



ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA MUNICIPALITIES

Meeting with Honourable Stan Struthers

Minister of Finance

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## **SUMMARY**

### **ABORIGINAL AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS**

#### ***Funding for Port of Churchill and Northern Rail Lines***

The AMM recommends increasing funding for the Port of Churchill and northern rail lines, and that rail line abandonment be discouraged and mitigated.

### **AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL INITIATIVES**

#### ***Rural Water Pipeline Funding***

The AMM recommends establishing a commitment of \$10 million annually towards rural water pipeline expansion, as the provincial share of a \$30 million tri-level funding initiative.

#### ***Economic Development in Manitoba***

The AMM recommends a commitment of financial resources to implement recommendations outlined in the Manitoba Connects report aimed at strengthening economic development opportunities

#### ***Ecological Goods and Services Policy for Manitoba***

The AMM recommends the Province implement a province-wide Ecological Goods and Services (EG&S) Policy with appropriate funding as soon as possible.

#### ***Funding for Noxious Weed Control***

The AMM recommends allocating additional resources to provincial weed control and to weed districts since these agencies make a significant contribution to weed control in Manitoba.

#### ***Rural Veterinary Board Funding***

The AMM recommends an increase in funding in order to keep rural veterinarian salaries competitive and to allow these clinics to continue providing veterinary services to their communities.

### **CHILDREN, YOUTH AND OPPORTUNITIES**

#### ***Hometown Green Team Program***

The AMM recommends the Province increase funding for this program to allow the approval of more applications.

## **CONSERVATION & WATER STEWARDSHIP**

### ***Surface Water Management Strategy***

The AMM recommends the Province provide sufficient funding to develop and implement this strategy, and to support new or expanded programs to fulfill the surface water management strategy objectives.

### ***Funding for Conservation Districts***

The AMM recommends the Province increase funding to CDs and consider reevaluating the funding formula.

### ***Dutch Elm Disease Management Funding***

The AMM recommends the Province reinstate funding for Dutch Elm Disease management services for municipalities.

### ***Contaminated Sites***

The AMM recommends long-term funding for remediation and contaminated sites across the province.

### ***Funding for the Beaver Management Program***

The AMM recommends the Province continue to provide funding for targeted beaver management and higher beaver tag rates and review options for maximizing the available resources in the program.

### ***Waste Reduction and Recycling Support Levy***

The AMM recommends that the 20 per cent of WRARS levy revenue that is not rebated back to municipalities be used to assist municipalities with below average recycling programs in making improvements.

## **CULTURE, HERITAGE AND TOURISM**

### ***Funding for Libraries***

The AMM recommends the Province establish funding for a universal, province-wide library card system, and increase overall funding for libraries.

### ***Tourism Funding***

The AMM recommends maintaining support for vibrant communities by continuing to provide funding for tourism.

### ***Funding for Community Museums***

The AMM recommends a funding increase to the Community Museum Grants Program.

## **EDUCATION**

### ***Reduction of Education Tax from Property***

The AMM recommends the Province identify sustainable new mechanisms that allow all school divisions to reduce their reliance on property taxes to fund education.

### ***Funding for Anti-Drug Programs in Schools***

The AMM recommends providing provincial funding to include anti-drug programs in Manitoba's school curriculum.

## **EMERGENCY MEASURES**

### ***Flood Compensation and Prevention***

The AMM recommends the Province continue to allocate funding for flood prevention infrastructure, and that improvements to existing methods of flood response and mitigation be made based on the reviews of 2011 flooding.

## **ENTREPRENEURSHIP, TRAINING AND TRADE**

### ***Business Development and Retention***

The AMM recommends the Province work with communities in all areas of Manitoba to promote and retain local businesses through training and development initiatives.

### ***Increase Shelter Allowance Rate***

The AMM recommends that the Province ensure those in need are able to secure adequate and affordable accommodation by increasing funding available under RentAid.

## **FAMILY SERVICES AND LABOUR**

### ***Funding for Childcare***

The AMM recommends investing in initiatives to address ongoing staff shortages of child care workers.

## **HEALTH**

### ***Health Practitioner Recruitment, Training and Retention***

The AMM recommends making adequate funding available to attract and retain health professionals in rural and northern Manitoba.

### ***Medical School in Brandon***

The AMM recommends the Province commit the resources necessary to implement the recommendations of the Medical Education Study to address the severe shortage of medical professionals in Manitoba.

### ***Removal of Community Capital Contributions for Health Facilities***

The AMM recommends health facilities be funded completely by the Province.

### ***Centralization of Rural Ambulance Service***

The AMM recommends the Province provide funding to ensure emergency response services are located a reasonable distance from every community for the safety of all Manitobans.

### ***Health Ombudsman Position***

The AMM recommends the establishment of a dedicated Health Ombudsman office, with appropriate funding, for the resolution of health complaints and systemic reviews of Manitoba's Regional Health Authorities.

## **HEALTHY LIVING, SENIORS AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS**

### ***Funding for Seniors Housing***

The AMM recommends providing adequate resources for various forms of seniors' housing across the province.

### ***Costs of Survey Monument Restoration***

The AMM recommends that the Province allocate the necessary funding to improve communication tools to provide information about survey monument restoration to municipalities.

### ***Increased Funding for the Operation of Recreation Centres***

The AMM recommends the Province of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro establish a new rate structure to assist recreation centres with skyrocketing operating costs.

