



News Release

AMM fronts priority list for Provincial Budget 2005

Rec centres and libraries, education tax, infrastructure top issues

March 7, 2005 - The Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) has prepared a list of priorities for tomorrow's Provincial Budget. AMM President Ron Bell will be on hand during the tabling of the budget to evaluate and comment on the commitments the Province makes to Manitoba's municipalities.

The first item on the list is the AMM's top priority for 2005, further reductions of education tax from property. As Bell explains, "The Province made a good first step by reducing education funding from property by 33% on farmland, but that was only a first step. The current model simply isn't sustainable. We'll be looking for more cuts across all property classes."

Another important issue for the AMM is increased funding for recreation centres and libraries. "Recreation centres are at the heart of many communities, and we need to make sure they are able to stay viable," explains Bell. "Libraries are the cornerstone of community literacy, yet they are having a tough time keeping up with the constant need for new materials and technological advances," he adds. "We're really looking for more of a commitment to these facilities in this budget."

Adequate funding for infrastructure is another top issue the AMM wants to see addressed in the Provincial Budget. "Manitoba's infrastructure deficit is now over \$7.4 billion," notes Bell. "We feel the Province needs to make a financial commitment to Manitoba's infrastructure."

The complete AMM priority list is attached. The AMM's complete 2005 Provincial Budget Submission is available on the AMM website at www.amm.mb.ca.

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For additional information or to arrange an interview with President Bell on Budget Day, please contact:

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WHAT THE IS LOOKING FOR IN BUDGET 2005

1. A commitment to the further reduction of education taxation from property

The current model of funding education is not sustainable. While the Province made a first step by reducing education funding from property by 33% on farmland, the AMM will be watching this budget to ensure the Province comes through with the commitment to further reduce this funding to 50%. We will also be looking for these cuts to be expanded to other property classes.

2. Increased funding for Recreation Centres and Libraries

Recreation centres are the heart of many communities and are an integral part of a communities' physical infrastructure. Along with libraries, these facilities provide opportunities for youth and it is crucial that funding is available to maintain these facilities. The AMM will be looking closely to see if Budget 2005 makes a commitment to these facilities.

3. A commitment to increase spaces available for the training of physicians in Manitoba and a commitment to help retain and recruit doctors across Manitoba

There is a doctor shortage in our province and this is felt most strongly in rural Manitoba. The AMM hopes this year's budget makes a commitment to increase the number of spots currently available for training in Manitoba, and also to help recruit and retain doctors needed across the province.

4. A commitment to greater funding for infrastructure in Manitoba

Manitoba's infrastructure is in desperate need of repair. Many communities do not have the needed infrastructure to ensure safe drinking water and live under boil water orders. Manitoba's infrastructure deficit is over \$7.4 billion, with \$3.4 billion needed for the highway system, \$1 billion for rural land drainage, \$2 billion for rural Manitoba and \$1 billion for the City of Winnipeg. Municipalities are limited in their ability to raise the revenues needed to construct and maintain these costly projects. The Province needs to make a financial commitment to Manitoba's infrastructure.

5. More money for policing in Manitoba

Manitobans deserve to be safe and protected. The AMM will be making sure the Province follows through with its Throne Speech commitment to increase the number of officers in this Province.

6. Increases to the Highways Capital Budget

Manitoba's highway system is an integral part of this province's economy as it not only allows for the safe and efficient transportation of goods and services, but of people as well. The current highways budget is inadequate and does not meet the current demands. The AMM hopes Budget 2005 will make a stronger commitment to the Provincial highway system.

7. A commitment to fund the requirements of the Water Protection Act

The Water Protection Act will be passed shortly, yet the Province has yet to indicate how these new requirements will be funded. The AMM hopes that this year's budget sets aside the funds needed to implement the goals of the legislation, to ensure the costs for this are not downloaded to municipalities.

8. Reinstatement of cancelled programs such as the Manitoba Airport Capital Assistance Program and the Bridge Co-operative Program

The AMM was disappointed to see a number of important Provincial programs be cancelled over the last few years and would like to see a commitment in this year's budget to reinstate these valuable programs.