

### Major Issues

#### Task Force on Economic Development

The AMM completed its Task Force on Economic Development final report in 2003. It was intended to strengthen Manitoba's existing economic development capacity and promote a coordinated, community-driven, economic development strategy. During 2002-2003, the Task Force held a number of consultative sessions with both economic development practitioners and municipalities to gain a better understanding of the models now in place, and their strengths and deficiencies. The Task Force made a number of conclusions and recommendations that are reflective of municipal objectives. The AMM will now use this report as the blueprint for its lobbying efforts in this area with a view to influencing provincial and federal policy in the realm of economic development.

#### Infrastructure

An ongoing and important issue for the AMM is building a strong infrastructure for communities. Currently, the provincial and federal governments are not meeting the basic infrastructure funding requirements necessary to maintain existing municipal infrastructure, let alone invest in the future. It is clear that there is a need for a permanent and ongoing infrastructure program so that the problem of crumbling municipal infrastructure can be addressed. The AMM has been actively lobbying both the provincial and federal governments to increase funding for a range of infrastructure priorities including rural water infrastructure, natural gas expansion, recreational facilities, roads and rural airports. While the AMM was pleased with the new \$1.2 billion Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund (MRIF), which includes a base allocation of \$15 million for Manitoba with the remaining funds being allocated on a per capita basis, the AMM will continue to lobby all levels of government to bring the additional funding needed to Manitoba to ensure the development and maintenance of a strong infrastructure base which is a key component for supporting a competitive economy and decent quality of life.

#### Single-Tier Social Assistance

The AMM and the Department of Family Services and Housing have come to an agreement for the Province to take over the administration of income assistance. Under the new system, the Province will administer the program in exchange for a fee from municipalities. This cost-neutral model was agreed upon based on a seven-year average of municipal assistance from 1995 to 2001. The AMM has actively lobbied on this issue and was pleased to help bring single-tier social assistance to fruition. The AMM looks forward to the implementation of this agreement in April 2004.



The AMM consulted with several economic development stakeholder groups in order to develop its final report.

#### Education Funding

Education funding is a critical issue for municipalities. This matter was most heatedly debated during the 2003 provincial election, largely raised as a result of the AMM's concerted lobbying efforts. The AMM believes the Province should develop a long-term strategy that will reduce Manitoba's reliance on property taxes as a mechanism for funding education. The current funding system places an unfair burden on property owners and cuts into the ability of municipalities to provide property services, such as infrastructure. The AMM believes an 80:20 funding formula represents a fair compromise, with 80 per cent of education funding coming from provincial general revenues. The AMM is represented on the Minister of Education's Working Group and expects final recommendations from this committee in early 2004.

#### Planning Act Review

The Provincial Government is currently undertaking a review of land-use planning laws meant to promote consistency in law, while establishing enabling and flexible rules that balance provincial and local interests in a way that is open and accountable. The AMM is represented on the Review's Technical Advisory Committee, and will maintain four points throughout the Review: First, the AMM believes that the principle of local control should be applied to all land-use decisions in Manitoba; second, the AMM believes that there should not be an appeal to an authority that overrides municipal land-use decisions; third, the AMM believes that Municipal Board hearings and amendments should only take place when at least ten per cent of ratepayers object to a proposal; and finally, the AMM believes that the Province needs to improve its current development plan approval process. The AMM will continue to work diligently on this issue to ensure that an improved planning law process will work to the benefit of municipalities.

### Major Issues

#### AMM-MTS Municipal Access Guidelines

In conjunction with MTS, the AMM has developed guidelines for access to municipal rights-of-way. These guidelines, one of the first of its kind in Canada, outline specifically how MTS will acquire access to install buried cable, buried pipe, and other facilities on municipal rights-of-way. The AMM was pleased with the willingness of MTS to work with the AMM in developing these guidelines, and both parties will continue to monitor their use and update them as required.

#### BSE and Drought

Manitoba municipalities have been hit hard by the BSE crisis as its negative impact on producers has created an environment of economic uncertainty. The AMM has been actively lobbying both the provincial and federal governments to work towards not only the end goal of a complete reopening of the U.S. border to all Canadian beef products, but the interim goal of creating a national program for mature breeding stock, and an interest-free cash advance program for producers. The implementation of these programs would ensure money reaches producers and would provide municipalities with some relief from their current state of concern and uncertainty and allow them to meet their financial obligations. While there has been a partial reopening of the U.S. border, the AMM realizes that this is not sufficient for producers, and in turn municipalities, and will continue to actively lobby both levels of government to bring about meaningful change.

