

News Release

AMM anxious about infrastructure

January 26, 2009 – The Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) is anticipating Tuesday’s Federal Budget with a mixture of cautious optimism and apprehension. Leading up to the budget, the Harper government has indicated “accelerating infrastructure” by “speeding up project funding” will be a key component. Although infrastructure funding is desperately needed, AMM President Doug Dobrowolski is concerned.

“The main question on the minds of municipalities’ is not only what this money will mean, but what it won’t mean,” explains Dobrowolski. “Will we see new money or money under the existing Building Canada Fund? If infrastructure funding is accelerated, will it all be handed to provincial coffers for distribution to municipalities? What if smaller municipalities cannot come up with their share during the “accelerated” window – does that mean they are ineligible? These are all questions that we hope to see addressed in the budget’s fine print.”

Dobrowolski also notes that infrastructure programs are traditionally funded in thirds with the feds, the province, and municipalities each kicking in a share. This leads to another question: “If municipalities are expected to contribute 1/3 of the money to infrastructure projects, they need to have a say in how those projects are selected,” he stressed. “This has always been the case, yet recent federal-provincial announcements around the Building Canada Fund Communities Component did not include municipal input. This is worrisome to our members.”

“We will be watching closely to see how the whole process unfolds.”

Dobrowolski will be available for comment immediately after the Federal Budget comes down. Please contact the AMM to arrange an interview.

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