



Meeting with
The Honourable Nancy Allan
Minister of Labour & Immigration

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Departmental Issues.....	6
1. 911 Issues	6
2. Fire Inspection Requirements for Municipalities.....	9
3. Provincial Floor Construction Standards	10
General Issues.....	12
1. Alternate Revenues for Municipalities and Infrastructure Investment	12
Appendix A – Active Resolutions	16

Executive Summary

Departmental Issues

1. 911 Issues

- Municipalities are prepared to participate in enhancing emergency response services, however the Provincial Government must ensure that province-wide structures are in place that will facilitate municipal service provision.
- At the 2008 Convention, the AMM membership passed two resolutions providing specific suggestions for improvements to the current systems.
- The first resolution suggests that mile marker signs should be installed along the Trans Canada Highways 1 and 16 to provide greater assistance in locating an incident.
- The second resolution will benefit municipalities beyond the Trans Canada Highways since it proposes an alternative telephone number for non-emergency calls.
- This service would also assist in reducing the false alarms attended by municipal fire departments, since it provides a mechanism to determine whether the municipal fire department is actually required.
- As well, ensuring that 911 service is consistently accessible throughout Manitoba continues to be a concern for municipalities, particularly in sparsely populated and remote areas.
- The AMM appreciated the Province's action to reinstate of the Provincial 911 Committee in 2007, however this committee has not met on a regular basis.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to provide greater supports to ensure that efficient emergency response is available throughout Manitoba, including mandatory 911 and assistance in locating emergency incidents.

2. Fire Inspection Requirements for Municipalities

- While the AMM supports measures that keep Manitobans safe and prevent fires, increased inspection responsibilities must not overburden local fire departments.
- Municipalities are particularly concerned that the new Fire Safety Inspections Regulation under *The Fires Prevention and Emergency Response Act* downloads responsibility for inspections on daycare facilities and other buildings to municipalities.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to amend the Fire Safety Inspections Regulation such that municipalities are not required to conduct inspections on additional building types.

3. Provincial Floor Construction Standards

- The safety of firefighters entering burning homes with silent floor construction is of particular concern to municipalities.
- Firefighters have no means of identifying the type of floor system prior to entry, however they should be alerted in some manner based on the greater risk of encountering structural issues in homes with silent floor construction.
- A National Research Council study found that the times to reach structural failure for the engineered floor assemblies were 35-60 percent shorter than for the solid wood joist assembly, and that the presence of engineered floor assemblies caused structural failure in the form of complete collapse into the basement or in the form of a “V-shaped” collapse due to joint or truss failure.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to respond quickly to the need for amendments to applicable acts and standards to ensure homeowners and builders clearly identify homes with silent floor construction.

General Issues

1. Alternate Revenues for Municipalities and Infrastructure Investment

- Today’s municipal council must balance community economic development, land use planning and infrastructure renewal and development with an eroding tax base and an increased reliance on application-based grants.
- The message the AMM is hoping to convey is not that the provincial or federal government has completely forgotten about municipalities, but rather that despite their efforts municipalities still face enormous challenges and more is needed.
- A new approach is needed, and for this reason we are asking the Province of Manitoba to share one percent of the Provincial Sales Tax with municipalities for infrastructure. This will provide municipalities with in excess of \$200 million a year.
- What should not be lost is the positive impact infrastructure investment would have for the provincial and national economy.
- A study by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities found that an increase in municipal infrastructure spending of \$1 billion in 2008 (at nominal process and allocated to a representative mix of infrastructure) would increase the size of the real economy by roughly 0.13 percent, or \$1.3 billion in nominal terms.
- Municipalities are not looking for new revenue sources to store money away for a rainy day. The storm has arrived.
- Providing municipalities with new revenue sources will not only begin to address the growing infrastructure deficit, but will help build and strengthen our economy.

- For municipal government to be sustainable into the future, and for Manitobans to have access to the quality of life they deserve, municipalities need to have access to sustainable growth revenues.

Therefore the AMM is asking the Province to undertake a serious review of the roles, responsibilities and resources of municipal government in Manitoba and in the short term provide municipalities with one percent of the current PST to help address the growing municipal infrastructure deficit.

