



ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA MUNICIPALITIES

MEETING WITH

Honourable Stan Struthers
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives

March 11, 2010

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Executive Summary

Departmental Issues

1. Economic Development Report

- In December of 2008 the Province received the *Manitoba Connects* report, which included five recurring themes in discussions with stakeholders.
- The report made three recommendations - establish a comprehensive regional economic development system based on a federation model, establish an umbrella group to guide, track and coordinate and evaluate economic development work in Manitoba and conduct a targeted process as the next step in addressing the need of the North.
- Since the public release of the report there has been little progress on the recommendations of the report.
- Municipal concerns in this area go back well before the AMM conducted its own report in 2003 and the time has come for the Province to take action.

Therefore, the AMM requests an update on the Province's action plan for implementing the recommendation in the *Manitoba Connects* report.

2. Noxious Weed Issues

- The breadth of issues raised by AMM's nine weed control resolutions indicates a serious need to invest greater resources in weed control throughout Manitoba.
- In early 2008, the Province committed to undertake a review of *The Noxious Weeds Act*, yet the AMM has not been advised of any progress in this regard.
- For instance, Section 27(3) limits the sum collectable for weed control on private land to \$500 per year on a quarter section of land, unless the written approval of the minister is obtained, which is insufficient to cover actual costs.
- The Provincial Government must also make a greater commitment to controlling noxious weeds such as leafy spurge and red bartsia on Provincial ditches, rights-of-way and road allowances.
- The Province should ensure its vehicles are adequately cleaned after working near weeds in order to minimize the widespread expansion of noxious weed growth.
- The AMM is not advocating for mandatory participation in weed control districts, however the Province should explore alternative mechanisms to engage non-participating municipalities in weed control efforts.
- At the same time, the Province must provide adequate support for municipalities participating in the weed control district structure.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to establish a coordinated approach for municipalities and Departments to control weed growth along Provincial highways, roads and ditches in order to minimize the spread of noxious weeds. The AMM also urges the Provincial Government to conduct a full review of *The Noxious Weeds Act* in a timely manner.

3. Role of MAFRI in Municipal Land Use Planning

- Land use planning remains one of the most important responsibilities of municipal government and municipal officials are tasked with laying out a coherent sustainable vision for their community for both the immediate future and the long term.
- Municipalities have worked regionally in planning districts to develop comprehensive plans for their communities and areas.
- We understand that one of the core principles of good planning is seeking input from all sectors that are impacted by the planning decisions, however our concerns come from the approach your department has taken toward these plans.
- Agriculture is an important part of the planning process, however it must be balanced with all aspects of planning and we are finding all too often agriculture stands in the way of municipal planning and adopts a combative approach toward municipal plans.
- Building strong and vibrant communities across Manitoba will only benefit the agriculture sector and needs to be recognized.

Therefore, the AMM urges MAFRI to adopt a more cooperative approach to land use planning and recognize building a strong rural Manitoba is to the benefit of all, including agriculture.

4. Education Tax Rebate System

- The AMM was pleased that the Province implemented a reduction on farmland education property taxes in 2004 and that the amount of this rebate has increased significantly since its inception.
- While the intent of the education tax rebate on farmland is consistent with municipal goals, opportunities remain to improve the delivery mechanism.
- Municipalities and agricultural producers agree that it is far more efficient to reduce the amount of education taxes initially paid than to require full payment and issue a refund.
- Doing so would leave money in the hands of producers rather than requiring each producer to wait until their payment is returned.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to replace the rebate system for education taxes on farmland with a direct adjustment on property tax bills.

5. Update on Vet Services Report Recommendations

- An issue that is of interest to many municipalities was the recent review of veterinary services in the province, with many providing comments to the review committee.
- The report was submitted to the Minister in early 2009 and included a number of recommendations.
- Many of the 33 recommendations are of interest to municipalities and AMM would appreciate an update on how the department is moving forward with the implementation of these recommendations.

Therefore the AMM would like an update on the implementation of the Veterinary Services Task Force Report recommendations.

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.
- 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.

Therefore the AMM would like to see:

- 1. A greater investment in municipal infrastructure by all levels of government**
- 2. An end to the downloading of responsibilities to municipalities and a requirement that new mandates come with new funding**
- 3. A commitment to provide new alternate revenues to municipalities**

Departmental Issues

1. Economic Development Report

In 2008, the Province conducted consultations with key stakeholders to discuss economic development issues in Manitoba. The AMM was pleased to participate in this process since municipalities play an important role in economic development. In 2003, the AMM released a report on this topic entitled *Creating a Vision: AMM's Report on Economic Development*. Many of these recommendations remain valid and the AMM appreciated the opportunity to discuss these and other important municipal concerns with the consultation coordinator, Clay Serby.