## **HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

### ***Increased Funding for Housing***

The AMM recommends the Province provide funding to support the recommendations of the Housing Roundtables when they are released.

### ***Increased Funding for Community Places Program***

The AMM recommends additional funding for the highly successful Community Places Program.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORTATION**

### ***Rural Airport Funding***

The AMM recommends the reinstatement of a capital assistance program for airports on a 50-50 basis with municipalities.

### ***Greyhound Service***

The AMM recommends the Province dedicate funding for a long-term solution to ensure adequate levels of bus service across Manitoba.

## **INNOVATION, ENERGY AND MINES**

### ***Biodiesel and Ethanol Initiatives***

The AMM recommends the Province invest in incentives and financial assistance to make it attractive for municipalities and developers to pursue new ethanol production facilities.

### ***Mining Issues in Northern Manitoba***

The AMM recommends the Province continue to support resource-based communities and municipalities in their development of long-term sustainability plans.

### ***Oil Production Issues***

The AMM recommends the Province work with the municipalities affected by oil production to develop a regional economic development plan.

### ***Wind Power Initiatives***

The AMM recommends the Province continue working towards its commitment to increase wind generation capacity and provide incentives for complementary industries and services such as component manufacturing and maintenance.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

### ***Municipal Infrastructure Priorities and Long-term Infrastructure Funding***

The AMM recommends the Province address Manitoba's infrastructure deficit by working with the federal government to provide long-term, sustainable, and predictable funding for all categories of public infrastructure.

### ***Alternate Revenues***

The AMM recommends the Province explore opportunities to identify new revenue sources to be dedicated to infrastructure.

### ***Staffing Issues***

The AMM recommends sufficient provincial funding be allocated to fill any vacancies in planning services staff and to increase field assessment officer staff levels by at least 15 per cent.

### ***Municipal Bridge Renewal Program***

The AMM recommends providing additional provincial support to expedite the process of bridge repair and replacement.

## **JUSTICE**

### ***Funding for the New Policing Agreement***

The AMM recommends providing adequate provincial funding to support effective policing while maintaining cost-efficient service delivery.

### ***By-Law Enforcement***

The AMM recommends allocating resources to carry out the recommendations of the By-law Enforcement Working Group to reduce municipal enforcement costs and ensure municipalities can achieve compliance more effectively.

### ***Traffic Control at Motor Vehicle Accident Scenes and False Alarms***

The AMM recommends establishing provincial funding or mechanisms to provide compensation to municipalities for traffic control at accident scenes and for responding to false alarms.

## ABORIGINAL AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

### *Funding for Port of Churchill and Northern Rail Lines*

**The AMM recommends increasing funding for the Port of Churchill and northern rail lines, and that rail line abandonment be discouraged and mitigated.**

Manitoba's railways are an integral part of Manitoba's transportation network, which offers considerable opportunities for expanding interprovincial and international trade. A significant portion of these trade opportunities rely on northern Manitoba's transportation infrastructure, particularly the Port of Churchill, its rail line connections, and the development of CentrePort Canada. However, in order to continue to support both Churchill and CentrePort, northern rail lines require increased provincial investment in order to capitalize on Manitoba's growing export potential. Beyond the contribution to Manitoba's economic development, rail lines in northern Manitoba provide an essential link for those living in northern communities. Ongoing concerns with the quality of the rail system in Manitoba such as reduced service through VIA rail threaten the reliability of this transportation link, and increase stress on alternative transportation infrastructure. Where rail line abandonment occurs, the Province should allocate adequate resources to address contamination and drainage concerns arising from the removal of rail beds. As well, greater provincial investment is required to support the sustainability of northern communities and to capitalize on trade opportunities in northern Manitoba.

## AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL INITIATIVES

### *Rural Water Pipeline Funding*

**The AMM recommends establishing a commitment of \$10 million annually towards rural water pipeline expansion, as the provincial share of a \$30 million tri-level funding initiative.**

The Province supported rural water pipeline construction in the past and the AMM recommends it be made a priority partnership initiative under Growing Forward. The federal government has indicated that the Province has the flexibility to allocate resources to priorities through Growing Forward and to determine the types of programs that would receive federal cost-shared funds. The AMM understands there are many other competing priorities, and would greatly appreciate provincial support to secure funding for rural water pipelines from both the provincial and federal government. Municipalities are prepared to contribute their third of the funding for these projects and the AMM recommends that \$10 million be committed annually from each order of government. There are numerous benefits that would result from reinstating federal funding for rural pipelines. Helping these communities provide basic infrastructure to residents and businesses will help to stimulate economic development and population growth, and improvements in water distribution would benefit the agriculture industry and the community at large. As well, the construction of these pipelines would improve the availability of water and assist with drought proofing. Finally, rural water pipelines would help to improve water quality and quality of life for residents who currently rely on wells for their water supply. This is especially important for areas of Manitoba experiencing de-population because water quality influences the attractiveness of a community and the quality of life of its residents.