Departmental Issues

1. 911 Issues

Timely response to emergency situations is an invaluable service made possible by the joint efforts of municipalities and the Province. Even with the recent implementation of targeted Provincial initiatives such as the Medical Transportation Coordination Centre (MTCC) and automatic vehicle locators in ambulances, there are still barriers to achieving this goal. The AMM membership recently proposed actions that would minimize these barriers through resolutions passed at the 2008 AMM Convention. Municipalities are prepared to participate in enhancing emergency response services, however the Provincial Government must ensure that province-wide structures are in place that will facilitate municipal service provision.

Municipalities along Trans Canada Highway 1 and 16 currently provide emergency response services for any incidents occurring on these highways. Several of these municipalities find that a significant portion of the motor vehicle accidents they attend are located on these major routes and therefore generate considerable costs for the municipal fire department. This is a particular concern since travelers along these highways are often non-residents, meaning that the municipality will not be reimbursed for their response efforts.

As a result, municipalities are seeking Provincial support for mechanisms that will improve emergency response along the Trans Canada Highways. At the 2008 Convention, the AMM membership passed two resolutions providing specific suggestions for improvements to the current systems. The first resolution suggests that mile marker signs should be installed to provide greater assistance in locating the incident. Again, since many travelers are non-residents, they are less likely to be able to provide specific details of where an incident has occurred. Increasing the frequency of landmarks through mile markers would provide additional reference points both for drivers and emergency responders.

The second resolution will benefit municipalities beyond the Trans Canada Highways since it proposes an alternative telephone number for non-emergency calls. This system would be promoted through road signage and in the media in order to encourage callers to consider the

nature of an incident prior to placing a call. This service would also assist in reducing the false alarms attended by municipal fire departments, since it provides a mechanism to determine whether the municipal fire department is actually required. Many false alarms stem from drivers calling 911 after observing a vehicle in a ditch without assessing whether the accident has already been reported and a fire department has already responded. The AMM's resolution suggests that this alternative telephone number should be complemented by an education campaign to teach the general public when it is appropriate to place 911 calls. As a further deterrent to placing unnecessary 911 calls, municipalities support the implementation of a legislated fine for individuals making non-emergency 911 calls. Together, the actions recommended by these two resolutions will greatly improve the efficiency of Manitoba's emergency response services. The Province should therefore be prepared to commit to such innovative solutions that will reduce the long-term costs of emergency response in Manitoba.

Furthermore, ensuring that 911 service is consistently accessible throughout Manitoba continues to be a concern for municipalities, particularly in sparsely populated and remote areas. Although the Province has estimated that 90 per cent of Manitoba's population has access to emergency service through 911, this does not mean that service is available in all locations. In these sparsely populated areas, access to a reliable emergency network is especially important due to the additional time required for emergency responders to attend an incident. Prompt response should be facilitated through a user-friendly system that offers a consistent contact mechanism regardless of where an emergency occurs.

The AMM appreciated the Province's action to reinstate the Provincial 911 Committee in 2007, however this committee has not met on a regular basis. The committee was expected to be an avenue for the AMM to raise municipal concerns such as the current gaps in 911 service and any issues with MTCC service. The AMM expected this committee's recommendations to be reviewed by the Minister and appropriate action taken to resolve any service issues. There will be insufficient attention to rectifying problems if the committee does not remain active. The Province has a key role in supporting emergency response services and communication with stakeholders is critical to making the most of Provincial participation.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to provide greater supports to ensure that efficient emergency response is available throughout Manitoba, including mandatory 911 and assistance in locating emergency incidents.

2. Fire Inspection Requirements for Municipalities

Municipal fire departments provide an indispensable service and must be equipped with the financial and technical resources required to keep communities safe. Recent amendments to *The Fires Prevention and Emergency Response Act* increased the inspections that must be carried out by local authorities. While the AMM supports measures that keep Manitobans safe and prevent fires, these increased responsibilities must not overburden local fire departments. Municipal budgets are under significant pressure and although fire prevention and protection are important priorities, increasing responsibilities may over-extend these budgets.