In December of 2008 the Province received his report "Manitoba Connects" which included five recurring themes in discussions with stakeholders – a shared vision and cooperation, communication, a multiplicity of departments and organizations in economic development, local involvement and longer term financial commitments. The report also made three recommendations - establish a comprehensive regional economic development system based on a federation model, establish an umbrella group to guide, track and coordinate and evaluate economic development work in Manitoba and conduct a targeted process as the next step in addressing the need of the North.

After the release of the report the AMM asked MAFRI to come to all our June meeting to give an overview of the report. Maurice Bouvier attended all of our meetings last year to provide an update to municipalities on the report. Since that time there has not been much progress on the recommendations of the report. Municipal concerns in this area go back well before the AMM conducted its own report and the time has come for the Province to take action.

Therefore, the AMM requests an update on the Province's action plan for implementing the recommendation in the *Manitoba Connects* report.

2. Noxious Weed Issues

The recent increase in AMM resolutions related to weed control illustrates the growing concern for the spread of noxious weeds in Manitoba. At both the 2008 and 2009 AMM conventions two new resolutions were passed by our membership, giving AMM a total of nine active resolutions on the topic. The breadth of issues raised by these resolutions indicates a serious need to invest greater resources in weed control throughout Manitoba. For this reason, municipalities are prepared to work with the Provincial Government to develop and implement a coordinated weed control strategy.

One of the most pressing issues is the need to conduct a full review of *The Noxious Weeds Act* to ensure its provisions reflect the current environment. In early 2008, the Province has committed to undertake a review of this legislation, yet the AMM has not been advised of any progress in this regard. The serious impact of noxious weeds demands that this legislation be updated and the Province must move forward with a full review of *The Noxious Weeds Act*. It is essentially that the list of weeds included in the Act remain robust so that the Province, municipalities and private land owners are able to protect public and private land.

Municipalities have identified several concerns with the current legislation. For instance, the Act authorizes municipalities to apply the costs of weed control on private land to the tax roll, which is a valuable mechanism for cost recovery. However, Section 27(3) currently limits the sum collectable to \$500 per year on a quarter section of land, unless the written approval of the minister is obtained. This amount is outdated and the actual cost of weed control today can far exceed \$500 per quarter section. By limiting municipalities in this manner, a significant portion of the actual costs must be absorbed by the municipality. As a result, all ratepayers ultimately bear the cost of one landowner's negligence. Therefore, the Province should strengthen the penalties for ineffective weed control and empower municipalities to conduct required works by removing the maximum amount collected against a parcel of land each year. This provision must be updated along with the rest of *The Noxious Weeds Act* to promote effective weed control practices throughout Manitoba.

Furthermore, the Provincial Government must make a greater commitment to controlling noxious weeds such as leafy spurge and red bartsia on Provincial ditches, rights-of-way and road allowances. *The Noxious Weeds Act* clearly defines the Provincial responsibility for such weed control, yet municipalities and agricultural producers are continually bearing the majority of the costs of weed control in Manitoba. Neglecting this responsibility not only contributes to the spread of noxious weeds, but increases costs to agricultural producers through reduced crop production and land values. As well, overgrown ditches increase the risk of flooding due to clogged culverts. These risks further illustrate the significance of establishing a coordinated approach for weed control and the Provincial Government has a key role in this process.

The Provincial Government should be subject to similar expectations for weed control as municipalities and agricultural producers. For instance, *The Noxious Weeds Act* identifies the need to clean farm machinery that is used in proximity to noxious weeds in order to minimize the risks of transporting and spreading weed seeds across a considerable distance. The same risks exist for Provincial vehicles used along roadsides. When Provincial employees conduct work on road allowances, rights-of-way and ditches there are the same opportunities for their vehicles to collect weed seeds and carry them to other areas. This is especially problematic given the extensive travel undertaken by many Provincial vehicles. Therefore, the Province should ensure its vehicles are adequately cleaned after working near weeds in order to minimize the widespread expansion of noxious weed growth.