### *Economic Development in Manitoba*

**The AMM recommends a commitment of financial resources to implement recommendations outlined in the *Manitoba Connects* report aimed at strengthening economic development opportunities.**

The provincial and municipal governments share an interest in creating a solid and diverse economic base from which Manitoba can flourish. For this reason, the AMM was pleased to see recommendations related to improving existing resources and coordination for economic development in the 2008 report, *Manitoba Connects*. Much of this report echoed the work of the AMM's Task Force on Economic Development and its 2003 report, *Creating a Vision*. Together, the two consultations provide insight into the need for an enhanced economic development delivery system and confirm that the long-standing issues will not be resolved without intervention. The AMM hopes the establishment of the Priorities and Planning Committee of Cabinet will assist in the development of existing tools and strategies to support Manitoba businesses. Since municipalities are already engaged in economic development, the AMM is prepared to work with the Province towards coordinating and strengthening these efforts for the overall benefit of Manitoba's economic development. This effort requires a commitment of financial resources from the Province to ensure we can achieve our shared goals through programming that supports a strong local economy.

### *Ecological Goods and Services Policy for Manitoba*

**The AMM recommends the Province implement a province-wide Ecological Goods and Services (EG&S) Policy with appropriate funding as soon as possible.**

Offering incentives to landowners is an important tool to encourage ecologically beneficial practices. Much of agro-Manitoba recognizes the need to take action to ensure clean air, water and enhanced biodiversity. As well, many municipalities have benefited from participation in conservation districts and water management authorities and understand the importance of healthy ecosystems. The AMM supports the policy framework document developed by the EG&S Policy Working Group and would like to see the implementation of a provincial policy.

### *Funding for Noxious Weed Control*

**The AMM recommends allocating additional resources to provincial weed control and to weed districts since these agencies make a significant contribution to weed control in Manitoba.**

Controlling noxious weeds is another shared interest for provincial and municipal governments. Neglecting this important issue will exponentially increase the problem due to the aggressive growth patterns of noxious weeds such as leafy spurge and red bartsia. While many municipalities are presently members of weed districts, greater coordination with provincial weed control activities is required, as well as mechanisms to engage non-participating municipalities. This includes a greater provincial commitment to clean vehicles and equipment used near infested areas. Since many provincial vehicles cover great distances, these vehicles can rapidly spread weed seeds across Manitoba. As well, the AMM opposes a cosmetic use pesticide ban because it will limit the tools available to weed districts to control noxious weeds, and it may increase the potential of weeds spreading from urban areas. Furthermore, the review of *The Noxious Weeds Act* should support a coordinated weed control strategy by equipping municipalities with the authority to effectively control weeds on public and private property. Working together with additional resources, the rapid expansion of noxious weeds can be contained to the benefit of communities across Manitoba.

### *Rural Veterinary Board Funding*

**The AMM recommends an increase in funding in order to keep rural veterinarian salaries competitive and to allow these clinics to continue providing veterinary services to their communities.**

Rural veterinary boards support publicly owned clinics which provide essential services to surrounding producers and residents. However, despite rising operating costs, provincial funding for veterinary boards has remained at the same rate since at least 1989. The Province matches 95 per cent of municipal contributions up to a maximum of \$19,000. Increased funding is required in order to keep rural veterinarian salaries competitive and to allow these clinics to continue providing veterinary services to their communities.

## CHILDREN, YOUTH AND OPPORTUNITIES

### *Hometown Green Team Program*

**The AMM recommends the Province increase funding for this program to allow the approval of more applications.**

The Hometown Green Team Program (HGTP) provides valuable employment opportunities and experience for youth living in rural areas. In addition, rural communities and their residents benefit from the services provided through the HGTP. However, applications for HGTP funding exceed available resources, therefore additional funding should be allocated to this program to allow more communities to benefit.

## CONSERVATION & WATER STEWARDSHIP

### *Surface Water Management Strategy*

**The AMM recommends the Province provide sufficient funding to develop and implement this strategy, and to support new or expanded programs to fulfill the surface water management strategy objectives.**

The Province announced its intention to develop a surface water management strategy in its Speech from the Throne in October 2011. The AMM understands this process will take time and was pleased to meet with staff from the Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship to discuss the first steps towards the development of this strategy. In order to make surface water management a priority, the Province must be prepared to commit the necessary resources to complete the development of this strategy as soon as possible.

### *Funding for Conservation Districts*

**The AMM recommends the Province increase funding to CDs and consider reevaluating the funding formula.**

Through many measurable successes, conservation districts (CDs) have demonstrated positive impacts on local watersheds and they are well-positioned to further expand on these successes. However, it has become clear that CDs require additional resources to ensure their mandates can be fulfilled, particularly if they are to be encouraged to take on additional responsibilities through the process of developing and implementing a provincial surface water management strategy.

### *Dutch Elm Disease Management Funding*

**The AMM recommends the Province reinstate funding for Dutch Elm Disease management services for municipalities.**

Dutch Elm Disease can be particularly devastating for small urban communities in Manitoba and the costs of disease management can be considerable. Although the AMM appreciates the technical and logistical advice provided by the Forestry Branch of Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship for municipalities who wish to establish a local program, the costs of maintaining such a program are too great for most municipalities.

### *Contaminated Sites*

**The AMM recommends long-term funding for remediation and contaminated sites across the province.**

The Province's inventory of contaminated sites is an important step toward resolving the long-standing problem of orphaned and abandoned sites in Manitoba. Only as remediation efforts move forward will the full financial scope of the projects become clear, therefore a long-term funding commitment is required to ensure continued progress in this regard. Municipalities recognize their responsibility for cleaning up municipally-owned sites; however the cost of remediation on orphaned and abandoned sites is beyond the scope of municipal responsibility. There is a critical need to ensure sufficient mechanisms, including long-term funding and criteria for remediation, are in place to eliminate the environmental and public health hazards associated with all contaminated and impacted mine and fuel storage sites in this province.

