

## **AMM meets with Premier Doer and members of Provincial Cabinet**

**T**he AMM Board of Directors has completed one of the most important meetings of the year – the annual meeting with the Premier and members of the Provincial Cabinet.

The meeting, held June 3, 2004 at the Manitoba Legislature, was opened by AMM President Stuart Briese. President Briese noted that while the AMM was pleased to see progress on a number of issues over the year, other issues did not progress as quickly as the association had hoped for. After presenting an overview of the top issues concerning the AMM, President Briese welcomed comments from the Premier and various cabinet members.

Some of the issues discussed included:

### **Water Stewardship**

The AMM stressed the need for more details regarding Bill 22, the proposed Water Protection Act. The AMM is most concerned about where the financial burden will lie. Premier Doer indicated that this legislation is needed for water stewardship and that he appreciates the AMM's input into the process. He invited the AMM to continue discussing the issue with Minister Ashton.

Inadequacies of the provincial drainage system and funding for conservation districts was also discussed briefly.

### **Agriculture Issues**

The AMM thanked the Province for the variety of programs implemented to assist agricultural producers in dealing with the economic impacts of the border closure due to BSE. The Province expressed disappointment in the Federal Government's decision not to fund a local slaughter initiative, but added that the Province will explore other possible options.

The AMM also expressed disappointment with the 2004 Provincial Budget for reducing the amount of REDI funding by \$1.25 million. The Premier noted that the reductions in VLT revenues (due to the smoking by-laws), have had a huge impact, and there are some limits to the Province's ability to move money around to increase funding for these grants.

### **Intergovernmental Affairs**

The AMM raised Bill 40, the Planning Amendment Act, with the Premier and stressed that while the proposed Act provides clarity and consistency for both the municipality and the ratepayer, there are a number of important municipal concerns that must be addressed.

On the issue of infrastructure, President Briese informed the Premier that the AMM is pleased with the ongoing commitment to fund the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Fund, along with the announcement of the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund (MRIF). He also expressed appreciation for the Gas Tax Accountability Act, but stressed that more needs to be done to address the growing infrastructure debt. The AMM also raised the new funding options being discussed federally, such as the \$.05 gas tax rebate to municipalities. Premier Doer also expressed pleasure with the legislation, and noted that any federal discussions of funding for municipalities must be for all municipalities and done with FCM.

### **Health Issues**

The AMM expressed concern regarding physician shortages in rural Manitoba, and encouraged the Province to expand the number of spaces in the U of M's Faculty of Medicine. President Briese also brought up the issue of entry tests for doctors trained out of the country. Premier Doer explained that there have been some changes with regard to entry tests for

foreign-trained physicians. He went on to say that enrolment is up, and pointed out a one-time investment in health care for \$1.4 million. However, the reduction in federal funding has resulted in reduced health care funding overall.

### **Finance Issues**

The AMM expressed serious concern with the provincial sales tax being extended to municipalities for legal, accounting, and other services. At a time when the Federal Government is moving toward enabling municipal governments to access more revenue for pressing municipal priorities by rebating 100 per cent of Goods and Services tax paid by municipalities, the AMM is disappointed to see the Province adding taxes to municipal governments. Minister Selinger expressed some concern with making one group exempt from the tax and not others, but committed to discussing this issue in greater detail with the AMM.

### **Education Funding**

The number one concern for AMM members continues to be the proportion of education funding coming from property taxes. President Briese noted that the Minister's Working Group on Education Finance has completed its report and urged the Province to move forward on this issue. The AMM believes the current situation is unsustainable and urged the Province to address the issue immediately. The Premier responded by noting that while education funding has increased, so too have school board budgets, and believes the whole system should be more transparent.

Other issues brought forth by the AMM and responded to by cabinet members included disaster financial assistance and compensation for communities that undertake community hostings, the provincial water

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bomber policy, policing, and workers compensation benefits for part-time firefighters.

Several other items were brought forth by the AMM, however time constraints prevented the Premier and Cabinet from responding to each item. A comprehensive cabinet brief was prepared outlining each of the issues and was presented to those in attendance. This brief can be viewed in its entirety on the AMM web site at [www.amm.mb.ca](http://www.amm.mb.ca).

