



December 17, 2014

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship
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AMM Submission RE: Manitoba's Surface Water Management Strategy

On behalf of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) I would like to provide some comments regarding the provincial Surface Water Management Strategy consultation document, released in June 2014.

The AMM is pleased to see the broad scope of the Surface Water Management Strategy, as our members support a comprehensive approach with the Province of Manitoba taking on a leadership role. The AMM is also pleased that the Surface Water Management Strategy is meant to complement many of the recommendations from the 2011 Flood Review and the Lake Manitoba – Lake St. Martin Regulation Review Committee Final Reports.

Some of the action items of particular interest to the AMM concern:

- How Conservation Districts (CDs) will be supported (Action #33 and #34);
- How Ecological Goods and Services (EG&S), and the goal of no-net loss of wetland benefits will be supported, as both help to improve shoreline protection, nutrient reduction, and overall improvement of water quality (Action #7, #8, #12, #17, #18, #19, #46, #47);
- How improved sharing of information with municipalities will be accomplished, whether it is water level information of lakes and rivers or LiDAR data to help with local land use planning (Action #29, #40, #41);
- How drainage regulation and enforcement will be improved (see the AMM submission on the "Towards Sustainable Drainage" consultation document); and
- How surface water management and/or drainage will occur on Crown lands.

The AMM has lobbied for a number of years for increased provincial funding to support the operating costs of CDs due to the important and cost-effective watershed management initiatives they undertake. As a result, we feel CDs will be essential partners in implementing the Surface Water Management Strategy action items, and any new roles and responsibilities must be appropriately supported by provincial funding. As well, input from CDs should be carefully considered as they have significant knowledge about their own local watersheds.

Additionally, AMM members have indicated in the past that they would like to see an EG&S policy, as well as programs that encourage wetland retention or restoration, and Lake Friendly practices. However, it is particularly important to ensure there is a clear and understandable definition of wetland classes, which should be addressed in the provincial wetland strategy (Action #12). Overall, municipalities have recognized that their communities can be affected positively by proactive and coordinated surface water management that assists with flood and drought mitigation, as well as practices to improve water quality.

Another topic often raised by AMM members is their need for timely water level information of nearby water bodies, particularly in emergency situations. The value of geospatial data, particularly LiDAR data, is also well understood by many municipalities, particularly for planning purposes. However, with ever increasing responsibilities, most municipalities require funding partners to collect this kind of data locally.

While the AMM is pleased to see the provincial commitment to 'lead by example on Crown land' (Action #16) "...by minimizing drainage of Crown land, and where appropriate, use this provincial resource to retain water in the watershed to improve drought resiliency, reduce flood risk, improve water quality and support healthy ecosystems." However, in the past a number of AMM members have encouraged the Province of Manitoba to consider allowing drainage to occur on Crown lands where it could provide a benefit.

Finally, the AMM urges the Province of Manitoba to ensure each region of the province has an opportunity to provide feedback on an ongoing basis regarding the Surface Water Management Strategy, as some may have considerations particular to the local watershed and topography. The AMM was pleased to hear Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship has been in contact with municipalities throughout the province that have expressed an interest in the Surface Water Management Strategy, as they can provide valuable input.

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The AMM looks forward to working with the Province of Manitoba and all other stakeholders to continue moving forward with the provincial Surface Water Management Strategy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe Masi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

Joe Masi
Executive Director