Municipalities are particularly concerned that the new Fire Safety Inspections Regulation under *The Fires Prevention and Emergency Response Act* downloads responsibility for inspections on daycare facilities and other buildings to municipalities. The AMM membership passed a resolution at the 2008 Annual Convention requesting that the Province resume its prior responsibilities to conduct fire inspections. Many municipalities do not have the resources required to undertake these additional responsibilities and view this as an additional downloading of responsibilities to municipalities. As well, there are times when it is more appropriate for the Province to conduct these inspections, as it can otherwise mean one neighbour shutting down another in some smaller communities.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to amend the Fire Safety Inspections Regulation such that municipalities are not required to conduct inspections on additional building types.

3. Provincial Floor Construction Standards

As housing starts increased over the past few years, there has been an associated growth in the use of new building materials and techniques that will improve the speed of construction and the quality of the final product. This has led to the widespread use of silent floor construction and other engineered floor assemblies based on their strength and efficient use of materials. Although there are advantages to using this type of construction, there are also significant safety concerns when emergency situations arise.

The safety of firefighters entering burning homes with silent floor construction is of particular concern to municipalities. When these homes catch fire, the floor systems burn considerably faster than traditional timber joists. During a fire, engineered wood products lose their structural integrity more rapidly since they do not have the same mass of material and therefore burn at a faster rate. Firefighters have no means of identifying the type of floor system prior to entry, however they should be alerted in some manner based on the greater risk of encountering structural issues in homes with silent floor construction. Making this critical information available prior to entry would greatly reduce the risks to firefighters and the households they assist.

The National Research Council (NRC) of Canada completed a study of fire-load tests on silent floor joists and released its report in December 2008. The study found that the times to reach structural failure for the engineered floor assemblies were 35-60 percent shorter than for the solid wood joist assembly. Furthermore, the presence of engineered floor assemblies caused structural failure in the form of complete collapse into the basement or in the form of a “V-shaped” collapse due to joint or truss failure. The testing also identified cases where the floor failed structurally before occupants were able to evacuate. Although the study states that assessing the safety of emergency responders was not within the scope of this project, the research did validate serious safety concerns regarding engineered wood floor assemblies. The NRC has identified scenarios where occupant safety is at risk, meaning it is reasonable to extrapolate that emergency responders would also be at risk in these cases.

In light of these results, the Provincial Government must be prepared to move forward to enact any changes required to Provincial legislation, in order for a consistent identification system to be created in a timely manner.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to respond quickly to the need for amendments to applicable acts and standards to ensure homeowners and builders clearly identify homes with silent floor construction.

General Issues

1. Alternate Revenues for Municipalities and Infrastructure

Investment

The lack of revenue is not a new problem for municipalities. In fact a strong argument can be made that from its inception municipal government has not had the resources required. You need only look back to the resolutions from the founding meeting of the Union of Manitoba Municipalities in 1905 to see municipal revenues were front and centre.

But now more than ever municipalities need new tools to deal with new responsibilities and new expectations. Municipalities are playing an ever greater role in the lives of Manitobans, as the days of simply collecting garbage and plowing roads are long gone. Today's municipal council must balance community economic development, land use planning and infrastructure renewal and development with an eroding tax base and an increased reliance on application-based grants. This has left many municipalities to question whether the current system is tenable any longer.

Currently, Manitoba municipalities are more reliant on provincial and federal grants than any other province in Canada. While in some cases these types of programs are necessary (for example large-scale infrastructure projects), it leaves municipalities having to compete against one another for limited dollars and restricts a municipality's ability to properly plan for much needed investment. The amount in grant programs like the recent Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund is nowhere near the total demand, meaning there is no guarantee much needed projects will ever see funding.

Overreliance on grants and transfers leaves municipalities without the tools required to meet demands. Many issues raised by municipalities are really issues of access to revenue when stripped down to their core. For example, the need to remove education tax from property is really a municipal revenue issue, as municipalities see education tax as eroding the property tax, which is the single greatest source of municipal revenue. Over the last number of years we have seen more and more municipalities speaking out on the need for greater municipal revenue sources.

It is important that the federal and provincial governments' contribution to municipalities are not forgotten. Federally, municipalities have benefited from a GST rebate, the sharing of the federal gas tax and the new Building Canada Fund. The recent Federal Budget has made an unprecedented investment in infrastructure, which will benefit municipalities. Provincially, municipalities have benefited from the sharing of provincial income tax, the Building Manitoba Fund, and supports in several other areas. The message the AMM is hoping to convey is not that either order of government has completely forgotten about municipalities, but rather that despite these efforts municipalities still face enormous challenges and more is needed.