There are significant impacts associated with the spread of noxious weeds and the Province must work with municipalities to address this issue. Although there are systems in place such as weed control districts, municipalities are not required to participate in any related efforts. This creates gaps in weed control practices which can dramatically exacerbate the spread of noxious weeds. The AMM is not advocating for mandatory participation in weed control districts, however the Province should explore alternative mechanisms to engage non-participating municipalities in weed control efforts. At the same time, the Province must provide adequate support for municipalities participating in the weed control district structure. This system once offered an example for other provinces to follow, however this is no longer the case

due to the recent inadequacy of Provincial support. Targeted weed control requires many stakeholders to work together to develop and implement an effective strategy, including all municipalities and the Provincial departments of Conservation, Infrastructure and Transportation, and Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to establish a coordinated approach for municipalities and Departments to control weed growth along Provincial highways, roads and ditches in order to minimize the spread of noxious weeds. The AMM also urges the Provincial Government to conduct a full review of *The Noxious Weeds Act* in a timely manner.

3. Role of MAFRI in Municipal Land Use Planning

Land use planning remains one of the most important responsibilities of municipal government. Municipal officials are tasked with laying out a coherent sustainable vision for their community for both the immediate future and the long term. Manitoba municipalities have been leaders in land use planning, and our efforts were vindicated with the decision of the federal government to exempt Manitoba municipalities from having to create Integrated Community Sustainability Plans as a condition of Gas Tax Program funding since this work was already being done in Manitoba.

Municipalities have worked regionally in planning districts to develop comprehensive plans for their communities and areas. We understand that one of the core principles of good planning is seeking input from all sectors that are impacted by the planning decisions. However our concerns come from the approach your department has taken toward these plans. Agriculture is an important part of the planning process, however it must be balanced with all aspects of planning. We are finding all too often agriculture stands in the way of municipal planning and adopts a combative approach toward municipal plans that call for anything other than blanket agricultural land use. Building strong and vibrant communities across Manitoba will only benefit the agriculture sector and needs to be recognized.

Therefore, the AMM urges MAFRI to adopt a more cooperative approach to land use planning and recognize building a strong rural Manitoba is to the benefit of all, including agriculture.

4. Education Tax Rebate System

One of the most important issues for municipalities in recent years has been the need to reduce the reliance on property taxes to fund education. For this reason, the AMM was pleased that the Province implemented a reduction on farmland education property taxes in 2004 and that the amount of this rebate has increased significantly since its inception. Agricultural producers have certainly benefitted from the growing rebate and the Province has begun to shift the focus away from property taxes as the primary means of funding education.

While the intent of the education tax rebate on farmland is consistent with municipal goals, opportunities remain to improve the delivery mechanism. In particular, municipalities and agricultural producers agree that it is far more efficient to reduce the amount of education taxes initially paid than to require full payment and issue a refund. Sufficient information is available that would allow the property tax bill to accurately reflect the rebate amount through an adjustment that reduces the amount producers are required to pay. Such a system would inevitably save on the administrative costs of issuing personalized applications and cheques to approximately 33,000 producers.

Furthermore, agricultural producers are not immune from the impacts of the downturn in the global economy and would benefit from the elimination of such a payment. Doing so would leave money in the hands of producers rather than requiring each producer to wait until their payment is returned. The current economic situation demands a greater consideration of efficiency and eliminating the rebate system in favour of an adjustment would accomplish this goal.

Therefore, the AMM urges the Provincial Government to replace the rebate system for education taxes on farmland with a direct adjustment on property tax bills.

5. Update on Vet Services Report Recommendations

An issue that is of interest to many municipalities was the recent review of veterinary services in the province, with many providing comments to the review committee. The report was submitted to the Minister in early 2009 and included a number of recommendations. Many of the 33 recommendations are of interest to municipalities and AMM would appreciate an update on how the department is moving forward with the implementation of these recommendations.

Therefore the AMM would like an update on the implementation of the Veterinary Services Task Force Report recommendations.

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. Sure 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. Everyday 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.

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 is in excess of \$123 billion for current needs. Most alarming is how quickly the deficit has been compounding, as it has doubled over the last 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 is over \$7.5 billion, putting the total municipal infrastructure deficit 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 2007 were just over \$730,000,000.³

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

¹ Saeed Mirza, "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 2007 – Municipalities of the Province of Manitoba", P.17

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 travelling to neighbouring communities to access recreation opportunities. Many have seen the outmigration of neighbours and friends who tire of dealing with these daily challenges.

