appropriate beginning to the process of separating education funding from property. Municipal property taxes should be used to fund strictly municipal services, and reducing the education portion of property tax will facilitate this process.

The Province has also made reference to further education tax relief being unveiled in the next budget. In order for further action to incorporate municipal interests, education tax relief must be applied equitably to all classes of property. Phasing out the residential Education Support Levy (ESL) is an essential part of this initiative and is certainly beneficial to residential landowners. However, reductions in education tax relief should be available to all property owners since it is incongruous for education funding to be associated with

property. At the same, a shift away from property should not justify a reduced investment in the education system. The AMM strongly supports the need for high quality education in all areas of the Province, yet maintains that other sources of Provincial revenue are more appropriate than property taxation. While every citizen should contribute to education funding, this does not occur under the current regressive system of property taxation. At present, there is an unfair reliance on property owners to fund an education system that contributes so much to the prosperity of Manitoba. Consequently, the AMM would like to see the Province take the opportunity presented by Budget 2005 and make a clear policy statement on its intended direction regarding the removal of education funding from property. The AMM believes a clear five-year plan is needed where the end result is the total removal of education funding from property. Budget 2005 should therefore build on what the Provincial Government has already accomplished to ensure that all Manitobans fund education equitably.

An important aspect of this issue is that municipalities are required to provide a wide variety of services while relying almost exclusively on property taxes as a source of revenue. Until methods of municipal financing are drastically changed, municipalities must be empowered to control the level of local property taxation without having to use this mechanism for Provincial purposes such as education. The current funding system places an unfair burden on property owners and hinders the ability of municipalities to provide property services, such as infrastructure improvements. The AMM appreciates that the Province has begun to take action to improve this situation and looks forward to working with the Provincial Government to develop a long-term plan to shift education funding away from property taxation.

Consequently, the AMM would like to see the Province take the opportunity presented by Budget 2005 and make a clear policy statement on its intended direction regarding the removal of education funding from property. The AMM believes a clear five-year plan is needed where the end result is the total removal of education funding from property.

2. Land Use and Water Resource Planning

Municipalities are highly involved in planning for both land use and water management purposes. As a main stakeholder in these processes, the AMM has appreciated the opportunity to actively participate in the consultations regarding the legislation that affects these two types of municipal planning efforts. Since new water legislation is forthcoming and the Planning Act is currently under review, a municipal perspective must be represented as legislation is formulated. There are two major municipal considerations that must be given priority in any new legislation and these are consistent for both land use and water resource planning. The first pertains to recognizing local authority regarding planning matters. The second consideration relates to the division of responsibility between municipalities and the Provincial Government.

Municipalities are in the best position to make the majority of planning decisions since they represent a local body of knowledge and expertise. For this reason, the first municipal priority for land use and water resource planning legislation is to recognize local authority. The review of the Planning Act will provide several opportunities to meet this objective, such as ensuring that municipalities have the final say in all land use planning decisions. In order to guarantee local control over land use planning, there should be no appeals process to another jurisdiction that supersedes municipal land use decisions. This is very important to AMM members as councils are elected officials with first hand knowledge of suitable land use within their jurisdiction. They also have a responsibility to objectively consider the consequences for all stakeholders and to establish a plan on that basis. An appeal process beyond this level would undermine the authority of the municipal council. Similarly, appeals to the Municipal Board should only be considered when a critical mass of ratepayers

formally objects to a land use decision. Through these policies, local interests will be upheld based on the authority of the municipal council to undertake effective long-term land use planning.

The need to recognize local interests also pertains to the inclusion of consultation processes within land use and water resource planning legislation. Meaningful consultations provide a vehicle for municipalities to express their concerns and ensure that these concerns will be taken into account. Such consultations should occur while developing the legislation and its accompanying regulations. This will be particularly important regarding water resource planning since the regulations are expected to articulate crucial details regarding the implementation of the Water Protection Act. Local expertise should also contribute to the development and implementation of watershed management plans since this type of expertise is based on historical information about the area. In addition, the review of the Planning Act should include public consultation, as it is essential that municipalities have the opportunity to express their specific views and garner a deeper understanding of the specific details of the proposed act.

New procedures within the Planning Act should also allow for public input, such as the environmental approvals processes. While the Province is well-equipped to conduct environmental assessments through the Technical Review Committees, the process would benefit from the inclusion of local input. The ongoing use of public consultation as required under the Planning Act also supports the ability of local authorities to effectively undertake land use planning. Community consultations are therefore critically important to land use

and water resource planning and the inclusion of consultation feedback will strengthen support for legislation and regulations.

The second municipal priority relates to the responsibilities held by the Provincial and municipal governments regarding effective land use and water resource planning. In particular, the extent of new municipal responsibilities remains unclear for the Water Protection Act and the Planning Act review. As a result, the AMM is concerned that municipalities, conservation districts and planning districts will take on significant administrative obligations in order to provide additional services. Due to the limited resources available to these organizations, the AMM cannot support policies that unfairly burden local authorities. Therefore, minimizing the uncertainty surrounding the responsibilities of municipalities, conservation districts and planning districts will clarify the impacts of the new policies and contribute to a greater understanding of the legislation.

The Provincial Government must also consider the impacts of adding new responsibilities to their own operations. For instance, requiring all municipalities and planning districts to create a development plan will increase the demand for the ministerial approval process. Presently, municipalities view the approvals process as too lengthy and the AMM is concerned that an increased demand for development plan approvals will further delay the approvals process and plan implementation. This concern will potentially impact the public hearing process where technical staff from the Province is required to attend. The Province is most appropriately positioned to address environmental concerns, however the presence of Provincial representatives at public hearings will facilitate understanding and acceptance from communities. Development plan approvals and public hearings provide municipalities

with important tools to accomplish community planning, therefore the Province should avoid delays in completing these processes and ensure effective information sharing.

Administrative responsibilities must often be supplemented by additional technical requirements that may not be available to all municipalities. Integrating land use and water resource issues through comprehensive planning will therefore require additional financial resources. In order to undertake the type of detailed planning that is expected, mapping and other technical services will be required. For instance, the Water Protection Act refers to the identification of watershed quality management zones however, in many cases, municipalities do not have the necessary levels of expertise or financial resources to meet this requirement. A similar situation could arise if development plans become mandatory for all municipalities or if the need to map agricultural zones is part of the reviewed Planning Act. For this reason, the Provincial Government must provide support for municipalities that lack the resources to meet the new legislative requirements.

Land use and water resource planning are very important for municipalities since each has wide-ranging impacts on the way that municipalities function and the development that occurs within their boundaries. Environmental considerations are very important to municipalities as they strive to balance the protection of natural resources with community development. Both types of planning ensure that municipalities are implementing a long-term approach and considering the impacts of current actions on the future of their communities. The AMM is supportive of the Provincial Government's efforts to improve land use planning and water resource management in Manitoba. Due to the strong interconnection between land use and water resource planning, municipal concerns are

consistent across these two issues. The legislation that is currently under consideration will only be effective to the extent that it incorporates the municipal concerns outlined above.

The AMM urges the Provincial Government to ensure that legislation and regulations related to land use and water resource planning are responsive to municipal concerns, including the need for local authority and a balance between Provincial and municipal government responsibilities.