

## **Reeve Kam Blight, President AMM Speaking Notes**

### **Welcome/Opening Remarks**

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- Good Morning Everyone, it is great to be here today. Welcome and thank you for joining us.
- As we continue to adapt to this environment, I want to express my gratitude to all municipalities and municipal officials.
- It has been a long year for all of us and for that I am proud of each one of you for your dedication and commitment to your communities, particularly in the face of new challenges due to the ongoing pandemic.
- I want to remind everyone here today that we are all in this together – and as always, the AMM is here to help.
- While I miss meeting in person, I am pleased that we are still able to hold these district meetings virtually for the second year in a row. I am of course hopeful that by this time next year, we will be able to travel to your districts once again in person.
- With that said, despite the pandemic, the AMM has continued to advocate on behalf of all of its members which has resulted in several positive developments over the past year. I am looking forward to providing a more detailed update in my report later on in today's program.
- In the meantime, I'll turn it over to your District Directors to bring greetings.

## Reeve Kam Blight, President AMM Speaking Notes

### AMM Successes & COVID-19 Municipal Support

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- I would like to focus my remarks on several AMM advocacy successes over the past year.

#### **On the federal front:**

- \$106 million was provided to municipalities as part of the Safe Restart Agreement while the Federal Gas Tax Fund transfer was provided up-front to help ease municipal operating finances – we were also pleased to hear the federal government’s plan to double the Gas Tax Fund in 2021/22.
- As many of us have experienced, the economic slowdown has increasingly highlighted the digital divide between communities. Since more Manitobans are working and learning from home while several businesses are shifting to e-commerce, better broadband connectivity is now more critical than ever.
- The AMM along with its partners across the country continued to push the federal government to expedite the roll-out and increase funding to the Universal Broadband Fund, which is now \$2.75 billion thanks to Budget 2021.
- Infrastructure Canada also launched and is now accepting applications under the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings program. The AMM pushed for this program to be made available to support both recreational facilities and to help fund accessibility upgrades.
- Applications are being accepted on an ongoing basis for projects under \$3 million and until July 6, 2021 for projects from \$3-\$25 million.

- And lastly, in direct response to the concerns raised by our members, the AMM welcomed Transport Canada's proposed risk-based approach to amending the federal Grade Crossings Regulations and Grade Crossings Standards as well as an extension to the November 2021 compliance deadline.
- Further details are expected very soon, and we will certainly keep you all informed.

**On the provincial front:**

- Given the ongoing pandemic and in recognition of the financial pressures facing municipalities, the Province of Manitoba in consultation with the AMM has committed to flowing 75% of operating basket funding to municipalities upfront, with the remaining 25% in the fall, for the **second** year in a row.
- Flowing and front-loading these funds will help your municipalities stabilize and proactively respond to challenges posed by COVID-19.
- Additionally, the Province also increased infrastructure investments by an additional \$500 million to help restart Manitoba's economy, including \$50 million under the Manitoba Restart program dedicated to water and wastewater projects.
- While \$10 million was flowed in 2020, the remaining \$40 million will be rolled out throughout the year. The AMM is represented on the Manitoba Water Services Board which is reviewing all applications.
- On May 27<sup>th</sup>, Manitoba Infrastructure formally announced the updated fee-for-service agreements totaling \$3 million for municipalities. The first two priorities focus on gravel road maintenance and noxious weed control.
- Increased provincial funding will certainly help local Councils enhance service delivery within their communities through these voluntary agreements while

compensation rates have been updated to align more with actual costs. The AMM wishes to thank Minister Schuler and the department for a collaborative process.

- On April 14<sup>th</sup>, the Province announced a new \$20 million endowment fund that will provide grants up to \$50,000 to municipalities and other organizations to eliminate accessibility barriers, which AMM has been advocating for over 10 years. More information about this new fund is expected in the coming months.

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- As you can see, the pandemic has not slowed us down. We have redoubled our advocacy efforts and have managed to move several files forward during these challenging times.
- We are also pushing hard on the paramedic self-regulation file to ensure the newly established framework does not negatively impact volunteerism in local communities.
- We have met with all parties involved several times to discuss easing financial and administrative burdens created by the regulations. We will certainly keep you all posted as new information becomes available.
- I will now pass it over to Vice-President Chris Ewen for his report.
- Thank you very much.