### *Funding for the Beaver Management Program*

**The AMM recommends the Province continue to provide funding for targeted beaver management and higher beaver tag rates and review options for maximizing the available resources in the program.**

The potential damage to local infrastructure resulting from beaver dams and the associated changes in water flow is well understood by municipalities and the Province. For this reason, the incentives offered by the Problem Beaver Management Program (PBMP) have been a welcome approach to controlling beaver activity, and the AMM appreciated the additional \$400,000 in funding to the PBMP in 2011. Although the

funding provided for two pilot projects and an increase to the beaver tag rate, the number of tags did not increase. As a result, municipalities welcome a review of the program to determine how to maximize the resources available in the areas most affected by beaver activity. The review of the PBMP should also consider how to manage beavers on Crown land as municipalities do not have the ability to do so despite incurring significant damage due to beaver activity in these areas. There are enormous costs associated with rebuilding infrastructure and proactive approaches to avoid these damages must be supported by sufficient financial resources.

### *Waste Reduction and Recycling Support Levy*

**The AMM recommends the 20 per cent of WRARS levy revenue that is not rebated back to municipalities be used to assist municipalities with below average recycling programs in making improvements.**

In recent years, there have been extensive changes to recycling in Manitoba and municipalities support the initiatives aimed at increasing the overall collection of recyclable material. Incentives to support municipal recycling benefit municipalities by reducing the amount of material collected at local landfills. While some communities expect to gain from the Waste Reduction and Recycling Support (WRARS) Levy, others are concerned that the levy will place them at a further disadvantage. For instance, communities with limited recycling programs often lack the resources required to improve them, and paying the WRARS levy reduces their ability to make improvements even more.

## CULTURE, HERITAGE AND TOURISM

### *Funding for Libraries*

**The AMM recommends the Province establish funding for a universal, province-wide library card system, and increase overall funding for libraries.**

Throughout Manitoba, public libraries act as a centre of information to provide valuable educational resources to local communities. Municipalities rely on public libraries to promote literacy and support educational opportunities for their residents, and the AMM appreciates provincial services provided to residents without access to a library such as *Open Shelf* and *Travelling Library Service*. However, when compared nationally, Manitoba libraries are especially underfunded. Currently, Manitoba municipalities contribute the second highest municipal percentage of funding to libraries in Canada, yet in provincial support Manitoba ranks close to the bottom. Although public library services funding increased marginally in the 2011-2012 budget, this investment should be significantly increased to match municipal commitments. Furthermore, the funding formula for libraries must be reviewed on a regular basis to maximize the distribution of resources while reflecting changing demographics. The existing per capita funding formula provides less and less funding to public libraries located in communities affected by rural de-population. This makes it difficult for these libraries to cover operating costs or invest in technology upgrades, program development, and collection improvements, which either remain constant or increase, regardless of a municipality's population. Finally, the AMM recommends the Province establish funding for a universal, province-wide library card system. Not only would it increase efficiencies in the public library system, it would also facilitate library use.

### *Tourism Funding*

**The AMM recommends maintaining support for vibrant communities by continuing to provide funding for tourism.**

Manitoba has much to offer and many communities recognize the potential that exists in marketing local attractions to the world. Tourism is an excellent economic development option and it is critical that this potential is developed and supported through provincial investment and promotion. The AMM urges the Province to showcase more community attractions by recognizing them through the Manitoba Star Attraction program. Communities take great pride in these local attractions and need provincial support to maintain them and showcase them to the world.

### *Funding for Community Museums*

**The AMM recommends a funding increase to the Community Museum Grants Program.**

Manitoba's community museums have an important responsibility to preserve and promote diverse aspects of our provincial heritage. Museum collections offer significant educational opportunities, they help build a sense of community, and they contribute to the economic development of many communities. Regrettably, the maximum amount available under the Community Museum Grants Program has remained the same since 1991, and so much additional fundraising is required to apply for these grants that many museums do not have the resources to even submit an application. Many must rely increasingly on donations or local sources of funding as their operating costs continue to rise, therefore increased provincial funding is required to assist in managing the increasing operating and maintenance costs.

## EDUCATION

### *Reduction of Education Tax from Property*

**The AMM recommends that the Province identify sustainable new mechanisms that allow all school divisions to reduce their reliance on property taxes to fund education.**

Even as the Province of Manitoba faces financial pressure, municipalities also continue to struggle to provide the wide range of services Manitobans expect. Since municipalities have limited tools and resources at their disposal, they must rely heavily on property taxes to generate revenue at the local level. However, municipalities do not have full control over this mechanism due to the ongoing reliance on property taxes to fund education. Although recent budgets have made progress in reducing the amount of education funding collected from property taxation, a long-term strategy is still required to achieve an 80:20 funding ratio on operating expenses for education. As well, the AMM is disappointed with the provincial decision to discontinue tax incentive grants because without any provincial funding increase to education, school trustees across Manitoba will be forced to raise the revenue from ratepayers. Municipalities require the flexibility to address local priorities by controlling property tax levels, and increases made for education funding will limit their ability to collect additional revenue from ratepayers if needed.