Municipal councils want to create vibrant, welcoming communities, but this is nearly impossible with the state of infrastructure today. For example, there remain 137 boil water advisories in Manitoba, many in Manitoba municipalities.⁶ This means in 2010 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

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)

⁶ Province of Manitoba "Provincial Boil Water Advisories" – January 11th, 2010

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, most often where they work and sometimes 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. These unilateral decisions leave municipalities in the untenable position of either scarifying 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 leaves 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 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.

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

A new approach is needed, and for this reason we are asking the Province of Manitoba to collect 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 revenues 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 with corresponding financial support.

The sad reality is that while the Province of Manitoba has been leaders 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.

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

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. 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.

Therefore the AMM would like to see:

- 1. A greater investment in municipal infrastructure by all levels of government**
- 2. An end to the downloading of responsibilities to municipalities and a requirement that new mandates come with new funding**
- 3. A commitment to provide new alternate revenues to municipalities**

Appendix A – Active Resolutions

AMM Resolution 34 - 2009

Topic: Increase Funding for Economic Development

Sponsor: RM of Eriksdale (Interlake District)

Department: Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives; Manitoba Local Government

WHEREAS the economic base is the determining factor in the viability of most municipalities;

AND WHEREAS promoting economic development and diversification in communities will lessen the strain of a boom and bust local economy;

AND WHEREAS municipalities need support from the Province of Manitoba to diversify local economies;

AND WHEREAS given current levels of funding to local regional economic development organizations are inadequate and barely cover annual operating costs for these organizations;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to substantially increase funding levels to regional and municipal economic development organizations;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT funds for economic development efforts should be directed to areas of greatest need as demonstrated by factors such as unemployment levels, social and other assistance program recipients, average income levels, age demographics of local workforces and population and other measures identified by AMM.

AMM Resolution 9 - 2009

Topic: Noxious Weeds

Sponsor: RM of Dauphin (Parkland District)

Department: Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives

WHEREAS Weed Districts in Manitoba play a vital role in controlling noxious weeds on public land and enforce The Noxious Weed Act on private property;

AND WHEREAS there is concern that the present list of noxious weeds could be reduced through proposed amendments to The Noxious Weed Act;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to maintain or expand the list of noxious weeds that currently exist in The Noxious Weed Act.

AMM Resolution 8 - 2009

Topic: Process for Property Tax Rebate

Sponsor: RM of Thompson (Central District)

Department: Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives

WHEREAS it has been necessary for rural ratepayers to submit a claim form for the Farmland School Tax Rebate since its introduction in 2004;

AND WHEREAS municipal office staff assist ratepayers with the completion of the claim forms;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to simplify the process for rural ratepayers to receive their property tax reduction by showing this initiative on the tax statement in an equitable manner to the education property tax credit, thereby reducing both the

administrative time in municipal offices and the administrative costs associated with the current rebate process.

AMM Resolution 49 – 2008

Topic: Funding for Community Development Corporations

Sponsor: RM of Alexander (Eastern District)

Department: Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives

WHEREAS in 2003, the AMM Task Force on Economic Development tabled a report including a recommendation that more resources be committed by all orders of government for economic development;

AND WHEREAS approximately 99 Community Development Corporations in the province receive funding at an average of \$20 - \$25,000 each yearly from their municipalities;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to develop a funding formula and implement a long-term secure fund that rewards municipalities for funding community development corporations;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to develop an associated strategic plan with accountability for results.

AMM Resolution 13 – 2008

Topic: Leafy Spurge Management Program

Sponsor: RM of Cornwallis (Western District)

Department: Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives; Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

WHEREAS the Rural Development Institute of Brandon University in partnership with the Leafy Spurge Stakeholders Group and the Governments of Canada and Manitoba have partnered to manage and prevent the spread of leafy spurge;

AND WHEREAS the uncontrolled spread of leafy spurge is a problem of provincial and national significance;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to dedicate the financial and human resources necessary to develop and implement a meaningful and effective leafy spurge management program.

AMM Resolution 35 – 2007

Topic: Livestock Emergency Plan

Sponsor: RM of Dufferin (Central District)

Department: Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives; Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

WHEREAS the AMM has been working together with municipalities, Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to develop a contingency plan to use in the event of a major livestock emergency;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba and Government of Canada to identify burial sites and fund an incinerator for use in the event of a livestock emergency.

