

New faces LED BY NEW PREMIER

By Tyler MacAfee, AMM Director of Policy & Communications

After an exciting few months

in Manitoba politics the Manitoba Legislature was back in business on November 30 with a new Premier, some new faces on the front benches and a new Throne Speech.

THRONE SPEECH – HARDER TIMES AHEAD

This year's Throne Speech made it clear that the rosy days of near 3% average economic growth are on hold for a while. Forecasting a 0.2% decline in the economy, the speech failed to deliver any big news for municipalities.

Of interest to municipalities is the commitment to increase infrastructure spending by 50% over the previous year, largely as a result of participating in the national stimulus program. While already allocated,

this money will be spread across Manitoba and some will be for municipal infrastructure.

Also of interest to municipalities is the commitment to introduce legislation to give all municipalities the authority to take title of vacant and derelict buildings and speed up the process. A new Act will also be introduced to provide a transparent framework for evaluating the full cost of public-private partnerships. The AMM will also now play a role in the oversight of the Water Services Board as the Board tries to improve service to municipalities.

As always the AMM will monitor these commitments to ensure they are implemented.

BILL 3 – THE CITY OF WINNIPEG CHARTER AMENDMENT AND MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT (DERELICT PROPERTY)

Bill 3 makes changes to both the *Municipal Act* and City of Winnipeg Charter to make it easier for municipalities to address growing issues with derelict buildings. The AMM has been working on this issue for some time, and has resolutions on the books going back to 2005. Bill 3 gives municipalities the ability to regulate the condition and maintenance of vacant dwellings and non-residential buildings. Farm property, as defined under *The Municipal Assessment Act*, is exempt from the legislation. Through by-laws municipalities



Taking part in the AMM's annual meeting with Cabinet were (L-R) Jennifer Howard, Minister of Labour and Immigration; Rosann Wowchuk, Minister of Finance; Stan Struthers, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives; Peter Bjornson, Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade; Premier Greg Selinger; President Doug Dobrowolski; Kerri-Irvin Ross, Minister of Housing and Community Development; Ron Lemieux, Minister of Local Government; Nancy Allan, Minister of Education; Flor Marcelino, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism; and Christine Melnick, Minister of Water Stewardship.

are able to take action after 90 days and issue preliminary and second notices.

AMM MEETS WITH CABINET

On November 26, 2009, the AMM Board of Directors met with Premier **Greg Selinger** and members of Provincial Cabinet in what has become an annual meeting. President **Doug Dobrowolski** chaired the meeting and took the opportunity to present some of the AMM's priority issues to the new premier.

President Dobrowolski began by outlining the core challenges facing municipalities today, primarily the municipal infrastructure deficit. While Premier Selinger clearly predicted (during his address to delegates at the AMM Gala the evening before) that finances will be tight in the next few years, President Dobrowolski stressed the negative impact the deficit is having on Manitoba's economy. He explained the ever-increasing responsibilities that municipalities face and the need to reduce the amount of downloading. He also pointed out the need for a new approach to municipal funding, including an alternate source of revenue. Premier

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Selinger committed to looking at ways to solving the downloading issues.

Other items discussed included the Onsite Wastewater Management Regulation, with the Premier indicating he would like to sit down and work out a solution for implementation. While the legislation is not going to change, the Premier suggested the creation of a working group of senior department officials may help to reduce the pressure on affected landowners.

Premier Selinger also committed to explore the feasibility of a medical school at Brandon University.

The Greyhound service issue was discussed as well, with the Premier acknowledging that it is unlikely all routes will be saved given the limited federal assistance that has been forthcoming. He suggested a made-in-Manitoba solution is the answer.

Other items discussed during the meeting included CD funding, funding for regional palliative care, and water and wastewater operator training.

The AMM distributed a position paper to those in attendance outlining dozens of other issues. The paper is available on the AMM website at http://www.amm.mb.ca/pol_cabinet.html. 



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