The drought in some areas of the province is further impacting an already fledgling sector of the economy. Prior to a meeting with the Premier, the AMM met with those municipalities most greatly impacted to hear their concerns. The AMM expressed these concerns to the Premier, who then offered to meet with municipalities to hear the concerns first-hand. The AMM is also lobbying for a transportation program designed to move livestock to feed or feed to livestock to help alleviate the burden on producers. The AMM was pleased with the transportation component of the recently announced funding for producers, and will continue to push for further assistance from both levels of government.



Representatives from some of Manitoba's municipalities affected by BSE and drought met with the Premier this summer to try to resolve the crisis.

#### Intensive Livestock Operations Legislation

The AMM has been involved in many discussions with Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs and other key stakeholders regarding livestock planning legislation. The AMM believes that, as the level of government closest to the people, municipalities must be responsible for making decisions regarding land use and that a provincial "one size fits all" model of land-use planning is not appropriate for Manitoba. In addition, municipalities must have the final say in all land-use decisions in their jurisdictions. The AMM has made its position clear to the Province on numerous occasions, including during the provincial consultations. The AMM is continuing to lobby to ensure that its position is heard as the legislation is drafted.

#### Increase to the Highways Capital and Maintenance Budgets

The AMM continues to lobby for increased provincial funding for highway construction and maintenance. While the Province continues with its 5-year, \$120 million annual investment in the highways capital budget, the AMM urges the Province to increase the budget to \$300 million per year in order to meet the estimated \$3 billion over ten years necessary to meet the needs of Manitoba's highway system. The AMM will continue to lobby the Province to address this growing gap and to improve a valued component of the infrastructure of Manitoba.



President Briese discusses the AMM's disappointment with the highways capital budget with CBC Radio's legislative coverage of the 2003 Provincial budget.

#### Livestock Disposal and Rendering

The AMM is actively involved with a committee mandated to explore options for the regular livestock disposal waste stream in Manitoba. This committee, which includes Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs, Agriculture and Food, and Conservation, is exploring regional plans and disposal sites across the province. As the disposal of this waste is a responsibility allocated to municipalities under The Environment Act, the AMM is working with the rest of the committee to find a workable system in the new reality after BSE. The AMM is committed to keeping municipalities up-to-date on the progress of the committee.

### Major Issues



The AMM tries to keep members informed of its lobbying efforts on a consistent and timely basis. AMM events, like the June District Meetings, allow the AMM Executive and Board Directors to update members on various issues.

#### Manitoba Water Strategy and Drainage Funding

The AMM was pleased with the release of the final Manitoba Water Strategy report, and was happy to note that many of the recommendations from the steering committee, which included AMM representation, were contained in the report. The AMM is looking forward to moving ahead with the Strategy, as it is important for the Province and municipalities.

Particularly important for municipalities is the issue of drainage. The AMM is actively lobbying on this topic, and was pleased that an additional \$1 million was allocated for drainage projects in the 2003 Budget, as was promised at the Ministerial Forum at last year's Annual Convention. However, there is more to be done, and the AMM will continue to lobby for greater increases in funding.

#### Treaty Land Entitlement Tax Loss Compensation

With treaty land entitlements granting parcels of land to various First Nations in Manitoba, municipalities are losing portions of their tax base. To address this loss in tax base, the AMM worked with the Provincial Government and negotiated a compensation package for affected municipalities equivalent to five times the value of the tax loss to allow municipalities to adjust for the loss of revenue. In instances where municipalities are exceptionally impacted by the agreements, the Province is committed to considering additional compensation beyond the five times model. The AMM is extremely pleased with the compensation packages and will continue to monitor this issue as it moves into the implementation phase. TLE seminars are currently being held throughout the Province explaining the compensation package for municipalities.

#### Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators

The AMM has long been urging the Province to develop regulations to ensure that all water and wastewater treatment plant operators are certified. The AMM was pleased that, after working with the AMM and other key stakeholders, the Province implemented the Water and Wastewater Facility Operators Regulation in April of 2003. The regulation outlines specifics including how current employees are to be certified, the time period for this to be accomplished, various classes of certificates, and classification of facilities. This regulation is truly a success and will help ensure that all Manitobans benefit from clean, safe, potable water for future generations.



The AMM shares many of the same issues with municipalities across Canada. This year, the AMM hosted a meeting of Executive Directors from other Canadian municipal organizations.

#### Prairie Grain Roads Program

The Prairie Grain Roads Program (PGRP) has been a success in helping to rebuild the major grain transportation routes in Manitoba. In 2003, there were 20 municipal grain road projects approved, totaling more than \$8 million and 163 kilometres of roadway. While focused on grain roads, the program allows municipalities to enhance economic development and build safe transportation routes throughout the province. The results of these road improvements have positive economic effects for entire communities. Since its inception, the PGRP has approved 68 projects, which upgraded more than 600 kilometres of road.