### *Funding for Anti-Drug Programs in Schools*

**The AMM recommends providing provincial funding to include anti-drug programs in Manitoba's school curriculum.**

Investing in preventative measures can save significant government funds over the long-term, and drug awareness is a prime example. Criminal activity associated with drug abuse imposes significant costs on both urban and rural communities in Manitoba. Teaching the consequences of drug use through the school curriculum offers a powerful opportunity to minimize this criminal activity while supporting the crime prevention efforts of local communities. There are a variety of structured anti-drug campaigns available and municipalities are pleased that many schools have

implemented these programs. A broader effort is required to ensure that students across the province are engaged in anti-drug programs, therefore provincial funding and support should be provided to include anti-drug programming in Manitoba's school curriculum.

## EMERGENCY MEASURES

### *Flood Compensation and Prevention*

**The AMM recommends the province continue to allocate funding for flood prevention infrastructure, and that improvements to existing methods of flood response and mitigation be made based on the reviews of 2011 flooding.**

The flooding of 2011 was widespread and unprecedented, and it affected a significant amount of municipal infrastructure. The AMM appreciates the establishment of the Property Tax Relief Program and other provincial funding to compensate property owners or help rebuild the damage caused by flooding. The AMM recommends the province continue to allocate funding for flood prevention infrastructure, and supports the establishment of the Flood Review Task Force and other review committees to focus on specific different aspects of flooding throughout the Province. A review of existing flood mitigation processes and infrastructure will help identify improvements for improved flood response in the future.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP, TRAINING AND TRADE

### *Business Development and Retention*

**The AMM recommends the Province work with communities in all areas of Manitoba to promote and retain local businesses through training and development initiatives.**

Ongoing concerns about the strength of the global economy resonate in communities throughout Manitoba. Small businesses across the province are facing new challenges in this environment and need support to minimize the impacts on the local economy. In particular, there is a demand to expand business development and training programs to additional rural and northern communities. The AMM appreciates the Province's efforts to highlight Manitoba's competitive advantages and make training for businesses and entrepreneurs more widely available. Maintaining a strong base of skilled workers and entrepreneurs will ensure that Manitoba can respond effectively when economic challenges arise. Development of the workforce and succession planning ensures that capable individuals are equipped to take over thriving businesses from retiring owners. Therefore, the Province should work with communities to promote and retain local businesses through training and development initiatives.

### *Increase Shelter Allowance Rate*

**The AMM recommends the Province ensure those in need are able to secure adequate and affordable accommodation by increasing funding available under RentAid.**

Many Manitobans must rely on RentAid from the Province of Manitoba to afford private rental housing. Due to increases in rent and inflation, and historically low vacancy rates, RentAid allowance does not always provide sufficient support to cover the rent. As a result, some low-income families must draw on their basic living allowance to supplement rental costs.

## FAMILY SERVICES AND LABOUR

### *Funding for Childcare*

**The AMM recommends investing in initiatives to address ongoing staff shortages of child care workers.**

Although not a direct municipal service, municipalities have an interest in securing high-quality child care services. Studies consistently show that the provision of local childcare opportunities increases regional economic development. For this reason, municipalities appreciate the Province's commitment to the Family Choices agenda as a multi-faceted approach to addressing childcare constraints. To achieve the long-term benefits of child care investments new spaces must be created to address the gap between supply and demand. In addition, as non-profit organizations, it is difficult for many daycares to afford competitive starting wages and the increasing minimum wage has exacerbated these budgetary constraints. The implementation of a pension program in 2010 was an important first step; however greater investment is still required to increase actual employee wages. Such an investment will assist in addressing the ongoing staffing shortages by attracting individuals to the profession. In general, this issue must be a greater priority with funding allocated to address the short and long-term obstacles facing child care centres in all parts of Manitoba.

## HEALTH

### *Health Practitioner Recruitment, Training and Retention*

**The AMM recommends making adequate funding available to attract and retain health professionals in rural and northern Manitoba.**

Throughout Manitoba, ongoing shortages of health care professionals present challenges that must be addressed through the provincial strategy focused on training, recruitment and retention. Even with existing provincial programs and funding there continues to be major gaps in health care services and municipalities are forced to bid for physicians to work in their communities by offering incentives. This creates a significant disadvantage for communities that lack the financial resources to attract physicians, and the AMM believes a Manitoban's access to health care must not be determined by their municipality's ability to pay. The AMM welcomes the Province's plan to ensure that every Manitoban has access to a family doctor by 2015, and appreciates steps taken to improve health care training, starting with the additional funding promised during the election to educate and hire more doctors and nurses. It is also important that training plans for health professionals prepare for an increased number of retirements in the coming years.

### *Medical School in Brandon*

**The AMM recommends the Province commit the resources necessary to implement the recommendations of the Medical Education Study to address the severe shortage of medical professionals in Manitoba.**

The AMM was pleased with the provincial commitment to a study of medical education needs in rural and northern Manitoba, including the feasibility of a medical school at Brandon University. Providing rural training opportunities for medical students is an example of the kind of innovative approaches needed to address gaps in health care services, such as the physician shortage in rural Manitoba. As well, options should be considered to encourage doctors to remain in rural areas.

