



ASSOCIATION OF
MANITOBA
MUNICIPALITIES

Meeting with the Honourable Ralph Eichler
Minister of Agriculture

2017

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Introduction

- The Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) appreciates the opportunity to meet with Minister Ralph Eichler and representatives of the Department of Agriculture.
- The AMM encourages the Province of Manitoba to consider municipal concerns as well as the effects of funding decisions on local communities throughout the budget process.
- This document outlines the AMM's position and recommendations on a number of important municipal issues relevant to the Agriculture portfolio.

Priority Issues

1) Support for ALUS

The AMM recommends the government:

❖ ***Consult with the AMM when implementing a province-wide program with Manitoba Sustainable Development based on the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) model to help reduce flooding and improve water management.***

- As water management affects all municipalities, AMM members overwhelmingly support improvements to water quality in Manitoba's lakes and waterways.
- Ecological goods and services initiatives such as Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) not only help to improve water quality, they also provide other environmental benefits such as wetland and riparian area protection.
- ALUS is an incentive-based model that recognizes the role of farmers in environmental management, and it has proven very successful in Nova Scotia, where it is a provincial policy, as well as in Ontario and Alberta.
- The AMM welcomes the provincial government's commitment to implement this model as per the Ministerial mandate letters.
- In Manitoba, however, effective watershed management and retention of wetland benefits demand financial support and incentives from the Province of Manitoba so that any new processes can be properly implemented and fully observed in practice.
- Regulations should not be implemented without accompanying provincial funding.
- Therefore, the AMM urges the Province of Manitoba to consult with individual and affected municipalities on watershed-based planning and drainage initiatives and continue the dialogue with our organization throughout the development of any subsequent regulations that affect water management in Manitoba.

2) Rural Veterinary Task Force Report

The AMM recommends the government:

- ❖ *Review the funding of rural veterinary boards with consideration of rising operating and capital costs; and*
 - ❖ *Provide an update on the Rural Veterinary Task Force's report.*
- During the Rural Veterinary Task Force's consultations, the AMM appealed for an increase in operating grants for Veterinary Service Districts (VSD), the reinstatement of provincial infrastructure grants to veterinary clinics, and the re-evaluation of the funding formula for rural veterinary boards.
 - As VSDs were created for the purpose of attracting veterinarians to rural Manitoba, the AMM hopes the Task Force's recommendations will address this relatively stagnant level of funding as it is vital for attracting and retaining veterinarians in local communities.
 - Moreover, the discontinuation of Veterinary Technical Enhancement Grants in 2012 has exacerbated these trends.
 - Therefore, it is essential that the provincial government does not download any additional responsibilities or financial costs onto VSDs and municipalities.
 - The VSD funding formula should be reviewed as 20 out of 27 VSDs meet or exceed the \$19,000 maximum threshold for matching provincial funding on municipal contributions. Some clinics regularly incur costs of upwards of \$45,000 on an annual basis.
 - The AMM would appreciate to be briefed on the Task Force's Report, and hopes its recommendations will help leverage additional funding to support veterinary services throughout Manitoba.

3) Noxious Weeds

The AMM recommends the government:

- ❖ *Formalize the process to review tier classifications of noxious weeds in consultation with the AMM; and*
 - ❖ *Support Manitoba Infrastructure to maximize roadside maintenance budgets to ensure control of weed growth along provincial infrastructure.*
- The spread of noxious weeds is an area of shared concern between municipalities and the Province of Manitoba.
 - Therefore, the AMM appreciates the Department of Agriculture's willingness to move ahead with regulatory changes that aim to modernize *The Noxious Weeds Act* while consulting with local communities and other affected stakeholders.
 - Proposed regulatory changes include moving the categorization of noxious weeds into the regulations and out of the *Act*, which should simplify the process that modifies noxious weeds tier classifications when problems arise.
 - The AMM also welcomes the Province of Manitoba's commitment to develop a formal process and proactively consult with stakeholders on any possible category or tier changes.
 - In addition, the AMM continues to urge the provincial government to recognize its responsibility to adequately control weed growth along provincial infrastructure in order to minimize the spread of noxious weeds.
 - It is essential that roadside maintenance budgets are maximized to ensure control of weed growth along provincial highways, roads and ditches.

4) Farmland Beaver Damage Control Program

The AMM recommends the government:

- ❖ ***Ensure funding will continue to be provided to municipalities to manage nuisance beavers.***
 - The potential damage to local infrastructure and associated repair costs due to beaver activity as well as the potential risks of changes in water flow are well understood by municipalities and the Province of Manitoba.
 - On an annual basis, nuisance beaver management can cost a municipality tens of thousands of dollars while indirectly damage can create additional issues such as access for producers, school buses and emergency services.
 - Currently, the *Farmland Beaver Damage Control Program* is funded under *Growing Forward 2*, a joint federal-provincial initiative to advance the agriculture industry.
 - As *Growing Forward 2* will expire in March 2018, the AMM urges the Province of Manitoba to ensure funding will continue to be provided to municipalities to manage nuisance beavers.

