



Tyler MacAfee, AMM Director of Policy & Communications

3rd session of 39th LEGISLATURE RESUMES

It was back to business for MLAs in March as the 3rd session of the 39th Legislature resumed. Before rising on June 11, the Government passed the 2009-2010 Provincial Budget and 27 of 35 bills introduced.

BUDGET 2009 – MUNICIPALITIES STILL WAITING

The AMM had high hopes for Budget 2009 in spite of the global economic slowdown. AMM was hoping to see Manitoba capitalize on its strong economic footing and invest dollars into municipal infrastructure. Unfortunately, Budget 2009 failed to deliver on municipal infrastructure needs, and outside of a few small projects and incentives, Budget 2009 held little for municipalities. Since the Provincial Budget there has been greater investment by the Province to match federal commitments, however Budget Day was a disappointment for AMM.

LEGISLATIVE ‘SLOW DANCE’

This sitting of the Legislature also saw a number of bills introduced (and in one case reintroduced) of interest to municipalities. Unfortunately, none of these bills were passed before the house rose on June 11. The AMM is expecting all of these bills to be reintroduced when the House returns in September.

BILL 4 – THE COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION TAX INCREMENT FINANCING ACT

Carried over from November, this Bill was revamped and reintroduced. This Bill allows municipalities to designate properties as community revitalization properties. Designated property that increase in assessed value are subject to a community revitalization levy that is imposed at the same rate as, but in lieu of, taxation for school purposes. Money raised by the levy is paid into a new Community Revitalization Fund. This fund is to be used to make grants to help revitalize communities and neighbourhoods, to encourage economic, social and cultural development, and to preserve heritage properties. The AMM was pleased to see the municipal oversight strengthened in the bill to make it clear that disbursements from the fund cannot be made without municipal approval of the project. The AMM looks forward to the bill passing in September as this will be another tool available to municipalities for economic development.

BILL 16 – THE POLICE SERVICES ACT

This bill creates new rules for how municipal police forces will be governed and is of great interest to those municipalities with their own police forces. The main theme of the bill is greater civilian oversight of policing in Manitoba. The bill attempts to achieve this through the creation of a new Manitoba Police Commission which is mandated to provide advice on policing issues and make recommendations to the Minister. An Independent Investigation

Unit is also created to provide greater transparency in the investigative process.

The major concern for municipalities is the move to mandatory police boards. While such boards are common across Canada, we are concerned that it removes the responsibility for policing from the elected council and places it into the hands of an appointed board. The AMM presented its concerns with this Bill when it went to the legislative committee June 18 and is hopeful the bill will be amended before being passed.

BILL 35 – THE MUNICIPAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND CAMPAIGN FINANCING ACT

Another Bill that has the AMM’s attention is Bill 35, introduced in early June, which makes a number of changes that will impact municipal officials. Bill 35 will require the annual statements of assets and interests filed by municipal officials under *The Municipal Council Conflict of Interest Act* available for public inspection. It also makes changes to election campaign financing for municipalities, banning unions and corporations from making contributions to candidates. The Bill will set maximum amounts for contributions that individuals can make to candidates, and limits are also applied to contributions that a candidate makes to his or her own campaign. Loans to candidates from anyone other than a financial institution are prohibited. Bill 35 will also require candidates to file election finance statements, and any elected candidate who fails to file a statement within the specified time may be disqualified from remaining on council. In addition, municipalities are required to establish a code of conduct and conflict of interest rules for municipal employees.

The AMM will be following up on these bills when the House returns on September 14. 

