

## CD Framework Document

- Since the Province released their vision for Manitoba's conservation districts in December 2007, the AMM has been working with the department to ensure that its vision reflects the current realities facing municipalities and conservation districts.
- We pushed the Province to have meetings with municipalities to hear municipal concerns firsthand and those meetings were held in February 2008.
- Last summer, the Province, the AMM and the CD association worked together to revise the framework and draft a consensus document we could all support.
- The CD Commission recently had the opportunity to comment and was generally comfortable with the document.
- The Minister just has to give the final approval before the document can be released publicly, but there is still a major issue to be resolved: funding.

- Funding has been our number one concern throughout this process since there simply hasn't been adequate funding for the conservation district program in Manitoba.
- We are currently working with the Province and MCDA to come up with an allocation formula that makes sense for the expanding and evolving CD program.
- The Province hasn't made any commitments to increase the overall program funding, but we're hoping that if we can agree on a formula, it will help make the case for more funding to strengthen the program and support the important work our conservation districts are doing.
- We are pushing to have a base amount established for all CDs to cover administrative costs of operating a CD
- We've committed to making a recommendation on the funding formula by 2010 and we're working with the Province and MCDA to make sure that happens.

## Minor Works Licensing

- The Ombudsman released a report last year indicating that licenses have been required for all forms of drainage since 1987 when *The Water Rights Act* was implemented.
- However, it showed that the department has been lacking the resources to fulfill this mandate since at least 1997.
- Since there have been major concerns with the amount of unlicensed drainage occurring in Manitoba, the Ombudsman recommended that the Province develop a process to license all drainage works, as required by the legislation.
- As a result, in 2008 the Province began requiring licenses for all works – including routine maintenance and simple same-for-same culvert replacements.

- In response, the AMM now has two related resolutions: one asking the Province to establish standards for responding to water rights license applications; and another to eliminate the license requirement for same-for-same culvert replacements.
- At the end of January, Provincial staff met with stakeholders including the AMM, MCDA and KAP to discuss a policy for minor works licensing.
- The Province proposed an expedited process for minor works licenses, with a turnaround time of two weeks for approvals.
- The policy will include an exemption regulation to ensure that the most basic works do not require licenses, for example urban drainage works that do not affect land outside the municipality, new approaches, and same-for-same culvert replacements.
- One of the issues the AMM identified was the impact of the municipal approval process.

- We ultimately recommended that the decision should be left to each individual municipality to designate an appropriate person to conduct approvals.
- We also recommended that municipalities should have the option of not participating in the process and leaving approvals entirely up to the Province.
- Another concern is the number of Provincial staff required to administer the policy. We are concerned that the department is underestimating the number of applications they will receive and the two-week turnaround may not be feasible, even with the commitment to hire more staff.
- To address these issues, the AMM suggested reviewing the new process in early 2010 to see if it is meeting its intended goals.

## Onsite Wastewater Management Regulation

- As most of you are well aware, the Province has proposed changes to the onsite wastewater management regulation
- While some of the issues proposed are acceptable, the major sticking point is the ban on ejector systems
- The AMM met with Donna Smiley on the changes, and were successful in having the consultation process extended until May to allow for a fuller review of the changes
- The Department attended the MOS session and I know many municipalities met individually with Donna to get an overview of the changes
- Late last month the AMM met with the Minister on this issue and raised our concern

- On the issue of the impact the removal of ejectors and the switch to holding tanks will have on municipal lagoons, we have been told that most ejectors will be able to be switched to septic fields, meaning there will be little to no impact on municipal lagoons
- This was a major concern for municipalities but we have been assured that in very few cases the change will be from ejector to holding tank
- While the impact the ban will have on municipal infrastructure appears to be minimal, the AMM will continue to lobby to ensure the ban on ejectors is not applied province-wide

### **Water and Wastewater Operator Certification**

- As everyone knows this is an important issue for municipalities
- Many municipalities have been struggling with trying to get operators trained to the proper level for certification

- There is no doubt this process could have gone smoother from its roll out till now
- We have been participating in discussions with the Province on how to get more operators trained and through the certification process
- However we remained concerned about the immediate needs in some communities
- Many operators were granted conditional licenses when the regulation was enacted and these are starting to expire this year
- If there are unique circumstances as to why your operator is not certified you can apply for an extension
- While we have all been frustrated by this process, we need to make it clear that you as municipal councils have a responsibility to make sure you have the right people in place

- If you don't, you need to start taking action to either find the right person or get your people trained and certified to the appropriate levels
- If you have questions about the process, we encourage you to call Tracey Braun - 945-7071