AMM Resolution 12 – 2007

Topic: Increase to Operating Grants for Veterinary Services

Sponsor: Town of Shoal Lake (Midwestern District), RM of Ste. Rose (Parkland District)

Department: Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives

WHEREAS Veterinary Service Districts in Manitoba may receive an operating grant of \$19,000 from the Province of Manitoba on a yearly basis;

AND WHEREAS the cost of maintaining a Veterinary District is ever increasing with municipal levies surpassing the provincial contribution;

AND WHEREAS the cost of operating veterinary clinics has increased significantly;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba for an increase in operating grants to Veterinary Service Districts in the amount equal to municipal levies.

AMM Resolution 11 – 2007

Topic: Noxious Weed Control

Sponsor: RM of Alonsa (Parklands District)

Department: Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives; Manitoba Infrastructure & Transportation

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to ensure that all equipment, either owned by the Province or private contractors, being used on Manitoba highway roadsides has been cleaned to ensure that leafy spurge and other noxious weeds are not transferred among municipalities.

AMM Resolution 10 – 2007

Topic: Costs of Controlling Noxious Weeds

Sponsor: RM of West St. Paul (Interlake District)

Department: Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives

WHEREAS *The Noxious Weeds Act* has provisions for controlling and destroying noxious weeds on lands;

AND WHEREAS municipalities find that the cost of weed control on certain lands exceeds \$500.00 per lot or quarter section;

AND WHEREAS Section 27 (3) of *The Noxious Weeds Act* limits the sum collectable to \$500.00 in any one year for any parcel or quarter section without the written approval of the Minister;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to amend Section 27 (3) of *The Noxious Weeds Act* to remove the limitation on the amount that can be collected against any one parcel or quarter section in any one year.

AMM Resolution 09 – 2007

Topic: Review of the Noxious Weeds Act of Manitoba

Sponsor: RM of Macdonald (Central District)

Department: Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives

WHEREAS the current version of *The Noxious Weeds Act* was enacted in 1987 and subsequently amended a number of times;

AND WHEREAS the current version of *The Noxious Weeds Act* makes reference to situations that are no longer applicable to the agricultural practices of today;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to have *The Noxious Weeds Act* of Manitoba reviewed and entirely updated.

AMM Resolution 18 – 2005

Topic: Weed Control Along Rights-of-Way

Sponsor: RM of Springfield (Eastern District)

Department: Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives

WHEREAS weed growth along rights-of-way has been proven to contribute to the widespread dispersal of noxious weeds, which leads to increased weed control costs for municipalities and farmers, and to reduced crop returns for the agricultural industry;

AND WHEREAS The Noxious Weeds Act of Manitoba requires all property owners to control weeds on lands under their control;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Provincial Government to require all owners and occupants of all rights-of-way to recognize their responsibility to adequately control weeds along their rights-of-way in order to minimize the spread of noxious weeds.

AMM Resolution 43 - 2002

Topic: Milk Price Controls in Rural and Northern Communities

Sponsor: Town of Churchill (Northern District)

Department: Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives; Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs

WHEREAS the sale of liquor is regulated by *The Liquor Control Act* under section 51(1) which states: "The price of each particular variety of liquor shall be the same at all liquor stores and premises of liquor vendors appointed under section 17";

AND WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba controls the price of liquor sold in stores regardless of geographical location;

AND WHEREAS the Province controls the operation and production of milk which is regulated under *The Dairy Act*;

AND WHEREAS the Province does not regulate or control the price of milk as is the case with liquor;

AND WHEREAS the price of milk in rural and northern communities is more expensive than the southern region of the province and is, at times, more expensive than an equal quantity of liquor;

AND WHEREAS the availability of fresh milk is an essential component of healthy living, especially for children, and is one cornerstone of Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating, while liquor is not;

AND WHEREAS Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating suggests that children 4-9 years consume 2-3 servings per day, children 10-16 years consume 3-4 servings per day, adults consume 2-4 servings per day and breast-feeding women consume 3-4 servings per day. The same cannot be said for liquor;

AND WHEREAS alcohol and drug abuse is the largest socioeconomic crisis in rural and northern Manitoba;

AND WHEREAS the Province has placed more effort into supplying affordable liquor to rural and northern communities than any other consumable;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the AMM lobby the Province to regulate and control the price of milk in rural and northern communities in the same way as liquor is regulated and controlled by *The Liquor Control Act*.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the AMM lobby the Province to amend *The Dairy Act* to include similar pricing controls as are found in section 51(1) of *The Liquor Control Act*, to ensure that the price of milk in rural and northern communities is the same across the province regardless of geographical location.