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# News Release

## ***INFRASTRUCTURE, WATER TOP MUNICIPAL BUDGET PRIORITIES***

**April 7, 2008** - The Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) is looking to the Province to take action in tomorrow's budget to deal with some of the most pressing needs in Manitoba municipalities. Topping the list this year are water issues and the rising infrastructure deficit.

AMM President Ron Bell says that the Province has been vigorously moving forward with water related initiatives, particularly in the areas of water protection and conservation districts, yet has been silent on how these will be funded. "Municipalities have always supported clean water initiatives, but we cannot fund these efforts on our own," explains Bell. "Quite simply, the Province needs to start matching water-related announcements with water-related funding."

Manitoba's estimated multi-billion dollar infrastructure deficit is another top priority for the AMM, who wants to see a long-term commitment to communities in Manitoba. According to Bell, "municipalities need new tools to start making inroads into the growing infrastructure deficit. We are seeing other provinces making major investments in new municipal infrastructure programs, or opting for more creative solutions, like exempting municipalities from the PST. These types of investments are tools that help municipalities to manage the increasing expectations placed on them. We need to see similar tools in Manitoba."

Another area the AMM will be watching closely is health care, since this is becoming a top issue in communities. Municipalities are increasingly being expected to play a financial role in health care, ranging from helping in the recruitment of doctors to contributing to health capital projects, such as hospitals and personal care homes. "Health care continues to be a top issue in communities and something we are looking for this budget to continue to address" says Bell. "Health care is the responsibility of the Provincial Government and this places a very unfair burden on municipalities."

The AMM also hopes to see increased funding for areas that enhance citizens' quality of life such as community halls and recreation centres, libraries and affordable housing initiatives. "These types of services form the core of a community's identity, yet too often they only receive piecemeal funding," stresses Bell. "We hope this budget will do some good things for municipalities."

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The AMM's complete budget submission is available at:

<http://www.amm.mb.ca/PDF/MinisterMeetings/2007/Finance-October19-07.doc>