Municipalities must have access to new revenue sources. A greater reliance on property taxes and provincial and federal grants has created an ever-widening chasm between municipal revenues and needs, leaving future generations with what is quickly becoming an insurmountable infrastructure deficit.

A new approach is needed, and for this reason we are asking the Province of Manitoba to share one percent of the Provincial Sales Tax with municipalities for infrastructure. This will provide municipalities with in excess of \$200 million a year. For a community of 1,000 people, this means an investment of roughly \$185,000 in their local infrastructure, or \$370,000 for a community of 2,000 people. A community such as Thompson could see close to \$2.5 million while Winnipeg would expect to see over \$117 million. Although these amounts alone will not erase the infrastructure deficit in Manitoba, it would be a positive first step.

The AMM understands that providing additional revenues to municipalities may become more difficult as the economy continues to fluctuate. While economic projections can never be taken as absolute fact, they are often a prophetic divining rod on economic times. However what should not be lost is the positive impact infrastructure investment would have for the provincial and national economy.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has investigated this principle in depth and has found in their 2008 study "Municipal Infrastructure- Macroeconomic impacts of spending and level-of

government financing” that an increase in municipal infrastructure spending of \$1 billion in 2008 (at nominal process and allocated to a representative mix of infrastructure) would increase the size of the real economy by roughly 0.13 percent, or \$1.3 billion in nominal terms. While this would erode slightly over time with consistent investment, over a four year period it would still result in meaningful gains to the economy, dropping to a 0.6 percent increase in the final year.

The resulting investment would be felt in the employment sector as well, since a great number of industries would benefit. A \$1 billion investment in 2008 would add 11,500 new jobs, in industries from labour and material suppliers through to architects and engineers.

Giving municipalities access to additional revenues, will translate to stronger investment in our communities. The Institute for Research on Public Policy has shown that providing adequate infrastructure has both direct and indirect benefits for private-sector manufacturing.

Infrastructure is an intermediate input into the production process, with businesses locating where they have access to water, hydro and transportation. New roads reduce fuel costs and haul times. Access to high quality (and adequate) water reduces input costs. There is also evidence that increased investments in public infrastructure allow private companies to use labour inputs more intensively, translating into more jobs.

Municipalities are not looking for new revenue sources to store money away for a rainy day. The storm has arrived. The national municipal infrastructure deficit is in excess of \$123 billion for current infrastructure with another \$115 billion needed for new infrastructure to keep pace with other developed nations. Left to deal with this ballooning deficit alone armed only with property taxes and grants, it will continue to grow exponentially. Alternatively, providing municipalities with new revenue sources will not only begin to address this growing deficit, but will help build and strengthen our economy.

The time has come for a new approach to municipal funding. The expectations of today’s municipalities are greater than any time in history. Regrettably so are the financial challenges facing municipalities. For municipal government to be sustainable into the future, and for

Manitobans to have access to the quality of life they deserve, municipalities need to have access to sustainable growth revenues.

Therefore the AMM is asking the Province to undertake a serious review of the roles, responsibilities and resources of municipal government in Manitoba and in the short term provide municipalities with one percent of the current PST to help address the growing municipal infrastructure deficit.

Appendix A – Active Resolutions

AMM Resolution 59-2008

Topic: Markers to Expedite 911 Calls on Trans Canada Highway

Sponsor: RM of Reynolds (Eastern District)

Department: Manitoba Labour and Immigration, Manitoba Emergency Measures, Manitoba Infrastructure & Transportation, Transport Canada

WHEREAS the Trans Canada Highway is a national highway;

AND WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba is eligible to receive Federal funding for improvement projects on the Trans Canada Highway and Provincial tax dollars are generated through tourist and business traffic;

AND WHEREAS the Province does not provide emergency response services nor does it provide financial assistance to municipalities that supply emergency response services on the Trans Canada Highway;

AND WHEREAS funding emergency response services for non-resident traffic incidents and false alarm calls on the Trans Canada Highway has become a heavy burden on municipal property owners who receive little, if any benefit from the traffic;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba and the Government of Canada to supply and install mile marker signs on the Trans Canada Highway #1 and Trans Canada Highway #16 to expedite emergency services in locating 911 calls.