At the 2002 Annual Convention, the AMM hosted round table discussions for the first time. The discussions were well received and helped the AMM better understand the issues and concerns surrounding the large and small urbans and the rural municipalities.

## Highlights

The AMM had the opportunity in 2003 to meet with many of the Ministers in Premier Doer's 2003 Cabinet, as well as with senior officials from various departments. At each of these meetings, the AMM profiled issues of concern to municipalities. The policy papers developed for these meetings are available on the AMM website at [www.amm.mb.ca/policies](http://www.amm.mb.ca/policies). The following list outlines some of the concerns that, in addition to those in the earlier section, the AMM profiled in its lobbying at the provincial level in 2003.

### Premier

- \* The need for interest-free cash advances for livestock producers
- \* The need for assistance for those areas of the Province impacted by drought

### Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs

- \* The elevated legal costs of negotiating treaty land entitlements and municipal development and services agreements

### Manitoba Conservation

- \* Increased funding for drainage
- \* Funding for Conservation Districts
- \* The implementation of the new Household Hazardous Waste Program
- \* Equitable taxation of permanent park residents

### Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism

- \* Increased funding for libraries
- \* Increased funding for the Community Places Program

### Manitoba Energy, Science and Technology

- \* Expanded cellular service to remote areas

### Manitoba Finance

- \* Municipal exemptions of retail sales tax on mechanical and electrical contracts



President Briese speaks at a news conference on the West Nile virus provincial program.

### Manitoba Health

- \* Municipal concerns with the Provincial West Nile virus plan
- \* Increased funding for regional palliative care
- \* The elimination of the community contributions component of health capital projects
- \* Changes to the Province's differential policy on inter-facility patient transfers



The AMM has met with the Premier on an annual basis to discuss municipal issues and concerns on behalf of its membership.

### Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs

- \* Filling Municipal Service Officer vacancies
- \* Expanding rural and northern internet service
- \* Infrastructure grants for recreation facilities
- \* Expansion of rural water services

### Manitoba Justice

- \* Improved policing across Manitoba
- \* Implementation of a cost-neutral by-law enforcement system



As a member of the Prairie Urban Municipal Association (PUMA) and the Prairie Association of Rural Municipalities (PARM), the AMM shares concerns and best practices with the other Prairie municipal associations twice a year.

### Manitoba Labour and Immigration

- \* Reimbursement for firefighters attending Firdale
- \* Including municipalities as employers in essential services legislation
- \* Reversing new policy of municipal financial responsibility for the use of water bombers

### Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation

- \* Increased reimbursement for municipalities responding to motor vehicle fires

### Manitoba Transportation and Government Services

- \* Greater compensation for municipalities under the Disaster Financial Assistance Agreement
- \* Compensation for municipalities that provide community hostings
- \* Certification of municipal emergency plans

### Federal Brief

The AMM had the opportunity in 2003 to raise Manitoba municipal concerns at the federal level on numerous occasions. Whether in meetings with the Manitoba Federal Liberal Party Caucus, meetings with the Federal opposition parties, in our submission to the Federal Finance Sub-Committee, or through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), the AMM has continually raised municipal concerns at the federal level. The AMM has focused its federal lobbying on three main concerns.

#### Infrastructure Funding:

The AMM has been pushing for infrastructure renewal in five key areas. The first is an ongoing, permanent infrastructure program that will allow municipalities to better prioritize their infrastructure needs. The AMM has also been recommending that the recent \$1 billion allocated to municipal infrastructure through the program be used in the first two-years of the ten year program. Secondly, the AMM has been lobbying for a national highway program to address the \$17.4 billion infrastructure deficit on Canada's National Highway System (NHS). The federal government collects \$5 billion annually from gasoline taxes yet returns a mere 2.5% to the NHS, and the AMM is calling on the federal government to fund a national highway program by dedicating the revenue from the federal fuel tax. Thirdly, the AMM has been urging the federal government to increase funding to the Airport Capital Assistance Program to ensure that municipalities are able to finance much-needed airport capital projects. Fourthly, the AMM has been urging the federal government to implement a permanent and long-term commitment to rural water and wastewater infrastructure along the lines of a 10-year, \$180 million federal/provincial/municipal program. Finally, the AMM has been urging the federal government to establish a tri-partite program for the repair, upgrading and building of recreational facilities in municipalities throughout Manitoba.

