

AMM 11th ANNUAL CONVENTION REVIEW

Lynne Bereza, AMM Communications Coordinator

If there were any doubts that the AMM 11th Annual Convention might pale in comparison to the extra-celebratory 10th anniversary of the previous year, they have been put to rest. Just ask any of the 916 registered delegates – or any of the 997 Gala attendees who were lucky enough to see hypnotist Wayne Lee perform his magic! But, more on that later...here is a day-by-day recap of the event.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23



Vic Toews

Monday started off in leisurely fashion, which was all the better for strolling through the jam-packed Display Area. Whether chatting with displays, entering draws, signing in at the registration desk, or just relaxing with a cup of coffee, delegates made sure the Manitoba Room was a busy spot.

Kicking off with the Annual Business Meeting, Monday afternoon was full steam ahead with a full agenda, followed by an address by the President of the Treasury Board, the **Honourable Vic Toews**.



David Foot

Toews stated under the current federal government, municipalities have seen “unprecedented infusions of financial support” and pointed to the 107 stimulus projects, 16

provincial-territorial projects and 52 communities-component projects funded under Building Canada in just 7 months. However, he also stressed the global recession arrived with lightning speed and while there are early tentative signs of it receding, a return to balanced budgets would take time.

The first keynote speaker was demographics expert **Dr. David Foot**, author of *Boom, Bust & Echo: How to Profit from the Coming Demographic Shift in the 21st Century*. Contending that demographics can explain “two-thirds of everything,” Foot explained that change can’t be avoided, but an understanding of demographics can help build an understanding of the past and a vision for the future. He pointed out the trend of young people moving from small communities to large cities means the stress of Canada’s aging population will increasingly lie with small communities. “If you come from a smaller community, the seniors are going to have a major role in the way you spend on infrastructure,” he said.

In one of the most diverse panels to present to AMM delegates, the plenary session “What does an ideal community look like?” offered four perspectives to answer that question. After hearing from Manitobans with disabilities, older Manitobans, younger Manitobans, and new Manitobans, attendees had a much better grasp of what communities need to provide to be truly inclusive. *(This session is recapped in more detail in this issue’s special report on inclusive communities.)*

The final speaker of the day was Assistant Commissioner **Bill Robinson**, Commanding Officer of RCMP “D” Division.

The Icebreaker Reception took place Monday evening and a great time was had by all. Thanks again to all our sponsors. We could not put on this great event for our delegates without your generous contributions. Congratulations to the Icebreaker prize draw winner Councillor **Ray Drayson**, RM of Langford, who won an ASUS Touch Screen EEE Laptop!

MINISTERIAL FORUM

The following members of Provincial Cabinet participated in this year’s Ministerial Forum:

- Premier Greg Selinger
- Minister of Health, Theresa Oswald
- Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Andrew Swan
- Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, Peter Bjornson
- Minister of Finance, Rosann Wowchuk
- Minister of Education, Nancy Allan
- Minister of Labour and Immigration, Jennifer Howard
- Minister of Housing and Community Development, Kerri Irvin-Ross
- Minister of Water Stewardship, Christine Melnick
- Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Flor Marcelino
- Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, Stan Struthers
- Minister of Local Government, Ron Lemieux
- Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, Steve Ashton

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24



Ron Bell

Day Two of the Convention began with the Opening Ceremonies. In true AMM fashion, the event began precisely on time. What delegates may not know is that the official kilt worn by Past-President **Ron Bell** was mysteriously missing! A quick “kilt run” by Manitoba Hydro’s **Rob Cox** ensured Past-

President Bell was able to lead the procession in a timely fashion, with delegates unaware anything was amiss.

We then heard from our new Minister of Local Government, **Ron Lemieux**, who explained that most of the Building Canada funding has now been rolled out in Manitoba and described looking through all the applications as difficult, as “the list was huge.” Minister Lemieux did commit to push for municipal involvement in the next funding project, stating “Municipalities have to have a seat at the table.” The AMM will be sure to remind the minister of that when the time comes!

