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January 27, 2020

Disabilities Issues Office (DIO)
630-240 Graham Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0J7
Via email: access@gov.mb.ca

REQUEST: The AMM requests that this submission be presented in full to the Accessibility Advisory Council (AAC)

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM), which represents all of Manitoba's 137 municipalities, I would like to provide some comments regarding the AAC's Discussion Paper on the proposed accessibility standard for the Design of Public Spaces (DoPS).

Firstly, the AMM would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its support for greater accessibility for all Manitobans. We believe designing accessible and inclusive public spaces is important to ensuring people with disabilities can participate in public life and contribute to the vibrancy of local communities – however, ensuring this becomes reality requires a true partnership based on funding provided by the provincial government to municipalities and other community-based stakeholders.

Since 2011, the AMM has repeatedly voiced concerns over the lack of provincial funding to municipalities to support the effective implementation of accessibility standards; in fact, to date no funding has been made available to municipalities to help implement any of the accessibility standards. Local communities in Manitoba cannot be expected to shoulder compliance costs and administrative burdens alone. These concerns have been repeatedly conveyed to the AAC and the Minister of Families as well as to the independent reviewer of the *Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)* legislation. For your review, please see the enclosed copy of AMM Resolution #41-2017, which was passed with overwhelming support at our annual Convention in November 2017 by more than 800 mayors, reeves, councillors and municipal administrators from across Manitoba.

In regards to the proposed DoPS accessibility standard specifically, the AMM encourages the AAC to provide greater clarity about the proposed standard's scope and intent. In particular, the terms 'redeveloped' (Section 1.2.1) and 'modifications' (Section 1.1.1) do not provide clear direction when trying to ascertain how they relate to existing public spaces. For instance, are all



modifications to an existing public space considered to fall under the scope of this proposed standard or is there a particular threshold for determining when the standard may apply? Additionally, what is deemed to be “significant” (1.9.20) when changes are planned? For comparative purposes, Ontario’s Design of Public Spaces Accessibility Standard applies to only ‘major’ changes to existing public spaces. The AMM believes the definition for ‘redevelopment’ (1.9.20) should be expanded to clarify its application while the term ‘modifications’ should also be defined to promote greater understanding of the scope and intent of the standard.

Additionally, in regards to maintenance and snow clearing operations (Section 3), ensuring paths of travel are accessible at all times is problematic as most municipalities conduct these types operations based on a priority-tiered basis. The section as outlined may create an expectation that recreation trails and pathways should be cleared following a snowfall immediately and/or at the same time snow is being cleared from major roadways or highways. Moreover, municipalities are already often called upon to bear greater financial burdens of ongoing trail maintenance as there is currently no annual funding provided by the Province of Manitoba to maintain recreation trails (e.g., TransCanada Trail); in fact, several community trail groups must receive financial assistance and they rely on small grants to function. Therefore, Section 3 as outlined does not take into account existing operational and financial realities and should be revised to better correspond with municipal maintenance and snow clearing operations.

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. The AMM will continue to advocate for greater accessibility through reasonable standards and practical regulations.

Sincerely,



Denys Volkov
Executive Director

cc: The Honourable Heather Stefanson, Minister of Families
Deputy Minister John Leggat, Manitoba Families
Jim Baker, Chairperson, Accessibility Advisory Council