AMM Resolution 60-2008

Topic: Education Campaign for 911 Calls

Sponsor: RM of Reynolds (Eastern District)

Department: Manitoba Labour and Immigration, Manitoba Emergency Measures

WHEREAS the Trans Canada Highway is a national highway;

AND WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba is eligible to receive Federal funding for improvement projects on the Trans Canada Highway and Provincial tax dollars are generated through tourist and business traffic;

AND WHEREAS the Province does not provide emergency response services nor does it provide financial assistance to municipalities that supply emergency response services on the Trans Canada Highway;

AND WHEREAS funding emergency response services for non-resident traffic incidents and false alarm calls on the Trans Canada Highway has become a heavy burden on municipal property owners who receive little, if any benefit from the traffic;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to provide a province-wide education program to teach the general public when it is appropriate to place 911 calls;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Province pass legislation to create fines for making non-emergency 911 calls;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Province provide a non-emergency public information number as an alternative to 911, and promote this program through media coverage and roadside signs upon entering Manitoba.

AMM Resolution 62-2008

Topic: Fire Inspections

Sponsor: Village of St. Pierre-Jolys (Eastern District)

Department: Manitoba Labour and Immigration

WHEREAS the Office of the Fire Commissioner was previously responsible for conducting fire inspections of all day care facilities in the Province of Manitoba;

AND WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba has now passed "The Fires Prevention and Emergency Response Act" Regulations 73/2007 which downloads the responsibility for inspections on day care facilities and some other buildings to municipalities;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to resume its prior responsibilities to conduct those fire inspections.

AMM Resolution 52-2005

Topic: Provincial Floor Construction Standards

Sponsor: RM of St. Andrews (Interlake District)

Department: Manitoba Labour and Immigration, Industry Canada

WHEREAS new home construction may involve floors that do not have traditional floor joists but have silent floors;

AND WHEREAS this type of construction does not have the same structural integrity when the home is on fire;

AND WHEREAS a firefighter cannot identify this construction method in a fire situation and may be in danger without knowing;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Federal and Provincial Governments to make the required amendments to applicable acts and standards to ensure homeowners and builders must clearly identify that the home has silent floor construction and that this identification be standard across the Province of Manitoba.

AMM Resolution 32-2003

Topic: Mandatory 911 Subscription

Sponsor City of Brandon (Western District)

Department: Manitoba Labour and Immigration, Manitoba Health

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM urge the Provincial Government to legislate mandatory 911 subscription within all municipalities in the Province;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT this legislation include a completion date for system implementation of June 30, 2005.

AMM Resolution 35-2003

Topic: Review of Costs for Fires Originating on Crown Land

Sponsor: RM of Kelsey (Northern District)

Department: Manitoba Labour and Immigration, Manitoba Conservation

WHEREAS section 264 of *The Municipal Act* states that every municipality must provide fire protection services within its boundaries;

AND WHEREAS the Province has the right to take over the responsibility for firefighting services and charge those services to municipalities;

AND WHEREAS fires on occupied or unoccupied Crown Land have the potential to create huge costs to municipalities for controlling and extinguishing fires;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Provincial Government to review the process for charging municipalities for fires, especially when these fires originate on Crown-owned lands.

AMM Resolution 82-2001

Topic: Funding for the Emergency Services College

Sponsor: RM of St. Andrews (Interlake District)

Department: Manitoba Labour and Immigration

WHEREAS the Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) operates the Manitoba Emergency Services College (MESC);

AND WHEREAS the MESC is an educational institution providing valuable public safety training to municipal emergency response organizations;

AND WHEREAS the OFC receives only 52% of its budget from the Fires Prevention Fund levy, a provincial tax on property insurance policies;

AND WHEREAS the OFC is finding it impossible to meet the increased demands of its municipal clients and balance its budget;

AND WHEREAS a recent request to raise the Fires Prevention Fund levy rate in order to provide necessary funding for public safety training for municipalities was recently rejected by the government;

AND WHEREAS the OFC will be forced to reduce services and/or charge fees for service to municipalities in order to balance its budget;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the AMM lobby the Province to provide funding from general revenues to the OFC to demonstrate its commitment to continued municipal public safety training for the Province.