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News Release

Budget leaves municipalities further behind

March 26, 2009 –The Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) had high hopes that the Province would acknowledge Manitoba’s municipal infrastructure deficit with more dollars yesterday. However, President Doug Dobrowolski was left disappointed after Budget 2009 was tabled at the Manitoba Legislature. “Municipalities have been living on crumbs for some time and this budget did nothing to improve our situation,” explains Dobrowolski. “Our core, bread and butter issue – infrastructure – was largely ignored. What amounts to an increase of about \$4 million for municipalities doesn’t begin to make a dent in the corresponding increase to the infrastructure deficit. It also doesn’t deal with the root issue of rising construction costs, which we’ve seen double or triple in recent years.”

Dobrowolski admits there are a few good things for AMM members in the budget, including increased funding for transit, more funding for electronic and household hazardous waste, enhanced opportunities for rural medical students, and money for public housing. What it lacked, however, was acknowledgement of just how big the infrastructure deficit really is. “A new recreation centre or even a water treatment plant upgrade can’t be had for \$4 million,” says Dobrowolski. “If you’re lucky, that amount might build 75 km of road.”

In the last few years municipalities have struggled while the Province changes regulations and increases costs in areas like water and wastewater management, building standards, and road construction. These downloads have also contributed to the dire situation in Manitoba communities, yet yesterday’s additional \$4 million doesn’t come close to providing what is needed.

“Manitoba has 198 municipalities dealing with these issues,” stresses Dobrowolski, “and they are going to fall further behind with Budget 2009.”

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