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Committees Branch
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Room 251, 450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8
Via email: committees@leg.gov.mb.ca

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM), I am writing to provide some comments regarding *Bill 34: The Police Services Amendment Act*.

Firstly, the AMM appreciates the opportunity to deliver remarks alongside the Hon. Kelvin Goertzen, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, at the upcoming May 3rd provincial announcement regarding Community Safety Officers (CSOs). Policing and public safety are among the fastest-growing expenses for municipalities and now exceed 20 per cent of spending. Therefore, the proposed amendments to *The Police Services Amendment Act* will provide some municipalities with additional options to enhance and improve safety in their communities in a manner that better aligns with their local needs.

As the AMM makes it a priority to tour the province and meet one-on-one with all municipal Councils, it is evident that public safety and crime prevention are major priorities. For example, we continue to hear municipal concerns regarding reduced visibility of RCMP officers throughout their communities. This is primarily due to increased administrative-type work and having to spend hours in a courtroom due to repeat offenders. In order to properly address local public safety priorities and help local governments manage increasing public safety costs, the AMM has long called on the Manitoba government to provide greater flexibility to move some enforcement and social functions from police forces to other authorities with appropriate funding support.

Additionally, the AMM has been urging the provincial government for more than ten years to grant local Councils enabling authority to enforce specific sections of *The Highway Traffic Act*, with the aim of safeguarding municipal infrastructure. During certain periods of the year, weight restrictions are in place on provincial highways leading to heavy trucks being diverted onto municipal roads which causes significant damage and costly municipal infrastructure repairs. The proposed amendments will now enable municipalities and provide an option to enforce road weight restrictions. Thus, the AMM wishes to thank the Manitoba government for listening to the concerns raised by our organization and municipalities.

While we recognize that not all municipalities have a CSO or can afford a CSO, having additional tools in the enforcement toolbox is valuable in addressing public safety challenges. Expanding enforcement options and offering new voluntary programs will enable municipalities to determine whether such initiatives can effectively address the unique needs of their communities. However, the cost of implementing a CSO program is cost prohibitive for many of our members, particularly smaller municipalities. Therefore, it is vital that the Province of Manitoba expand CSO training opportunities and provide financial assistance to help offset costs should a municipality choose to participate in this program. For municipalities that have already joined the CSO program, it is crucial that the Province invest in regional training opportunities. By offering training closer to local communities, more municipalities will have the chance to participate and send their staff for CSO training. This approach will also help reduce expenses associated with staff travel, lodging and training costs overall. Finally, the AMM urges the Province to review the training program and ensure that program content aligns with the requirements of municipalities.

Moving forward, the AMM stands ready to continue our discussions with Manitoba Justice and further work in partnership with the Province of Manitoba. While we acknowledge that progress has been made with this positive first step, we firmly believe that additional measures are necessary to prevent any potential downloading of responsibilities from the Province to municipalities. As local Councils wish to see innovative solutions to better protect their communities, it is essential to reinforce the provincial-municipal partnership, so that all 137 municipalities can have access to a range of enforcement options beyond the CSO program.

With a significant number of newly elected officials taking office after the October general election, we see an opportune moment to provide municipalities with a clear and concise handbook that can guide their decision-making around enforcement approaches. The development of this handbook will not only promote a consistent approach throughout Manitoba but also ensure that every corner of Manitoba receives the same high-quality information. Thus, the AMM recommends that Manitoba Justice and Manitoba Municipal Relations work together to develop a standardized handbook for enforcement in partnership with our organization. In addition, the AMM would encourage more dialogue with our members around the CSO program and related issues, such as training, equipment, and overall responsibilities. We recommend that a dedicated webinar be organized to enhance clarity and provide an opportunity for municipal feedback and discussion.

Finally, there have been concerns raised regarding gaining access to license plate reading technology through Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI). To address this issue, it is vital to provide municipalities with a designated point of contact within the provincial government who can offer assistance with this matter.



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Thank you for the opportunity to provide these brief comments.

Sincerely,

Denys Volkov
Executive Director

cc: Hon. Kelvin Goertzen, Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Hon. Andrew Smith, Minister of Municipal Relations
Deputy Minister and Deputy Attorney General Jeremy Akerstream, Manitoba Justice
Deputy Minister Bruce Gray, Manitoba Municipal Relations