## *Removal of Community Capital Contributions for Health Facilities*

**The AMM recommends health facilities be funded completely by the Province.**

Municipalities continue to struggle to contribute funding to health capital projects whose design and cost are determined by the Province. The policy states that communities are required to fund at least 10 per cent of all local health capital projects, and municipalities are typically expected to make part of the local contribution. This policy exemplifies increasing concerns about municipal involvement in health care, which is a clear provincial responsibility. The AMM has repeatedly lobbied to change this policy, as it is inequitable and inappropriate for local communities to contribute to the provision of health care services. The Province has indicated the policy is in place to ensure requests for facilities only come from communities that are genuinely in need, however there is no evidence to suggest that communities request facilities unnecessarily. Furthermore, this policy does not allow for any local input or consideration of ability to pay, thereby putting some communities with legitimate needs at a disadvantage if they have insufficient resources to contribute the 10 per cent.

## *Centralization of Rural Ambulance Service*

**The AMM recommends the Province provide funding to ensure emergency response services are located a reasonable distance from every community for the safety of all Manitobans.**

The AMM remains concerned the reassignment of ambulance locations has left some communities too far from ambulance services. Some residents may be waiting longer for an ambulance to arrive because it is traveling further, especially since those driving the ambulance are often unfamiliar with the area. The AMM fully appreciates the need to ensure those responding to emergencies are of the highest standard and fully trained and in some communities these highly trained people are not available. However many communities have invested resources into training emergency responders and they should be permitted to keep their emergency services. The AMM

appreciates the provincial decision to review ambulance services to look at locations, response times and staffing.

### *Health Ombudsman Position*

**The AMM recommends the establishment of a dedicated Health Ombudsman office, with appropriate funding, for the resolution of health complaints and systemic reviews of Manitoba's Regional Health Authorities.**

The integrity of Manitoba's health care system is important to all Manitobans, and the AMM believes appropriate measures should be in place to ensure health care is delivered fairly, equitably, and with administrative accountability. A poll conducted for the Canadian Medical Association in August 2011 revealed that 86 per cent of Canadians supported an independent ombudsman for complaints about health service.

## HEALTHY LIVING, SENIORS AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

### *Funding for Seniors Housing*

**The AMM recommends providing adequate resources for a various forms of seniors' housing across the province.**

Municipalities struggle to respond to the overall shortage of housing in Manitoba, however, an important aspect of this issue is the rising demand for various types of housing for seniors. In recent years, there have been a number of provincially-supported seniors' housing projects that have provided options for seniors in select communities. The AMM also appreciated the request for proposals to build 150 units of seniors housing in 2011 which included up to \$60,000 per unit for southern Manitoba and up to \$70,000 per unit in the north. However, there are no geographic boundaries on the need for seniors' housing, due to Manitoba's aging population. Therefore, there are many municipalities that would also appreciate similar projects. A key part of this issue is providing supportive housing options, and regional health authorities must obtain the resources to enable further expansion of supportive housing throughout Manitoba. Overall, the housing needs of seniors must be prioritized in provincial housing programs and financial resources must be in place to support this priority.

### *Costs of Survey Monument Restoration*

**The AMM recommends the Province allocate the necessary funding to improve communication tools to provide more information about survey monument restoration to municipalities.**

The cost of replacing survey monuments can be quite onerous for municipalities, particularly when numerous monuments must be replaced at one time. Furthermore, it is difficult for municipalities to budget for these expenses as they often arise unexpectedly due to individual requests or a determination that several consecutive monuments must be restored. The Province must ensure sufficient funding is available under this program and evaluate the overall program funding allocation if necessary.

Recent discussions with The Property Registry have indicated better communication with municipalities could help with budgeting issues and increase understanding of the program.

### *Increased Funding for the Operation of Recreation Centres*

**The AMM recommends the Province of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro establish a new rate structure to assist recreation centres with skyrocketing operating costs.**

Recreation centres are not only important assets for a community to attract new residents; they also promote healthy lifestyles which indirectly reduces health care costs. However, recreation centres continue to struggle with high operating costs, which tend to consume a high proportion of the centre's budget. Although many communities are replacing local recreation centres with newer, more energy efficient facilities, many municipalities must continue to use older facilities that are more costly to operate. These communities appreciate Manitoba Hydro's programs in support of energy efficiency for recreation centres, however the operating costs for these facilities remain high. Without new programs or a new rate structure, a facility will not be used to its maximum potential because there are insufficient funds remaining in the local recreation budget to support programming. New programs or rates should assist communities with high operating costs despite having made improvements to their facilities, and should provide incentives to improve energy efficiency in all recreation centres.

## HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### *Increased Funding for Housing*

**The AMM recommends the Province provide funding to support the recommendations of the Housing Roundtables when they are released.**

The importance of housing cannot be understated as it has a significant impact on the growth potential of a community. Low-income households are not exclusively found in large urban centres, although specific demands often reflect local demographics. There are many province-wide commonalities that drive the need for greater investment in affordable housing. AMM members see the value in initiatives such as the Rural Homeownership Program and the recent Request for Proposals to develop affordable seniors housing. As the Province moves forward with the implementation of its housing strategy, it is essential to ensure that programs are accessible in all areas of the province and that sufficient supports are in place to help municipalities through often complicated application processes. In addition, because basic necessities are more expensive in remote areas, the low-income threshold should be adjusted to account for these regional discrepancies. A comprehensive strategy with the cooperation of the federal, provincial and municipal governments as well as the private and not-for-profit sectors will help to produce long-term solutions that are responsive to local needs. The AMM would like to thank the Province for the commitment it has shown this year to address the housing shortages through the establishment of roundtables for seniors housing and rental housing supply.