Keynote Speaker Senator **Roméo Dallaire** then took the stage to an unsurprisingly packed house. Dallaire, author of *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, was one of the event’s most anticipated sessions, and he did not disappoint. Comments ranged from “the best speaker I have ever witnessed,” to “After he finished, I couldn’t get up. I just had to sit for a few minutes and absorb what I’d heard.”

Dallaire expertly walked us through several themes of leadership and the need to send our 18-30 year-olds out into the world because, “The youth of



Roméo Dallaire

this nation don’t see a huge world. They don’t see borders. They see a globalized generation.” And while every single one of Dallaire’s words were absorbed, the cliché “you could have heard a pin drop” was absolutely true when he spoke of his time in Rwanda. Lacing these stories throughout his presentation, the overriding theme was one of humanity. He explained that 80% of humanity is living in inhuman conditions, and yet, in the end, “all humans are human.”

Thank you to the sponsors of the AMM 11th Annual Convention – we couldn’t do it without your support!

Tuesday afternoon, Municipal Service Officers **Gail Anderson, Linda Baleja** and **Don Reid** walked delegates through *Bill 35: The Municipal Conflict of Interest and Campaign Financing Act*. The presenters did not enjoy a smooth ride with the AMM audience, but answered the many questions they received with grace and ease. Not everyone in the audience was opposed. Councillor **Duane Nicol**, City of Selkirk, stated he was “very appreciative of this legislation.” However, most comments were more similar to that of Councillor **Hugh Sigurdson**, RM of St. Laurent, who described the extent of his campaigning as



Dr. David Barber

“an 8 ½ x 11 sheet mailed out at a cost of about \$75.” Most of the audience seemed to agree accountability is a good thing, with Mayor **Martin Harder**, City of Winkler, commenting, “I don’t think there is a single person here who doesn’t want to be accountable to the ratepayers.”

With only one nomination for the position of AMM President, **Doug Dobrowski** was acclaimed to serve his second term in this post. Congratulations, Doug!

The first resolutions session of the 11th Annual Convention took place on Tuesday, and we heard from Mayor **Basil Stewart**, President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, as well.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25

Keynote speaker **Dr. David Barber** took the stage first thing Wednesday morning. Barber is a former climate change skeptic who, during a recent expedition, discovered that permanent Arctic sea ice has all but disappeared. His description of his



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discovery brought to life the role of Arctic sea ice for AMM delegates and raised many questions. Dr. Barber answered his own question – “Why should we care?” – by explaining “Because the Arctic is an early indicator of climate change and it’s changing faster than we originally predicted, meaning that the global response to climate change is going to change a lot faster than we predicted, too.”

Delegates then heard from Progressive Conservative Leader **Hugh McFadyen** and Manitoba Liberal Party



Hugh McFadyen

Leader **Dr. Jon Gerrard**. Both took the Province to task on the recent ban of sewage ejectors. McFadyen accused the government of having no connection whatsoever to the life in rural communities, stating, “None of us disagrees with the goal. It’s a debate over



Jon Gerrard

how as opposed to what.” His words on Bill 35 may even be somewhat prophetic: “I fear legislation like this will keep good people out of municipal politics.”

Resolutions session #2 and 3 were concluded early in the afternoon, leaving the only other order of business for the day an election for AMM Vice-Presidents. With only one nomination for both Urban and Rural VP, **Shirley Kalyniuk** and **Roger Wilson** were respectively acclaimed to serve their positions for another year. Congratulations to both!



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RESOLUTIONS RECAP

Total Resolutions - 51
Withdrawn - 1
Defeated - 2
Late - 1
Carried - 48

Wednesday evening’s Gala was a spectacular event. Premier **Greg Selinger** presented his first official address to AMM delegates, giving a clear message: “Finances are going to be tight in the next few years.” The Premier called on all municipalities to work together with their federal and provincial counterparts, stating, “We’ll be able to work our way through this and come out stronger on the other end.”

