



ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA MUNICIPALITIES

MEETING WITH

Honourable Jim Rondeau
Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors

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Executive Summary

Departmental Issues

1. Funding for Recreation Practitioners

- Communities offering a variety of recreational opportunities derive significant benefit from employing recreation practitioners who guide programming decisions to engage community residents and achieve considerable health improvements.
- In particular, municipalities recognize the benefits offered by groups such as Recreation Connections Manitoba (RCM) that offer training and support to recreation practitioners across the province and it is critical that investments be made in these support organizations to allow them to fulfill their mandates and deliver much needed training to its members.
- As well, recreation commissions are in need of additional funding since these important organizations have not received a funding increase since the early 1990s.
- The AMM was pleased with the 2009 Provincial Budget commitment to increase operating grants for major cultural agencies and other recreation and sports organizations and are looking for the 2010 budget to build on these investments.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to provide sufficient resources for recreation practitioners and recreation commissions to ensure high-quality recreational programming is available throughout Manitoba.

2. Increased Operating Costs for Recreation Centres

- For many communities the challenge of finding funding to build needed community recreation centres is only half the battle. Once the facility is built ongoing funding is needed to ensure the centre remains open when the community needs it.
- While new centres are being built to energy efficient standards that save operating costs, many of the older centres are finding operations costs are becoming an impediment to keeping the doors open.
- Manitoba Hydro has done great work with many centres and has been successful in reducing heating costs which help improve the bottom line. However this is only one of the main cost drivers and there are limitations to what can be done.
- The AMM believes a support program from the province would be beneficial to ensure these centres can remain open for as many hours as possible and user fees charged at these centres remain reasonable.

Therefore the AMM asks the Province to develop new incentive programs for community recreation centres to help offset the escalating operating costs.

3. Increased Funding for Seniors Housing

- One of the issues we hear often in visiting with municipalities is the need for housing specifically for seniors.
- The increasing population of seniors has heightened demand for various housing types, including community living and supportive housing.
- Recent commitments are appreciated however there are many other municipalities that would benefit from similar programming.
- The AMM sees a strong role for Regional Health Authorities in establishing effective supportive housing units, and the Province should work with RHAs to promote the allocation of resources in order to complement the further expansion of supportive housing throughout Manitoba.
- As the federal government looks to make increased investments in housing initiatives, our association feels strongly that seniors housing should be one of the funding priorities.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to ensure that the housing needs of seniors are prioritized in provincial housing programs and adequate support is available.

General Issue

The Core Challenges for Municipalities

- Municipal government plays a greater role in the lives of Canadians than any other time in history and the new realities facing municipalities have serious repercussions as they diligently try to balance growing responsibilities with stagnant revenues.
- The core challenges facing municipalities have become overwhelming, and the lead up to this year's provincial election provides an opportunity for all political parties, candidates and citizens to engage in a thoughtful discussion about how these challenges should be addressed.
- Municipal infrastructure is the very foundation of a community, yet its current state leaves communities with little hope for prosperity. Nationally the municipal infrastructure deficit is in excess of \$123 billion and provincially it is estimated at over \$11 billion, or a staggering \$10,000 per Manitoban.
- As well, municipal responsibilities continue to grow, either through the intentional or unintentional offloading of responsibilities or new unfunded mandates being forced on municipalities.
- Because of these challenges municipalities must have access to new sources of revenues. Options include the Province collecting a one cent municipal tax to be allocated to municipalities for infrastructure, a rebate of the Provincial Sales Tax paid by municipalities, or an increase to existing revenue sources such as VLTs.
- Manitoba municipalities are more reliant on provincial and federal grants than any other province in Canada and while in some cases these types of programs

are necessary it leaves municipalities having to compete against each other for limited dollars and restricts a municipality's ability to properly plan for much needed investment.

- 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. This is the only way municipalities will be able to even begin to address the core challenges they face.
- The AMM is therefore asking every political party to make municipal funding a top priority for this year's provincial election. Now is the time for each party to lay out its vision for the future of municipal government in Manitoba and how these core challenges can be addressed. The health of our communities is at stake.