### *Increased Funding for Community Places Program*

**The AMM recommends additional funding for the highly successful Community Places Program.**

Many municipal projects benefit from the Community Places Program (CPP), however, this program could have a far greater impact with an increased funding allocation. Many municipal applications are for large-scale projects with expenses that quickly rise beyond the \$50,000 maximum, particularly when the program includes

requirements such as LEED certification. While the AMM appreciates the increase to a \$75,000 maximum for northern projects, we recommend increasing the overall funding allocation for the CPP and re-evaluating the maximum allowable grant per project.

## INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORTATION

### *Rural Airport Funding*

**The AMM recommends the reinstatement of a capital assistance program for airports on a 50-50 basis with municipalities.**

Municipal airports in rural and northern Manitoba provide important services such as ambulance service to surrounding communities, but without capital improvements these airports will soon lose the use of their runways. The reinstatement of a capital assistance program on a 50-50 basis with municipalities, similar to Saskatchewan's Community Airport Partnership Program, would enable rural airports to make much needed improvements, something they cannot do on their own, in order to keep their airports operational. An increase in the operating grants under the Manitoba Airport Assistance Program would also enable small airports to keep up with operating costs. The provincial grants for paved and unpaved airports have not increased for at least 10 years, and \$1,200-\$2,400 does not provide enough assistance. Therefore, an increased provincial commitment to the capital and operating expenses of small rural and northern airports would be a significant investment in the affected communities.

### *Greyhound Service*

**The AMM recommends the Province dedicate funding for a long-term solution to ensure adequate levels of bus service across Manitoba.**

For many Manitobans transportation by bus is their only means of transportation to connect to larger centres. Bus service is also used to move goods across the province, including essential medical supplies for remote communities. The AMM appreciates the action by the Province to ensure continued bus service through its service maintenance agreement with Greyhound until March 31, 2012, and would like to see a long-term plan for public transportation.

## INNOVATION, ENERGY AND MINES

### *Biodiesel and Ethanol Initiatives*

**The AMM recommends the Province invest in incentives and financial assistance that make it attractive for municipalities and developers to pursue new ethanol production facilities.**

Demand for alternative energy is increasing as a means of reducing the reliance on fossil fuels, and the new emissions tax on coal as well as the Biomass Energy Support Program will also have an important role in the growth of the biofuels industry. Biofuels represent an important opportunity for communities to participate in the growing alternative energy industry, while gaining significant economic development benefits. The provincial strategy to expand the bio-products industry, including a \$20 million investment over the next decade, will play an important role in supporting innovation, research, market development, and the creation of skilled, green jobs. The AMM appreciates the Province's commitment to the industry, as continued investment in these renewable energy resources is required to ensure Manitoba is prepared to meet increasing local demand for biofuels. As well, the Province should develop an education campaign targeted at agricultural producers in order to increase the supply of feed grains, corn, straw and other raw materials needed to produce more ethanol.

### *Mining Issues in Northern Manitoba*

**The AMM recommends the Province continue to support resource-based communities and municipalities in their development of long-term sustainability plans.**

Many northern communities rely on resource-based industries such as mining or forestry as the main source of employment and primary stimulus for the local economy. These industries attract major investment and provide spinoff benefits throughout the province. The provincial interest in promoting mining industry investment must also consider the need to assist communities that suddenly lose this critical industry. For this reason, mining communities appreciate the Province's support for mineral exploration and mining with its extension to the Mineral Exploration

Assistance Program with a total investment of \$4.5 million. The AMM also appreciates the assistance from the Province in managing unemployment and the impacts on local businesses in mining communities. Most recently, Thompson faced the possibility of significant job losses after an announcement by Vale in 2010 of its intention to close its smelter and refinery operations by 2015. As well, since these events are not necessarily predictable, the Mining Community Reserve Fund must be maintained exclusively to respond to these circumstances in order to support economic stability in the affected community.

### *Oil Production Issues*

**The AMM recommends the Province work with the municipalities affected by oil production to develop a regional economic development plan.**

Oil production in Manitoba has generated significant economic benefits for Manitoba and for southwestern Manitoba in particular. However, the oil boom has created additional demands on municipalities that are currently not offset by the increase in economic activity. For instance, infrastructure is being used more intensively by heavy machinery and is deteriorating faster as a result. As well, the number of surveys being conducted by oil companies has sometimes resulted in very high costs to municipalities for survey monument restoration which are difficult to cover all at once. The oil industry should be included in a plan to compensate municipalities for the use of their local services and infrastructure.

### *Wind Power Initiatives*

**The AMM recommends the Province continue working towards its commitment to increase wind generation capacity and provide incentives for complementary industries and services such as component manufacturing and maintenance.**

Municipalities are eager to support the growing clean energy industry by investing in wind energy production. The St. Leon wind farm has already generated substantial

local benefits and the development of the new St. Joseph site has further stimulated interest in the generation of wind energy. For this reason, the AMM recommends the Province continue working towards its commitment to add 1,000 megawatts of wind generation capacity by 2015. A further means of supporting wind power development in Manitoba is to develop a standard offer contract for community wind projects. A standard offer contract promotes project development by guaranteeing the purchase of power for a standard price, over a set time frame. This ensures a much safer long-term investment for stakeholders, while supporting the use of renewable energy on a smaller scale. The AMM appreciates the Province's commitment to release a community wind policy as well as a wind atlas to aid future development, and looks forward to the inclusion of features such as a standard offer contract.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### *Municipal Infrastructure Priorities and Long-term Infrastructure Funding*