This was the third such meeting between the AMM and Cabinet. It was followed by a similar briefing to the Official Opposition. Members of the opposition had a number of questions for the AMM and sought clarity on a number of AMM issues.

The AMM thanks Premier Doer and Cabinet for taking the time to discuss these priority issues, and looks forward to once again taking the opportunity to express the views of its membership in 2005.

## From the AMM Office

### Notices

#### GST Rebate for Municipalities

A number of municipalities have enquired as to the status of the GST rebate for municipalities. We understand that Bill C-30, the enabling legislation for the GST refund received Royal Assent on May 13, 2004. We expect that the Canadian Revenue Agency will now be sending information to municipalities advising on how the payment of refunds will be conducted.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the AMM office.

#### Share your thoughts on the Local Authorities Election Act

The Province is undertaking a review of the *Local Authorities Election Act*, an important Act for Manitoba's municipal governments. The goal of the review is to develop new election processes and procedures that are enabling and flexible but respectful of

democratic values. The Province will be posting a discussion document online and is encouraging the public to provide ideas for new election laws for Manitoba's local authorities. Your comments are important to ensure that local election laws continue to serve the interests of the public, but are also easy to administer and interpret. You may submit your comments electronically by visiting [www.gov.mb.ca/laeareview](http://www.gov.mb.ca/laeareview). Please submit your comments no later than June 30, 2004.

### Coming Events

#### June Districts

June Districts are almost upon us. Agendas have been circulated to all municipalities. Information is also available on the AMM web site at [www.amm.mb.ca](http://www.amm.mb.ca). Watch the web site for up-to-date information.

**June 9<sup>th</sup> is the Deadline for June Districts Resolutions!**

#### Shifting Gears: Sustainable Mobility for Western Municipalities

Edmonton, AB June 16-17, 2004

This is a two-day conference designed to help Western Canadian municipalities solve critical land-use and transportation issues.

The conference will help cities, towns and villages deal with transportation loads on roadways, land-use planning and development issues, demands to reduce greenhouse gases and health concerns about smog – all in a context of changing demographics and constrained tax bases.

For more info visit:

[www.climatechangecentral.com](http://www.climatechangecentral.com)  
or telephone (780) 408-4588

#### CMHC and MHRC Host Affordable Housing Programs Workshops

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (MHRC) invite you to attend an affordable

housing programs workshop. The workshop will be of interest to builders, developers, non-profit housing corporations, community groups, and municipal officials.

The workshops will focus on affordable housing programs delivered by both organizations. The workshops will also profile housing projects in Manitoba that have been successful in obtaining program funding and provide advice on how to apply for program support.

MHRC and CMHC staff in attendance will also highlight housing research and information that may be of assistance in developing a housing project.

#### Locations and Dates

**Winnipeg** - Clarion Hotel, Saskatchewan Room at 1:30 PM on June 15.

**Brandon** - Trails West Motor Inn, 210 18<sup>th</sup> Street N. at 10:00 AM on June 16.

**Thompson** - Juniper Centre, 108 Nelson Road at 1:00 PM on June 17.

Please call Natalie Oliver at the CMHC Winnipeg office at 983-5601 or by e-mail at [noliver@cmhc.ca](mailto:noliver@cmhc.ca) to attend.

### Job Postings

#### Public Works Assistant Town of Rossburn

The Town of Rossburn invites applications for a full time position of Public Works Assistant.

Experience relating to water and sewer, general equipment operation and maintenance techniques, including interpersonal skills to deal with the public are desirable. Direct experience in operating a Water Treatment Plant will be considered an asset otherwise candidate must be willing to learn the operation of the Water Treatment Plant and be prepared to enroll in the Certificate Program for Water Treatment Plant Operators.

Applications with resume, three references and salary expectations will be accepted up to **June 14, 2004 until 4:00 p.m.**

Town of Rossburn  
Attention: L. A. Mackedenski  
P.O. Box 70 Rossburn, MB R0J 1V0  
Ph: (204)859-2762 Fax: (204)859-2959