This year’s Honourary Life recipients were **Lorne Boguski** and **Les Magnusson**. Congratulations to both gentlemen on your years of dedication!

Finally, no one in attendance will soon forget the Gala entertainment, hypnotist **Wayne Lee**. Lee had his volunteers expertly performing just as he wanted them to, much to the delight of the audience! Those participating on stage are all great sports who garnered much well-deserved applause. Their willingness to be a part of this great show made it an extra-special (and extra-entertaining) evening for the entire room. Kudos to you all!

HOT TOPICS

- The hot-button issue this year was arguably resolution #12 regarding the Onsite Wastewater Management Systems Regulation. The resolution calls for the Province of Manitoba to have the new regulation apply on a case-by-case basis where there are scientifically justified environmental concerns and identified high risk areas.
- The resolution carried easily and continued to prompt many questions during the Ministerial Forum. Perhaps the most memorable quote from the debate came from Councillor Bill Fleury of the RM of Woodlands, who said that there was no scientific proof backing up the ban on sewage ejectors. "No one has died from a sewage ejector – ever," he stated. "People have died from the H1N1 vaccine, but I don't see them running out and banning that vaccine. This overreaction by the province has to be addressed immediately. We can't afford this luxury."
- Another high-profile resolution was #19, calling for the AMM to lobby the Province of Manitoba for the creation and operation of a rural medical school at Brandon University, something Reeve Sandy Sanderson of the RM of Glenwood called "one of the best ideas put forward in recent times."
- Resolution #4 asking for the AMM to strike a steering committee to identify barriers to women's participation in municipal government was also drew a great deal of attention.
- Resolutions calling for increased funding for infrastructure carried as well, with the exception of #25 regarding priorities for the Building Canada Fund. This was declared to be "moot" by the delegate body as the fund is all but spent in Manitoba.

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Thank you for your years of service
Lorne Boguski and Les Magnusson,
this year's Honourary Life
Membership recipients

Congratulations
to City of Winkler
CAO Vince
Anderson, who
won the HED and
AMM sponsored
grand prize - a
\$2,000 travel
voucher

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26

The final day of the AMM Annual Convention is always widely anticipated due to the Ministerial Forum, and this year's forum included a record number of Ministers (see sidebar). With several ministers having recently taken over new departments, some were still becoming acclimatized to their new portfolios. However, with so much of Cabinet in attendance, many of the ministers who formerly held those positions were able to shed light on various issues.

While questions varied, the hot-button issue this year was clearly the ban on sewage ejectors. Premier Selinger repeatedly stated the regulation would stay in place, but suggested flexibility was needed and

committed to putting together a working group to study the situation.

- Other issues that were raised included:
- Nutrient removal
 - Elimination of park fees
 - Inflatable dykes in flood-prone areas
 - Plans for Highway #3
 - GST rebate for municipalities
 - Immigration issues
 - Wastewater treatment
 - Infrastructure deficit
 - DFA agreement
 - Policing issues
 - Daycare issues
 - Public Utilities Board issues
 - Hospital infrastructure
 - Walkways/highways

Garth Manness, President and CEO of Credit Union Central of Manitoba, gave a presentation on Manitoba's economic climate immediately before the Ministerial Forum.

The final order of business of the 11th Annual Convention was to draw for the grand prize of a \$2,000 travel voucher sponsored by HED and the AMM. Congratulations to CAO **Vince Anderson**, City of Winkler, on winning the grand prize.

All in all, the AMM 11th Annual Convention succeeded in highlighting the *world of opportunities* that exists for Manitoba's municipalities. From demographics to climate change to humanitarianism, we learned we can navigate the burning issues taking place around the world by beginning in our own back yards. It all begins by making our communities more inclusive for our citizens, which we touched on during Convention and which we explore in greater detail throughout this issue. Just remember to keep asking yourselves the same question as you go forward: *What if?* 



Lorne Boguski



Les Magnusson



Wayne Lee