Therefore the AMM would like to see a commitment from each political party to:

- 1. Make a greater investment in municipal infrastructure**
- 2. End the downloading of responsibilities to municipalities and require that any new mandates come with new funding**
- 3. Provide new growth revenues to municipalities**

Departmental Issues

1. Funding for Recreation Practitioners

There is a growing recognition of the importance of recreational activities as a main contributing factor in an overall healthy lifestyle. While a great deal of attention is paid to building recreation centres, it is equally important to have effective practitioners running the centres and programming. Communities offering a variety of recreational opportunities derive significant benefit from employing quality recreation practitioners. These individuals are able to guide programming decisions to engage community residents and achieve considerable health improvements. Therefore, the increased emphasis on recreation as a mechanism to prevent health problems has heightened the role of recreation practitioners.

In particular, municipalities recognize the benefits offered by groups such as Recreation Connections Manitoba (RCM) that offer training and support to recreation practitioners across the province. Many recreation practitioners are volunteers, therefore the training and professional development offered by groups like RCM is

invaluable. This is why it is critical that investments be made in these support organizations to allow them to fulfill their mandates and deliver much needed training to its members. As well, recreation commissions are in need of additional funding since these important organizations have not received a funding increase since the early 1990s. Since there are effective program delivery vehicles in place, the Province should ensure that adequate funding support is available to maintain the services offered by these important organizations.

The AMM is pleased with the focus that has been placed on improving the health of Manitobans by the Province. The recent Throne Speech made it clear that providing healthy recreation opportunities will be a priority in the coming year. While municipalities fully support this initiative it is important that the Province provide financial support for the practitioners that are being asked to deliver in these provincial commitments.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to provide sufficient resources for recreation practitioners and recreation commissions to ensure high-quality recreational programming is available throughout Manitoba.

2. Increased Operating Costs for Recreation Centres

For many communities the challenge of finding funding to build needed community recreation centres is only half the battle. Once the facility is built ongoing funding is needed to ensure the centre remains open when the community needs it. While new centres are being built to energy efficient standards that save operating costs, many of the older centres are finding operations costs are becoming an impediment to keeping the doors open.

Manitoba Hydro has done great work with many centres and has been successful in reducing heating costs which help improve the bottom line. Saskatchewan has also implemented a similar program which was launched in late 2009 similar to Manitoba Hydro's program. While these types of programs are helpful, this is only one of the main cost drivers and there are limitations to what can be done.

The AMM believes a support program from the province would be beneficial to ensure these centres can remain open for as many hours as possible and user fees charged at these centres remain reasonable. Recently our membership passed a resolution at our convention calling on the government to develop new programs and new rate structures for recreation centres in the province and we see real value in developing a program that rewards those that have done improvements to centres yet continue to be hindered by high operating costs.

Therefore the AMM asks the Province to develop new incentive programs for community recreation centres to help offset the escalating operating costs.

3. Increased Funding for Seniors Housing

One of the issues we hear often in visiting with municipalities is the need for housing specifically for seniors. The increasing population of seniors has heightened demand for various housing types, including community living and supportive housing. For this reason, the Province's commitment to double the Building Foundations funding for new supportive housing units in Thompson, The Pas and Brandon will be greatly appreciated in those communities. More recent commitments to provide funding for projects in St. Jean Baptiste, Pinawa and the Morden-Winkler area are also appreciated. However, there are many other municipalities that would benefit from similar programming. The AMM is aware that there are options available to municipalities to develop housing projects including working with non-profit groups in their communities. Additional support through Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) is critical to establishing effective supportive housing units, and the Province should work with RHAs to promote the allocation of resources in order to complement the further expansion of supportive housing throughout Manitoba.

Municipalities appreciate the willingness of the Province to continue to develop housing programs as the federal government's involvement fluctuated over the last number of years. We understand that there are ongoing discussions with the federal government as it is now looking to make increased investments into housing initiatives. Our association feels strongly that seniors housing should be one of the funding priorities.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to ensure that the housing needs of seniors are prioritized in provincial housing programs and adequate support is available.

General Issue

The Core Challenges for Municipalities

Today's municipal government plays a greater role in the lives of Canadians than any other time in history. Municipalities no longer simply plow the streets and pick up the garbage. Certainly today's municipal corporation still cleans the streets and collects garbage (and recyclables), but it also is sustainably managing growth through everything from state of the art transit systems to environmentally conscious land use and water planning. The pioneers of municipal government would be astonished to see today's council agenda where elected officials are doing everything from recruiting doctors from around the world to providing funding for daycares.

