



ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA MUNICIPALITIES

FEDERAL BUDGET SUBMISSION FOR 2014-2015

DATE

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Infrastructure .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Community Policing.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Disaster Financial Assistance and Flood Mitigation .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Wireless and Broadband Access.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Housing.....</b>	<b>7</b>

## Introduction

- The Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) appreciates the opportunity to meet with Members of Parliament from Manitoba to discuss the 2014-15 federal budget.
- The AMM would also like to thank the government for the infrastructure funding commitments in Budget 2013-14, including an indexed Gas Tax Fund as part of the Community Improvement Fund, a new Building Canada Fund, and the renewal of the P3 Canada Fund.
- The AMM was also pleased with the housing announcements in Budget 2013-14 with the renewal of over \$1.25 billion over 5 years for the Investment in Affordable Housing bilateral agreements with provinces and territories.
- The top priorities for the AMM in the upcoming budget include the need to move forward on investments in infrastructure; support for rising municipal policing costs; improvements to the Disaster Financial Assistance Program and flood mitigation; reliable wireless communication and high speed internet; and support for affordable housing.
- The AMM also supports Transport Canada's work with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) to improve railway safety and would like to thank the Government of Canada for the introduction of the Protective Direction to require railways to share municipality-specific information regarding the transportation of dangerous goods.

# 1) Infrastructure

The AMM recommends the government:

- ❖ *Consult with FCM on program design for the Building Canada Fund;*
  - ❖ *Ensure municipalities receive a fair share;*
  - ❖ *Maintain the Communities Component in the Building Canada Fund to ensure small communities can benefit;*
  - ❖ *Maintain the 5 year review in the Building Canada Fund to take advantage of lessons learned during the first half of the Fund's duration;*
  - ❖ *Ensure the AMM is on the selection committee for municipal infrastructure project applications under the Building Canada Fund;*
  - ❖ *Maintain the commitment to make the Building Canada Fund available on April 1, 2014; and*
  - ❖ *Share details about the application process with municipalities as soon as possible.*
- The AMM appreciates the commitments to local infrastructure in Budget 2013-14. To date they are the longest and largest commitments announced by the Government of Canada.
  - This decade-long plan will deliver \$47 billion in federal funding to repair and maintain existing infrastructure, and build new infrastructure. The AMM is confident these investments will create jobs and allow Canada to compete in today's global economy.

## *Gas Tax Fund:*

- Particularly noteworthy was the permanent Gas Tax Fund, now to be indexed at 2 per cent per year to protect its value against inflation. This was a key priority for AMM members as the Gas Tax Fund provides a predictable and flexible source of infrastructure funding for municipalities.

- The AMM would like to thank the Government of Canada for this support, and is pleased that the Gas Tax Funding Agreement was recently signed with the Province of Manitoba.

### *Building Canada Fund*

- The AMM was also pleased to see the commitment to a new Building Canada Fund to begin in 2014.
- It is important to finalize the details and design of the program as soon as possible to ensure municipalities can take advantage of the short construction season.
- Since the Building Canada Fund is also available to the Province of Manitoba for provincial infrastructure, the AMM would like to emphasize the importance of ensuring municipalities receive a fair share of funding. Municipalities are responsible for more than 60 per cent of Canada's infrastructure while they receive only 8 cents of every tax dollar.
- Additionally, a Communities Component is critical to allow small communities to take advantage of this much needed funding. For Manitoba, a small community should be one with a population under 10,000.
- The AMM has also requested to be part of the selection committee for municipal infrastructure funding applications under the Building Canada Fund, similar to our involvement with the previous Manitoba Rural Infrastructure Fund. The Province of Manitoba has already made a commitment to include the AMM on this selection committee.
- Finally, the AMM supports the federal government's proposed asset management requirement; however it is important to maintain flexibility with this requirement to account for a municipality's administrative limitations.

