

# AMM Board OF DIRECTORS

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President of the Manitoba Municipal Administrators' Association



Doug Dobrowolski, President

## We cannot fall ANY FURTHER BEHIND

Isn't it great to usher in spring? Typically a time of renewal, warmer days, puddles (and sometimes, unfortunately, floods) spring is also the time for budgets.

Across Canada municipalities held their collective breath waiting for the federal budget to come down in early March. Fortunately, the feared spending cuts and offloading did not materialize. Leading up to the budget, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) called for the Federal Government to sustain its core commitments to cities and communities, and that is essentially what it did. The Gas Tax Fund, the GST rebate and the existing social housing programs will continue, even as the government begins its long term plan to balance its books.

Given the fiscal situation, it comes as no surprise that there is little stimulus funding still available for access by municipal projects – virtually every dollar has been committed, and in many cases projects have begun. Our hope in the coming year is for Ottawa to continue to partner with provinces and territories to monitor stimulus projects, identify regional challenges, and show flexibility where delays are caused by factors outside of municipal control. The Federal Government stood by municipalities with Budget 2010, and we join FCM in urging it to continue to do so.

It should come as no surprise that provincially, too, our “wish list” is on the short side. Gone are the days of big “asks” – at least temporarily. We expect a tough budget and hopefully, a fair budget. We are taking a realistic approach in that we expect existing programs to be maintained and protected. That is not to say we are looking for nothing new at all, simply that we are looking for movement on smaller, more achievable items.

For example, an issue of great importance to many of our municipalities is the cost of using fire personnel to do traffic control at motor vehicle accident scenes. Too often untrained fire personnel are

being asked to do traffic control as RCMP have other priorities. Municipalities understand this and while traffic control is ultimately the responsibility of the RCMP, local fire departments are willing to provide this service. However municipal fire departments should be trained and compensated for their time. To that end we asked the Province to provide funding to municipal fire departments to offset the cost of providing traffic control at accident scenes, and we also asked for training to be made available to municipal fire departments.

While this is just one example, it perfectly illustrates how a downward situation is born – an expectation is created, municipalities rise to the challenge, and ultimately end up providing a service that was never their responsibility to begin with.

Naturally, we expect some movement on the sewage ejector issue as well – that is one that requires no explanation. And, as with the federal budget, we must not see any erosion of our current programs. In times of fiscal rebuilding, everyone understands the need for restraint. However, there is an equal need to maintain and protect what we already have. We simply cannot fall any further behind.

Our budget submissions for 2010, both federal and provincial, are available on our website at [http://www.amm.mb.ca/pol\\_budgets.html](http://www.amm.mb.ca/pol_budgets.html).

With that, our year is well under way and our work certainly appears to be cut out for us! I am thankful for the many opportunities I have already had to meet with our members, including our recent round of Mayors, Reeves and CAOs meetings. These meetings continue to be an excellent way for the AMM to feel the pulse of our membership and hear the issues facing our community leaders. I look forward to our next opportunity to meet – at MOS in Brandon. See you there. 