

LOBBYING HIGHLIGHTS - SUCCESSES



It is only natural that as a lobby group the AMM is judged by its successes. This past year was a success for the AMM in many areas and a work in progress in others. Here is an overview of the AMM's lobbying highlights from the last year.

Disaster Financial Assistance—a breakthrough

The spring of 2009 was a wet one for a lot of municipalities. For those municipalities in the Red River Valley it was tough year with flood levels reaching the second highest ever on record, and impressive heights were reached in other areas of the province as well. Municipal officials were out in their communities working day and night to initiate emergency plans and coordinate relief efforts. In many cases it was the actions of municipal officials and local volunteers that saved homes and prevented more extensive damage.

In times of disaster municipalities need to take action without having to worry about how much everything will cost. The AMM has been working with the Province for years to find a better way to deliver disaster assistance to municipalities and raised it immediately in the spring when it became evident it was going to be a difficult year. The AMM was very pleased when the Province announced in July 2009 that it would adjust the cost-sharing agreement with municipalities and cap the total municipal contribution.

The new rate is a flat rate of five dollars per capita of municipal expenditures, replacing the former system of municipalities contributing the first 10 per cent of their total claim. This new rate will mean significant savings for municipalities in the future and was a welcome announcement to those municipalities impacted this year.

MPIC Rate Increase

Another issue the AMM has been pushing for a number of years is the compensation provided by the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation (MPIC) to municipalities for responding to motor vehicle accidents. In 2005 the AMM was able to secure a rate increase that brought the rates up substantially; however, this increase failed to adequately compensate municipalities for the actual costs of responding to accidents.

The AMM has continually raised this issue with MPIC as well as the Provincial Government. The AMM met with MPIC in early September 2009 and was able to secure another rate increase. MPIC will now be increasing the compensation rates the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as of 2006 plus one per cent annually across the board. This means that effective September 1, 2009 basic calls will receive \$658 per incident (up from \$600) and \$877 per incident for complex calls (up



L to R: President Doug Dobrowolski, Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Steve Ashton, and Manitoba Emergency Measures' Lee Spencer on July 6, 2009.

from \$800). MPIC will also continue to reimburse municipalities for extra services as required. Most importantly, the AMM was successful in having MPIC commit to an annual increase of the rates effective March 1 of each year based on the prior year's CPI plus one per cent.

Greyhound Bus Service

An issue that immediately drew attention from the AMM was Greyhound Bus Lines' announcement in early September, 2009 to discontinue service throughout Manitoba. This would cause serious problems for many rural and remote communities in the province. The AMM immediately took action by meeting with the Province to discuss the impact of this policy decision on municipalities. The Province agreed with the seriousness of the issue and a working group was created to find possible solutions. The AMM also raised this issue with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), and was successful in getting an emergency resolution of the Board passed. The resolution called on the Federal Government to work with the provinces and industry to find a short-term solution to continue service as well as develop a long-term strategy to ensure service remains into the future.

Greyhound backed away from its original announcement to discontinue service and was working with stakeholders to find a solution, but renewed its threat on October 23, 2009. On October 29, Transport Minister Ron Lemieux announced Greyhound and the Province had agreed to work together to find a mutually satisfactory solution and Greyhound agreed to cancel its deadline of November 1 to pull out of Manitoba.

The AMM will continue to monitor the situation and work with Greyhound, the Provincial and Federal Governments and FCM to find a permanent resolution.