These new realities are having serious repercussions for municipalities as they diligently try to balance growing responsibilities with stagnant revenues. Every day municipalities are facing new demands from both citizens and other orders of government and must try to balance these with existing priorities and scarce revenues that remain overly reliant on the ebb and flow of grant programs. The current challenges facing municipalities are overwhelming and there must be a greater effort to address these if we want to see strong vibrant communities throughout our province.

While municipal concerns cut across every provincial department, there are two core issues that are most pressing for municipalities today - the ballooning municipal infrastructure deficit and the growing mandate of municipal government, either through intentional and unintentional offloading of responsibilities from other orders of government and unfunded mandates. These two challenges are crippling municipal government and keeping Manitoba communities behind.

The lead up to this year's provincial election provides an opportunity for all political parties, candidates and citizens to engage in a thoughtful discussion about how these core challenges should be addressed.

Municipal Infrastructure Deficit

It is no secret that municipalities are facing nearly insurmountable infrastructure challenges. We only need to take a look around our communities to see the deteriorating state of our infrastructure. Roads that are nearly impassable due to potholes and heaving, drafty libraries with crippling heating bills, recreation complexes with leaking roofs and water and sewer treatment plants that are running beyond capacity. These are the very foundation of a community, yet their current state leaves communities with little hope for prosperity. For Manitoba communities to thrive in the future these swelling infrastructure challenges must be addressed.

In Canada the municipal infrastructure deficit was estimated in 2007 to be in excess of \$123 billion for current needs. Most alarming is how quickly the deficit has been compounding, as it has doubled over the previous 5 years. Equally alarming, the \$123 billion is only for the upgrade and repair of current municipal infrastructure, with another \$115 billion required for new infrastructure.¹

These national trends hold true for Manitoba as well. The City of Winnipeg has recently calculated its infrastructure deficit at \$3.8 billion for existing infrastructure and \$3.6 billion for new strategic infrastructure.² Historically the municipal infrastructure deficit outside of Winnipeg has been double that within Winnipeg so it is fair to extrapolate that the deficit outside Winnipeg for existing infrastructure is over \$7.5 billion, putting the total municipal deficit for existing infrastructure in Manitoba in excess of \$11 billion, or a staggering \$10,000 per Manitoban. It is certainly an insurmountable amount for municipalities to tackle on their own since the total municipal taxes levied in 2008 were just over \$760,000,000.³

¹ Mirza, Saeed, "Danger Ahead: The Coming Collapse of Canada's Municipal Infrastructure", November 2007 (available at www.fcm.ca)

² City of Winnipeg Administrative Report, "Infrastructure and Possible Funding Options" Tabled at July 22nd, 2009 Council Meeting (available at www.winnipeg.ca)

³ Province of Manitoba, "Statistical Information 2008 – Municipalities of the Province of Manitoba", P.17

There is no doubt the current infrastructure deficit is crippling Manitoba's economy. Adequate infrastructure is an obvious prerequisite for economic development and unfortunately it is greatly lacking in many communities. FCM has investigated this principle in depth and 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. 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, which would be felt in industries from labour and material suppliers through to architects and engineers.⁴

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 there is 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.⁵

While the numbers are staggering, of far greater concern is the very real impact this infrastructure deficit is having on the people who live in Manitoba. Manitobans are experiencing longer commutes to work either because of impassable roads or slower speeds. We are also spending more time traveling to neighbouring communities to access recreation opportunities. Many have seen the outmigration of neighbours and friends who tire of dealing with these daily challenges.

⁴ Sonnen, Carl, "Municipal Infrastructure- Macroeconomic impacts of spending and level-of-government financing" May 31, 2008 (available at www.fcm.ca)

⁵ Brox, James A. "Infrastructure Investment: The Foundation of Canadian Competitiveness - IRPP Policy Matters 2008" August, 2008 (available at www.irpp.org)

Municipal councils want to create vibrant, welcoming communities, but this is nearly impossible with the state of infrastructure today. For example, there remain 167 boil water advisories in Manitoba, many in Manitoba municipalities.⁶ This means today, thousands of Manitobans do not have access to safe drinking water when they turn on the tap. It is unreasonable to think these communities can realistically compete with the rest of Manitoba and Canada if they do not have this essential infrastructure.

Ever Increasing Responsibilities

A second core challenge for municipalities is ever increasing responsibilities. Municipalities are continually being asked to do more and more, either through the intentional or unintentional offloading of responsibilities from other orders of government or through new unfunded mandates being forced on municipalities by the provincial and federal government. These new responsibilities do not come with new revenue sources and result in municipal budgets being stretched thinner and thinner. The sad reality is that as municipalities are being forced to take on more the core municipal responsibilities suffer.