#### Fisheries and Oceans:

The AMM has also been actively lobbying to ensure that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) inspections and enforcement are done in a reasonable and practical way that will allow municipalities to begin projects in a timely manner



The AMM met with former Progressive Conservative leader Joe Clark and MP Rick Borotsik last Spring as part of Mr. Clark's visit to Manitoba.



Last winter, the AMM made a presentation to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance.

without adding undue costs and using much needed infrastructure dollars. The AMM wholeheartedly supports the maintaining and preserving of fish habitat, as this is not an issue that should be taken lightly. However, the AMM believes that DFO needs to adopt a more flexible interpretation of its mandate and show sensitivity to the needs of municipalities. Municipalities are willing to comply with DFO guidelines, however these guidelines must be both transparent so that municipalities know what is expected, and reasonably applicable to projects. The AMM is pleased that DFO is currently reviewing some of its practices and will continue to lobby to help develop a workable system in Manitoba.

#### The Western Canadian Community Crisis:

In Manitoba and across Canada, farmers are struggling to deal with continued low commodity prices, while at the same time farm input costs such as fertilizer, fuel and chemicals continue to rise. Coupled with an aging population and export subsidizations from other major trade partners, this crisis is continuing to grow. This is not just a rural agriculture problem but a concern for western Canadian communities. The effects of a single cow found to have BSE this year has shown that urban areas are not immune, as all areas of Manitoba have felt the impact of the closure of international borders to Canadian livestock. The drought this summer has only further exacerbated the problem. This summer has highlighted what has been known by many communities all along - what happens in the most rural areas has implications for urban centres. The current crisis is truly more than just a rural crisis - it is a community crisis that threatens the very social fabric of western Canada. As such, the AMM has been working diligently to bring attention to this reality and help bring aid to those communities most greatly in need, to strengthen and preserve a valuable way of life that is the cornerstone of Western Canada.

### Policy Events

#### Housing Now! Conference

Housing has been a concern for many municipalities and communities in Manitoba and an issue the association has worked diligently on in the last year. The AMM, along with The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and The Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (MHRC), held a one day conference on Saturday April 12th, 2003 in Winnipeg to provide an opportunity for municipalities and other key stakeholders to not only identify housing issues, challenges and needs in their communities but also to discuss workable solutions. By bringing together all three levels of government along with key industry stakeholders, the Housing Now! conference hoped to begin the process of developing workable solutions to the housing needs in Manitoba. The AMM was pleased with the discussions that occurred in Winnipeg as well as the final conference report that was sent to all municipalities in early October. The AMM has developed an action list stemming from the conference and has begun to work with CMHC and MHRC to address some of the needs, issues and challenges that were raised.



The AMM's Housing Conference was April 12, 2003

#### Policing Meeting

An issue that is often raised to our association by municipalities is policing. Many municipalities, urban and rural, have expressed concern with not only the escalating costs of policing, but also the level of service and the impact of recent detachment amalgamations. Stemming from a resolution passed at last year's convention, the AMM in early September held a meeting of the large urban centres (over 5000 people) to discuss their specific policing concerns. With the RCMP, Manitoba Justice, Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs as well as the seven large urban centres in Manitoba represented, the group managed to flesh out some of the major concerns. The group agreed to form a working committee to further discuss concerns and to propose workable solutions to improve the level of policing service in Manitoba. The AMM was pleased with the discussion that took place in September and will continue to lobby for improved policing service in not only large urban centres but in all Manitoba municipalities.



A large urban policing committee was formed after a September meeting with the RCMP.

#### Task Force on Economic Development

Economic development is fundamental to the survival of Manitoba communities, and as such, an issue of great importance to the AMM. In August 2002, the AMM created a special Task Force to explore this issue and to recommend models that will help facilitate the delivery of economic development in Manitoba in an effective and efficient manner. The Task Force held consultations across the Province in late May to receive input on different economic development models. The results were compiled in a comprehensive report that has been submitted to the AMM Board of Directors. The Task Force found that there is no single standard model for economic development as each community and region is unique. However, all levels of government and all communities should assess their current economic development process to ensure that the best value is being received for the time and money being spent. The AMM is pleased with the work of the Task Force and is looking forward to using the blueprint developed in the report for direction in future lobbying.

#### Manitoba Airport Operators Committee

In late May 2003, the Manitoba Airport Operators Committee held its annual meeting in Winnipeg. Delegates received an update on proposed legislation from Transport Canada as well as an overview of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' federal lobbying efforts on the issue of airport funding. The meeting was well attended and the AMM was pleased with the discussions that occurred throughout the day. The committee, with representatives across the province, agreed to hold another meeting in conjunction with the AMM Annual Convention in late November.