

Minister Meetings Continue

The week of January 25 saw the AMM meet with several Provincial Cabinet Ministers, beginning with the Honourable Steve Ashton, Minister of *Water Stewardship*.

The AMM opened the meeting with Minister Ashton by stressing the importance of water and the need to preserve this important resource. While the AMM sees some parts of the Water Protection Act as positive, local authority must be recognized. The AMM expressed concern with the financial implications of the legislation, and financing of these initiatives being downloaded to municipalities.

The Minister indicated that the Province will be consulting with stakeholders, including the AMM, on these initiatives. Regarding integrated watershed management, the Minister indicated that there is still work to do to bring the federal government onboard.

The AMM also raised the need to increase funding for CDs as they are being asked to take on more without accompanying funding. The Minister

agreed that funding needs to come if we want CDs to do more. He indicated he would like to see CDs move toward enforcement of drainage, where desired, as enforcement is necessary since there is no reason to apply for a license if no one is doing enforcement. The Province believes that CDs are a good system, since they can match dollars on many initiatives, and the Province is committed to seeing that they work.

Other issues raised with Minister Ashton were increasing provincial funding and staffing for drainage, certification of Water and Waste Water Plant Operators, and the Drinking Water Safety Act.

On January 26th, the AMM met with the Honourable Ron Lemieux, Minister of *Transportation and Government Services*.

The AMM opened the meeting with Minister Lemieux by requesting an update on the Vision 20/20 initiative. The Minister indicated that they are in the final draft stages. There is still a question of how the suggestions and

recommendations will be funded.

The AMM also urged the Minister to reinstate the Manitoba Airport Capital Assistance Program. The Minister indicated that he is currently in discussion with the Department of Finance and this was being considered.

Another program that the AMM urged the Minister to consider reinstating is the Bridge Co-Operative Program, as the costs of bridge repairs are skyrocketing. The Minister noted that often the escalated costs are a result of increased material costs. He stated his department is committed to assisting municipalities however possible.

Other issues raised with Minister Lemieux included the need to increase the Highways Capital Budget, and the need for sufficient funding for highway repairs in urban centres. •

*The AMM also took the opportunity to raise two additional issues, **Education Funding and Land Use and Water Resource Planning**, with each Minister.*

Budget Submission 2005

Another important meeting that took place on January 26, 2005 was the AMM's annual budget submission to the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Greg Selinger. While a great number of issues are raised in the complete submission, the AMM focussed the discussion in the time allotted to the major funding issues facing municipalities.

The AMM began by stressing the need to remove education funding from property as property based taxes should be used for municipal services. The AMM thanked the Minister for the recent reduction in education taxes on farmland and indicated that this is a good first step, but only a first step in the overall reduction in education funding. The Minister indicated that there will be further moves in the budget and the Province intends to move along on this issue in future budgets as well, however they will not be committing to a specific number or date.

Water related issues were also discussed. The AMM expressed concern with the downloading of financial

responsibility to municipalities, as well as the expansion of user fees. The AMM is concerned that the Province is expanding the base of taxes, including the Retail Sales Tax (RST), however the Minister indicated that there are no plans at this time to broaden the base of taxes and does not anticipate any significant changes in fees. He also indicated that he would be willing to review this as he reviews all fees every year.

Other issues the AMM discussed in detail with Minister Selinger included funding for recreation centres, the cancellation of the Manitoba Airport Capital Assistance Program and the Bridge Co-operative Program, and the need to put greater funding into the Survey Monument Program.

The Minister indicated he would look into these concerns, and committed to reviewing the brief presented to him in its entirety. •

Complete policy papers from all meetings with Ministers are available on the AMM website at: www.amm.mb.ca/policies.htm

AMM Coming Events

Municipal Officials Seminar & Trade Show

February 28 and March 1, 2005

Keystone Centre
Brandon, Manitoba

Preliminary agendas and delegate cards were recently mailed to all municipalities. Updated agendas are also available on the AMM website at

www.amm.mb.ca/events

See you at MOS!



Don't Miss the Next Education Seminar for Elected Officials:

Decision-Making for Councils and Boards

presented by McCandless Tramley

on

March 18, 2005

Knights of Columbus Hall
Portage la Prairie, Manitoba

For more information, please call:

Donna Belbin, Events Coordinator

Phone: 204-856-2374 or

Email: dbelbin@amm.mb.ca

AMM Coming Events

Municipal Visits—Interlake

Next week, the AMM will kick-off its annual municipal visits by meeting with Councils from several Interlake Region Municipalities. Municipalities included in the visits include the RM's of Fisher, Eriksdale, Grahamdale, Siglunes, Bifrost, Gimli and the Towns of Arborg and Winnipeg Beach.

Coming Events

Second International Water Conference

April 6 & 7, 2005

The Red River Basin Institute is hosting the *Second International Water Conference "Research and Education in an International Watershed: Implications for Decision-Making"* at the Fort Garry Hotel in Winnipeg. The conference is expected to attract over 300 researchers, educators, local decision-makers and water resource professionals.

Plenary speakers and concurrent sessions will address some of the most problematic issues of water management, flood damage reduction/mitigation, and natural resource protection/development confronting policy makers, scientists, and citizens of the Red River Basin.

Details on conference sponsorship, exhibiting, presenting, registration, and accommodations are available at:

www.tri-college.org/watershed/conference.htm

Early bird deadline is March 1, 2005!

Notices

Status of Off-Road & Agriculture Tires

The Tire Stewardship Board (TSB) has been instructed by the Minister of Conservation, the Honourable Stan Struthers, to proceed with meeting its regulatory obligations within the existing revenue structure. The Board of the TSB interprets this to mean that OTR and agriculture tires are not in the program for the present time, as the TSB does not have the funds to recycle these tires.

While this means that municipalities will have to deal with the problem of disposal of scrap off-road and agriculture tires, the TSB will continue to assist you, if possible, while we continue to look for solutions to this problem.

For further information, please contact Bill Harper, General Manager of the Tire Stewardship Board, at 204-661-3242 or email mbtirebd@skyweb.ca

Technology Solutions for the Workplace

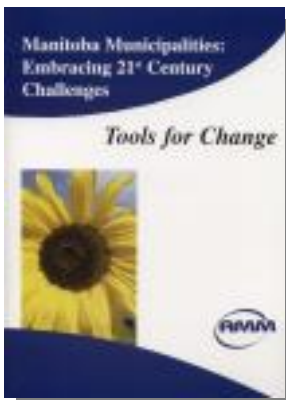
Assiniboine Community College

The following courses begin in March, 2005:

- Gravel Road Maintenance & Design
- Water Treatment & Distribution 1
- Water Treatment 1, and
- Water Distribution 1

To register, call

725-8701 or 800-862-6307, ext. 6742



MUNICIPAL INNOVATION AWARDS PROGRAM

The Municipal Innovation Awards Program is an annual AMM-sponsored awards program that recognizes excellence in municipal practices that improve governance, administration, service delivery or intermunicipal cooperation.

This award will be presented at the upcoming MOS Seminar in Brandon at the end of February. Deadline for submissions is **February 18, 2005**.

To view the submission guidelines and obtain a copy of the submission form, visit the AMM website at www.amm.mb.ca.