Municipal officials believe in their community. This is where they live, where they raise their families, where they work and for many where they were born. They care greatly about their community and when they see a need they will do everything they can to address it. Many times municipal officials are their own worst enemy, as they step in and act where other orders of government have abdicated their responsibilities. Municipalities step up and do repairs on provincial roads, they recruit physicians from all corners of the world, and they help fund community health facilities. In some cases municipalities are just filling gaps in service unintentionally left by other orders of government and other times municipalities are stepping in because the provincial and federal governments have made it clear their community will not get the service or investment unless they do.

Compounding this is the growing trend of unfunded mandates being heaped on municipalities by the provincial and federal governments. Too often new rules are implemented without adequate thought to how they can possibly be implemented.

⁶ Province of Manitoba “Provincial Boil Water Advisories” – October 19th, 2010

These unilateral decisions leave municipalities in the untenable position of either sacrificing core programs and services or being in non-compliance of provincial rules. Unfortunately we are hearing more and more from municipalities that they are being forced to opt for the latter.

Municipalities cannot keep pace with the rapid increase in the offloading of responsibilities and unfunded mandates. These challenges are pushing municipalities further and further behind.

Alternate Revenues

Now more than ever municipalities need new tools to deal with new responsibilities and new expectations. Currently Manitoba municipalities are more reliant on provincial and federal grants than any other province in Canada⁷. While in some cases these types of programs are necessary (for example large-scale infrastructure projects), it leaves municipalities having to compete against each other for limited dollars and restricts a municipality's ability to properly plan for much needed investment. The amount allocated to grant programs like the recent Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund or community infrastructure funding under the Building Canada Fund is nowhere near the total demand, meaning there is no guarantee much-needed projects will ever receive funding.

Over-reliance on grants and transfers leave municipalities without the tools required to meet demands. Many municipal issues, when stripped down to their core, are really issues of access to revenue. 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 base, 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 government contributions to municipalities are not forgotten. Federally, municipalities have benefited from a GST rebate, the sharing of the federal gas tax and the Building Canada Fund as well as

⁷ Slack, Kitchen, McMillan, Vaillancourt, "Roles, Responsibilities, Resources and Relationships – Report to the Provincial and Territorial Municipal Associations" June 15th, 2007.

Stimulus Funding. Provincially, municipalities have benefited from the sharing of provincial income tax, the Building Manitoba Fund, and supports in several other areas. We also appreciate the Province stepping up with their one-third share of recent federal programs. 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. Municipalities are struggling to deliver core services as their budgets begin to crack under increased demands.

The reality is the property taxation system cannot meet the new demands facing municipalities. Municipalities have been increasing taxes to try to meet these demands however they are falling further and further behind. Over the last 10 years municipalities outside the City of Winnipeg have increased their own taxes levied by over 4 percent a year on average. In 2009 only 13 municipalities outside Winnipeg decreased taxes, while 183 increased taxes, 22 municipalities by over 10 percent. Every year municipalities are going to citizens in their communities and asking them for more and more, yet the infrastructure deficit and budgetary demands continue to rise.

A new approach is needed, and for this reason we are advocating for a one-cent municipal tax to be allocated to municipalities for infrastructure and split equally among municipalities on a per capita basis. This will provide municipalities with in excess of \$200 million a year. For a community of 1,000 people, this means roughly an investment of \$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 this funding alone will not erase the infrastructure deficit in Manitoba, it is a positive first step.

While the AMM is not necessarily asking for a new tax, there is support among

Manitobans for a new tax dedicated to municipal infrastructure. Polling done by AMM in 2008 found that 94 percent of Manitobans see infrastructure as a high priority, including a 94 percent positive response rate in Winnipeg. The poll also found that 55 percent of Manitobans think that municipalities do not have the revenue sources needed to cover infrastructure costs alone, including 50 percent in Winnipeg. Most interestingly, the poll found that 54 percent of Manitobans, including 51 percent of Winnipeggers, support an additional one percent municipal tax dedicated to infrastructure renewal projects⁸. As the infrastructure deficit continues to grow, support for this will only increase.

The AMM is also asking for other revenue sources for municipalities, such as a rebate of the Provincial Sales Tax as well as increases to existing sources such as VLT revenues. We would also ask that any new mandates for municipalities be accompanied by corresponding financial support.