## 2) Community Policing

The AMM recommends the government:

- ❖ *Renew the successful Police Officer Recruitment Fund; and*
  - ❖ *Support improved communication between the RCMP and municipalities.*
- Although community safety and crime prevention are among the top priorities of Manitoban communities, the costs of fighting crime are rising and quickly becoming increasingly unsustainable.
  - FCM has studied this issue in depth, and found the costs for police services in Canada rose from \$6.4 billion in 1999 to \$12.3 billion in 2009, with municipalities paying for 60 per cent of this increase.
  - Without the renewal of the federal Police Officer Recruitment Fund, many Manitoba communities will experience a decrease in the number of police officers in their communities.
  - In most cases, municipalities do not have extra funds in order to keep the officers hired with federal funding, and are seriously concerned about the potential effect this will have on public safety in their communities.
  - As well, while the Manitoba Contract Management Committee has made some important progress in terms of opening communication between municipalities and the RCMP, it is important to ensure this progress continues.
  - Municipalities need to have regular communication with their police forces, and a good understanding of their policing contracts with the federal government in order to work together.

### 3) Disaster Financial Assistance and Flood Mitigation

The AMM recommends the government:

- ❖ *Conduct a review of Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA) funding, policies and criteria, incorporating the AMM's recommendations; and*
- ❖ *Invest in the development of a national disaster mitigation strategy.*
  - The AMM appreciates the federal assistance under DFA of almost \$300 million for response and recovery costs incurred during the catastrophic flooding in 2011.
  - The AMM has recommended several changes to Disaster Financial Assistance which will allow for more efficient and effective use of government resources:
    - *Establish provisions in the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements to cover seasonal, non-permanent residents or provide another avenue for financial aid;*
    - *Allow disaster events taking place very close together to be linked in one claim;*
    - *Allow approval of claims for homeowners who have experienced both sewer back-up and overland flooding; and*
    - *Allow and provide funding for more preventative work during the recovery process to decrease the impacts of future flooding.*
  - In particular, continued investment in permanent flood protection and prevention measures will save recovery and reconstruction costs in the future.
  - Additionally, the AMM encourages the Government of Canada to move forward with the development of a national disaster mitigation strategy to better prepare for future flooding.

## 4) Wireless and Broadband Access

The AMM recommends the government:

- ❖ *Meet with representatives of the affected communities, the AMM and the Province of Manitoba to discuss partnership opportunities and solutions to the lack of reliable wireless and broadband service.*
- Cell service, high speed internet, and emergency communication systems are extremely important from both an economic development perspective, and a public safety perspective.
- Investments to expand wireless and broadband services will help to encourage private sector growth by providing the basic services businesses need to operate.
- The AMM would like to encourage the Government of Canada to meet and partner with the Province of Manitoba, municipalities and the private sector to improve both wireless and broadband access in rural and northern Manitoba.
- As well, it is especially important for emergency communication services to be reliable to ensure the safety of the public and emergency responders.
- One solution FCM, the AMM and the Province of Manitoba all support is to include agreements or conditions with the auction of spectrum in the 2300 MHz and 3500 MHz band requiring the service provider to offer these essential communication services.
- A past example of a successful federal partnership was the Broadband Canada: Connecting Rural Canadians program. In Manitoba, approximately 27,000 unserved or underserved households benefited from funding provided to telecommunications companies through this program.

## 5) Housing

The AMM recommends the government:

- ❖ *Build on commitments in Budget 2013-14 by establishing a long-term plan to work with FCM, provinces and municipalities to strengthen Canada's housing system and implement 'housing first' programs; and*
  - ❖ *Protect communities from the loss of affordable housing by renewing the \$1.7 billion in federal operating agreements scheduled to expire.*
- The AMM appreciates Economic Action Plan 2013 commitments to renew investments in affordable housing, proposing \$253 million per year over 5 years for bilateral agreements with provinces and territories.
  - Many Manitoba communities are experiencing strong economic and sudden population growth, and a healthy housing sector is essential to support the economy and to ensure their continued growth.
  - Rural and northern Manitoba is experiencing housing shortages of a variety of types: supportive housing for seniors, rental housing, and affordable housing for all different sizes of families.
  - Public sector involvement must complement and encourage the private sector to build housing that meets local needs, rather than creating obstacles.
  - Cities and communities need better housing options to attract new workers, keep young families, and support seniors and our most vulnerable citizens.
  - The AMM encourages the Government of Canada to play a role in strengthening our housing system by developing a long-term plan.
  - The federal government actions, aligned with provincial and local initiatives, can be a catalyst for a stronger and more balanced housing system, which will attract investment and create jobs, support new growth, and increase labour mobility.