**The AMM recommends the Province address Manitoba's infrastructure deficit by working with the federal government to provide long-term, sustainable, and predictable funding for all categories of public infrastructure.**

Insufficient investment in Manitoba's deteriorating infrastructure has created a major burden for municipalities in the form of a severe infrastructure deficit. Municipalities face growing demands and expectations, while lacking the resources to meet these expectations. This trend is evident across all types of public infrastructure including water and wastewater treatment and delivery, storm water systems, roads, bridges, public transportation, airports, railroads, and recreation and leisure facilities. Reversing the trend of infrastructure deterioration will require a collective effort from all orders of government to strategically invest in public infrastructure throughout Manitoba. Municipal infrastructure also encompasses a diverse range of assets and services which compete for scarce municipal resources. There is an ongoing need to invest in municipal infrastructure, yet municipalities cannot unilaterally provide the funding required for all the necessary construction, repair and maintenance projects using only property tax revenue. The Province is an important stakeholder in this process and must be prepared to adequately support municipalities as they take on the arduous task of upgrading and maintaining infrastructure assets.

### *Alternate Revenues*

**The AMM recommends the Province explore opportunities to identify new revenue sources to be dedicated to infrastructure.**

Manitoba's infrastructure deficit exceeds \$11 billion, or \$10,000 per Manitoban, and it has a significant impact on Manitoba's municipalities. For example, the City of Winnipeg estimated that its existing infrastructure deficit is at \$3.8 billion, with another \$3.6 billion required for new strategic infrastructure. The AMM is pleased that

the Province has recognized municipalities need access to growth revenues by changing the legislated annual revenue-sharing formula in 2011. However, without a significant investment over and above existing levels municipalities will continue to struggle to address the infrastructure deficit in their communities and fulfill their new and existing responsibilities. Polling conducted for the AMM in November 2011 revealed that 64 per cent of Manitobans support a one cent municipal sales tax dedicated to infrastructure needs. This is an increase of 10% over a similar polling question asked in September, 2008.

### *Staffing Issues*

**The AMM recommends that sufficient provincial funding be allocated to fill any vacancies in planning services staff and to increase field assessment officer staff levels by at least 15 per cent.**

Provincial assessment and planning services are essential to municipal operations. However, staff vacancies have forced municipalities to contract out for planning services at considerable expense. In addition, lack of sufficient staff in some assessment offices has made it difficult for them to keep up with new construction which deprives municipalities of much-needed revenue.

### *Municipal Bridge Renewal Program*

**The AMM recommends providing additional provincial support to expedite the process of bridge repair and replacement.**

The AMM appreciates the willingness of the Province to partner on programs like the recent stimulus spending and is also pleased with the announcement at our 2010 convention of a new Municipal Bridge Renewal Program. Municipal bridges are in need of critical repair and bridge repairs and maintenance can be expensive due to higher engineering costs. Deteriorating bridges often cause major traffic diversions that increase greenhouse gas emissions and place additional pressure on municipal roads that were not necessarily designed to accommodate the increased traffic.

## JUSTICE

### *Funding for the New Policing Agreement*

**The AMM recommends providing adequate provincial funding to support effective policing while maintaining cost-efficient service delivery.**

The growing pressures on municipal budgets and the rising costs of police services require sufficient investment by the Province as the Federal-Provincial Agreements for RCMP services takes effect on April 1, 2012. The AMM appreciates provincial communications throughout the negotiations, and is pleased that the new agreement incorporates more accountability mechanisms for the costs of police services. Since policing is one of the fastest growing areas of expenditure in municipalities across the country, the cost of policing has been a key concern for the AMM. As well, municipalities are pleased that they will have input on the level of service provided to their communities in terms of staff and detachment resources.

### *By-Law Enforcement*

**The AMM recommends allocating resources to carry out the recommendations of the By-law Enforcement Working Group to reduce municipal enforcement costs and ensure municipalities can achieve compliance more effectively.**

The AMM is pleased with the provincial commitment to address by-law enforcement issues through an interdepartmental working group with the AMM. In some cases, the problem is a lack of understanding of a complex legal process, although municipalities also have a limited amount of authority. Additional mechanisms such as restricting the issue of vehicle or driver insurance for residents with unpaid parking tickets would improve the ability of municipalities to collect these outstanding fines. Measures to improve by-law enforcement will reduce backlog in the courts as well as municipal legal costs, and it is in the best interests of all Manitobans that their municipal by-laws are enforceable.

## *Traffic Control at Motor Vehicle Accident Scenes and False Alarms*

**The AMM recommends establishing provincial funding or mechanisms to provide compensation to municipalities for traffic control at accident scenes and for responding to false alarms.**

While responsibility for traffic control for motor vehicle accidents technically rests with the RCMP, since they are not always available to remain on the scene municipal firefighters often provide this important service. The costs associated with traffic control and responding to false alarms are significant, particularly in municipalities where major highways and high traffic volumes are present. As a result, structured training and compensation mechanisms should be in place to recognize the contribution made by municipal fire departments to this aspect of emergency response. Manitoba Public Insurance (MPIC) maintains that it cannot provide compensation for traffic control under the current legislation, although both the Province and the RCMP have acknowledged it not a municipal responsibility. Funding from MPIC or the Province should therefore be established to reimburse municipalities for traffic control and false alarms.