



June 8, 2011

Clerk of Committees
251 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Dear Committee Members:

On behalf of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM), I would like to express our support for Bill 47: The Accessibility Advisory Council Act and Amendments to the Government Purchases Act. It is our hope that the Accessibility Advisory Council will facilitate with the prevention and removal of barriers in order to enhance accessibility for all Manitobans.

AMM would also like to express appreciation of the differences between Bill 47 and the report submitted by the Advisory Committee for Accessibility Legislation, of which AMM was a member. AMM values the opportunity to provide feedback on legislation as it is developed and would like to express some comments and concerns about any future regulations or accessibility standards applicable to municipalities.

Firstly, as accessibility issues are already addressed in some communities by Age-Friendly Committees or other bodies, we would urge the Province to reduce redundancies by incorporating provincial accessibility initiatives into Age-Friendly Initiatives where possible.

Secondly, municipal councils should be allowed input into how accessibility initiatives or standards are administered in order to be sensitive to local needs. Improving accessibility will have different requirements for different communities, and councils must have a sufficient degree of autonomy in determining the structure of their committees as well as how accessibility issues are to be prioritized in the community.

In addition, any new standards imposed on municipalities must also include provisions for the extra resources municipalities will require. Without resources to accompany new standards, municipalities will bear the costs of implementation. This will be a very difficult challenge for municipalities who are constantly dealing with new downloaded responsibilities and unfunded mandates.

Municipalities are already struggling to deal with policies that require them to address more and more issues such as water quality, recycling, emergency preparedness, and workplace health and safety. Adding new responsibilities and deadlines for implementation will only stretch their budgets further and overburden their staff so that they can no longer deliver on their core responsibilities. AMM would urge the Accessibility Advisory Council to keep in mind that without the necessary resources, it will be difficult for municipalities to implement solutions to accessibility issues.

Municipalities have told us it is essential that any accessibility initiatives take into account the costs municipalities will have to incur. These costs include those associated with the increased demands on staff, as well as the costs associated with improving access to buildings and other municipal infrastructure.

The AMM would like to reiterate our support for making Manitoban communities more accessible to all citizens. We would urge the Province to consider the resources municipalities will require to achieve a more accessible Manitoba, and we remain committed to working with the Province towards this goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Doug Dobrowolski', written in a cursive style.

Doug Dobrowolski
President