The sad reality is that while the Province of Manitoba has been a leader in some municipal areas, it has not been enough. We have the opportunity to visit every municipality in Manitoba within the four year election cycle and it is clear our communities are struggling and we are falling behind.

We understand 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. Furthermore, delaying investment in these critical infrastructure projects will have serious long-term consequences for Manitoba's economy.

Municipalities are not looking for new revenue sources to store money away for a rainy day. The storm has arrived. With a national municipal infrastructure deficit in excess of \$123 billion, and Manitoba's share in excess of \$11 billion, there is no shortage of work to be done. If municipalities are left to deal with this ballooning deficit alone armed only with property taxes and grants, it will continue to grow exponentially.

⁸ Probe Research "Public Attitudes on Infrastructure Renewal Funding in Manitoba" September, 2008.

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. This is the only way municipalities will be able to even begin to address the core challenges they face.

The AMM is therefore asking every political party to make municipal funding a top priority for this year's provincial election. Now is the time for each party to lay out its vision for the future of municipal government in Manitoba and how these core challenges can be addressed. The health of our communities is at stake.

Therefore the AMM would like to see a commitment from each political party to:

- 1. Make a greater investment in municipal infrastructure**
- 2. End the downloading of responsibilities to municipalities and require that any new mandates come with new funding**
- 3. Provide new growth revenues to municipalities**

Appendix A – Active Resolutions

AMM Resolution Number 14 - 2007

Topic: Increased Funding for Hometown Green Team Program

Sponsor: RM of St. Laurent (Interlake); Town of Gladstone (Central)

Departments: Manitoba Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors

WHEREAS the Hometown Green Team Program provides employment opportunities for youth living in rural areas where summer employment opportunities are scarce;

AND WHEREAS rural communities depend on the Hometown Green Team to provide many much needed services;

AND WHEREAS it is in the best interest of rural communities to retain their youth through employment opportunities;

AND WHEREAS the Hometown Green Team Program provides a wage incentive equal to \$4.16 per hour (50 per cent of minimum wage plus vacation allowance), while the Urban Green Team Program provides \$8.70 per hour (100 per cent of minimum wage plus vacation allowance and employer contributions to Employment Insurance and the Canada Pension Plan);

AND WHEREAS applications for Hometown Green Team funding far exceed available resources;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to fund the Hometown Green Team Program at the same hourly rate as the Urban Green Team Program;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to increase funding for Hometown Green Team Program to allow more applications to be approved.

AMM Resolution Number 12 - 2006

Topic: Recreation Connections Funding

Sponsor: Town of The Pas (Northern)

Departments: Manitoba Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors

WHEREAS it is recognized that the Municipal Governments of Manitoba, as the closest Government to the people, are responsible for the delivery of recreation services to their residents;

AND WHEREAS Municipal Governments spend considerable financial resources to deliver recreation services to their residents on an annual basis;

AND WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba has a policy outlining the provincial responsibility to support the recreation delivery system and its practitioners;

AND WHEREAS the most effective and efficient way to support and strengthen the recreation delivery system is to fund Recreation Connections Manitoba to the level outlined in the business plan developed by Recreation Connections and the Province of Manitoba;

AND WHEREAS the Manitoba Government takes a lead role in supporting this organization and developing and nurturing partnerships with the key stakeholders in the recreation delivery system;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to support municipalities and practitioners of the recreation delivery system by funding Recreation Connections to the level identified in their business plan in order to fulfill and fully support the recreation delivery system in accordance with their existing policy.

AMM Resolution Number 19 - 2005

Topic: Trust Fund for Maintenance of Trans-Canada Trail

Sponsor: RM of St. Andrews (Interlake District)

Departments: Manitoba Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors; Manitoba Finance; Finance Canada

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Federal and Provincial Governments to create a trust fund to provide for the maintenance of the Trans-Canada Trail in the Province of Manitoba.

AMM Resolution Number 38 - 2003

Topic: Funding for Seniors Independent Living Program

Sponsor: Town of Virden (Western District)

Departments: Manitoba Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors

WHEREAS there is insufficient funding provided to the Regional Health Authorities by the Provincial Government for Seniors Independent Living Programs;

AND WHEREAS this is a service provided to seniors to allow them to remain living in their own homes;

AND WHEREAS this service costs the Department of Health substantially less than seniors residing in personal care homes;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government for additional funding for the Seniors Independent Living Programs across the Province.