Appendix A – Active Resolutions

AMM Resolution #44-2015 *Standing Policy

Topic: Funding for Problem Beavers

Sponsor(s): Rossburn Municipality (Midwestern District)

Department(s): Manitoba Agriculture

WHEREAS Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship is responsible for the control of deer, moose, bear, birds, fish, coyotes, wolves, etc. and was previously responsible for problem beavers, before downloading responsibility on municipalities and providing minimal compensation for beaver control;

AND WHEREAS the control of beaver activity places a substantial strain on a municipality's human and financial resources and can cause serious damages to infrastructure;

AND WHEREAS Manitoba Conservation in part manages beaver populations by requiring trapping licenses and permits;

AND WHEREAS ongoing costs associated with trapping beavers and removal of dams are beyond the resources of some municipalities;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to cost share 50/50 the expenses for removal of beaver dams and cleanout of blocked culverts on municipal property;

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Province of Manitoba assumes all costs associated with the removal of problem beavers and dams on Crown Lands;

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to take back responsibility for the control of problem beavers.

AMM Resolution #16-2013

Topic: Control of Problem Beavers

Sponsor(s): RM of Reynolds (Eastern District)

Department(s): Manitoba Agriculture

WHEREAS Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship is responsible for control of deer, moose, bear, birds, fish, coyotes, wolves, etc., and was previously responsible for problem beaver, before downloading responsibility on municipalities and providing minimal compensation for trapped beaver;

AND WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba has rewritten the program to prepay the reimbursement with only a guesstimate of how many beaver will need to be trapped;

AND WHEREAS the new program will create a costly administrative demand on staff plus additional expenses for special financial reporting for funds expended which must be prepared by an accountant certified to practice in Manitoba;

AND WHEREAS any funds not used must be returned to the Province;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to take back responsibility for control of problem beavers.

AMM Resolution #32-2013

Topic: Modernize Education Funding

Sponsor(s): RM of Edward (Western District)

Department(s): *Manitoba Education and Training, Manitoba Agriculture

WHEREAS farmers in rural Manitoba have lobbied and fought for fairness when it comes to the education tax system;

AND WHEREAS the 2013 Budget would see the rebate capped at \$5,000, which would unfairly discriminate against producers with a larger land base, causing greater hardship;

AND WHEREAS the current education tax system is clearly dysfunctional and antiquated, in need of restructuring so that the cost of education is funded fairly;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to repeal the \$5,000 cap on the Farmland School Tax Rebate immediately;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Province of Manitoba work to create a new, modernized model for how education funding is achieved.

AMM Resolution #39-2013 *Standing Policy

Topic: Infrastructure Grants for Veterinary Clinics

Sponsor(s): RM of Wallace (Western District)

Department(s): Manitoba Agriculture

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba has ceased providing infrastructure grants to provincially funded veterinary clinics;

AND WHEREAS provincially funded veterinary clinics provide basic care to protect the health of food producing herds in rural Manitoba;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to continue to provide infrastructure grants to provincially funded veterinary clinics.

AMM Resolution #09-2011

Topic: Rural Veterinary Board Funding

Sponsor(s): RM of Coldwell (Interlake District)

Department(s): Manitoba Agriculture

WHEREAS funding from the Province of Manitoba for rural veterinary boards has remained the same since at least 1989;

AND WHEREAS the cost of living and the cost of providing these services has increased substantially;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to re-evaluate the funding formula for rural veterinary boards annually or bi-annually to better reflect the actual cost of delivering service.

AMM Resolution #44-2011

Topic: Control of Aggressive Domestic Animals

Sponsor(s): Town of Roblin (Parkland District)

Department(s): Manitoba Agriculture

WHEREAS there is growing concern in Manitoba about the safety of our citizens due to aggressive domestic animals;

AND WHEREAS The Animal Liability Act makes the owner of livestock liable for damages or harm that the animal causes to a person or to property;

AND WHEREAS other provincial jurisdictions have legislation in place to deal with aggressive or dangerous animals, such as Alberta's 'The Dangerous Dog Act' or Ontario's 'The Dog Owners' Liability Act'.

AND WHEREAS The Animal Liability Act does not apply to a domestic animal biting a person or another domestic animal;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to impose more effective control measures to deal with aggressive or dangerous domestic animals along with enforceable penalties for offences.

AMM Resolution #03-2010

Topic: Ecological Goods and Services Policy

Sponsor(s): RM of Blanshard (Midwestern District)

Department(s): Manitoba Agriculture

WHEREAS there is a precedent for reimbursing landowners for societal benefits stemming from ecological goods and services derived from their property;

AND WHEREAS a number of pilot projects such as ALUS in the RM of Blanshard indicate strong landowner support of such programs;

AND WHEREAS reviews of these pilot projects have indicated the benefits generated significantly outweighed the costs;

AND WHEREAS Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives is leading an interdepartmental working group tasked with creating a made-in-Manitoba Ecological Goods and Services policy;

AND WHEREAS a stakeholder knowledge group has been struck to assist the interdepartmental group;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM actively participate as a member of the stakeholder knowledge group;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to implement an Ecological Goods and Services Policy for Manitoba.

AMM Resolution #12-2007

Topic: Increase to Operating Grants for Veterinary Services

Sponsor(s): RM of Ste. Rose (Parkland District)

Department(s): Manitoba Agriculture

WHEREAS Veterinary Service Districts in Manitoba may receive an operating grant of \$19,000 from the Province of Manitoba on a yearly basis;

AND WHEREAS the cost of maintaining a Veterinary District is ever increasing with municipal levies surpassing the provincial contribution;

AND WHEREAS the cost of operating veterinary clinics has increased significantly;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba for an increase in operating grants to Veterinary Service Districts in the amount equal to municipal levies