



By Tyler MacAfee, AMM Director of Policy &amp; Communications

## Infrastructure - WHAT ELSE COULD IT BE?

*From time to time in the Leader we give you updates on some of the big ticket issues we have been working on here at AMM. It was pretty easy to pick the topic this time – infrastructure. In reality, what else could it be?*

Greater funding for municipal infrastructure certainly isn't a new issue and has been at the top of the list since the AMM was created almost 11 years ago. Actually, I am willing to bet municipal infrastructure challenges have been around ever since there were municipalities. What makes the challenges of today more pressing than any other time in history is the scope of the problem.

We only need to take a look around our communities to see the deteriorating state of our infrastructure. Roads nearly impassable due to potholes and heaving, drafty libraries with crippling heating bills, recreation complexes with leaking roofs and water and sewer treatment plants running beyond capacity. These are the very foundation of a community, yet their current state leaves communities with little hope for prosperity.

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.

These national trends hold true for Manitoba as well. The City of Winnipeg recently calculated its infrastructure deficit at \$3.8 billion for existing infrastructure and \$3.6 billion for new strategic infrastructure. 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.

An \$11 billion municipal infrastructure deficit for the Province of Manitoba is staggering. To put it into perspective, this is over \$10,000 per Manitoban, as the population of the province is just




over one million. It is certainly an insurmountable amount for municipalities to tackle on their own since the total municipal taxes levied in 2007 were only \$731,635,227. The Province of Manitoba has certainly supported municipalities over the years, however with a total provincial budget of just over \$10 billion, the Province cannot fix the problem alone. For Canada's communities to prosper it is going to take a coordinated approach from all three orders of government. This is the only way we can start to meet the challenges head on.

Through the work of AMM and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), we have seen some success. Manitoba communities have benefited greatly from the measures taken by the federal government over the last few years including the GST rebate, the Gas Tax Agreement and the Building Canada Fund. There is no doubt municipal infrastructure funding has seen increases not rivaled since the 1960s. While this renewed investment has helped, when evaluated in comparison to the overall municipal infrastructure deficit we can see that more work needs to be done.

The AMM has taken every opportunity to advocate for infrastructure funding with the provincial and federal governments. Infrastructure challenges were raised with every provincial minister we met with in 2009, and were the cornerstone of our Lobby Days effort in April. Increased investment in municipal infrastructure was also one of the recommendations we made to the Federal Finance Committee's Budget Consultations.

Infrastructure will also be front and centre at the AMM Convention in November. We have a number of resolutions coming to the floor for debate, and no doubt you will make it a central theme of the Ministerial Forum. The AMM has also traditionally met with the Premier and Cabinet during the Convention and will make sure this issue is on the agenda. With a new Premier and likely some new faces at the Ministerial Forum it is critical that they receive the message first-hand in November.

There is no doubt the challenges facing our communities are steep. An \$11 billion municipal infrastructure deficit is rushing toward unfixable. However community leaders have the will to fix these problems. Municipal officials live in their communities, and often have grown up in them. Municipal government is truly the order of government closest to the people and you – Manitoba's mayors, reeves and councillors – know what it will take to make your community strong. It is not the lack of vision at the community level that is holding you back; it is the lack of support. While there is no easy fix to the problem, rest assured the AMM will continue to push government to make greater investments in municipal infrastructure. We will work with all orders of government to develop a long-term strategy to give you the support you need to fix these challenges and build the strong, healthy and vibrant communities Manitobans deserve. 



## Nelson River Construction Inc.

### FOR ALL YOUR CONSTRUCTION NEEDS

Municipal, Residential,  
Commercial and Industrial Works  
Asphalt & Concrete Paving  
Sewer & Water

101 Dawson Road North  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2J 0S6  
Telephone: (204) 949-8700  
Fax: (204) 237-8337



[www.nelsonriver.com](http://www.nelsonriver.com)