## **Mayor Chris Ewen, Vice-President AMM Speaking Notes**

### **Modernizing Education Funding / Education Property Tax Phase-Out**

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- Hello Everyone, I have really been looking forward to today's meeting and having the opportunity to speak to you in my new role as Vice-President.
- Even though I am new to this position, as the Mayor of the RM of Ritchot, I have seen first-hand how challenging it can be to juggle day-to-day municipal duties coupled with a global pandemic.
- In my remarks, I would like to focus on one aspect of Budget 2021 – the provincial commitment to phase-out education property taxes.
- The AMM welcomed this announcement since a new sustainable long-term funding model to reduce school division reliance on property taxes is long overdue.
- The Province will reduce education property taxes by 50% for residential and farm property owners over the next two years – 25% this year and 25% next year.
- Please be assured that the Province has committed to providing an explanatory insert in all tax bills mailed out to ratepayers. This insert will outline instructions along with contact information as the Province has committed to fielding all questions related to this initiative.
- While this announcement is still relatively new, we know some concerns have been raised regarding the provincial decision to mail out cheques rather than adjusting taxation bills.

- Let me be clear – we hear your concerns, and we will continue to bring them forward to departmental staff and the minister and ensure that the process for subsequent years follows a more streamlined approach.
- *Manitoba Municipal Relations is currently preparing a comprehensive FAQ document regarding this initiative to respond to questions and concerns raised by AMM members – so please stay tuned for this resource.*
- ***\*Alternative line (depending on timing):** Manitoba Municipal Relations recently published a comprehensive FAQ document regarding this initiative to respond to questions and concerns raised by AMM members. It is now available on the MMO portal, so please take the time to review this new resource.*
- As part of the ongoing discussions, the AMM continues to also appeal for the \$5,000 cap on the Farmland School Tax rebate to be lifted as it negatively impacts agricultural producers and the vibrancy of local communities.
- When the rebate was first introduced, there was no cap in place.
- We also continue to call on the provincial government to provide an update on the plan to phase out education property taxes **in its entirety**.
- As the phase out could potentially take up to ten years, it is vital that a plan to ensure the needs of taxpayers and services provided through property taxation is developed in close consultation with municipalities.
- The government has announced that they plan to have a new educational system in place by July 2022, so the AMM will work hard to have renewed discussions with departmental staff to ensure any additional changes are reflective of municipal concerns.
- Thank you very much for your attention.

## Reeve Brad Saluk, Vice-President AMM Speaking Notes

### Bill 37

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- Hi everyone, I have really been looking forward to today. It is really great to see everyone, albeit virtually.
- I would like to provide an update on our advocacy related to Bill 37: *The Planning Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act*, which recently passed Third Reading.
- The AMM has been closely monitoring Bill 37, as this legislation will significantly impact municipalities and re-shape land-use planning in our province.
- Let me be clear, the AMM understands that private sector development plays a significant role in job creation and building sustainable local communities here in Manitoba.
- We continue to support and welcome an approach that fosters economic development and streamlines approvals for growth projects through efficient and transparent processes at the municipal level.
- We have also appreciated the opportunity to participate in the multi-stakeholder Bill 37 Working Group to bring forward and discuss municipal concerns.
- Some of those concerns have been addressed and so we do want to give credit where credit is due.
- Due to our advocacy efforts, the Province supported amendments that reduced a lengthy window for appeals from 90 days to 14 days, mandated a three-year review of the legislation, and granted the right for municipalities to be

consulted if new any regional planning districts are to be created in the future. Sections related to conditional use appeals were also removed.

- These amendments are certainly positive, but our position has fundamentally remained the same from the beginning.
- During our presentation to the legislative committee, we outlined why the Manitoba Government should follow the examples set by other provinces by specifying the scope and parameters of appeals in legislation rather than regulation.
- Overall, it is vital that standards are designed to try to keep the process speedy, fair and most of all, democratically respectful.
- Especially because we know that Ontario initially made appeals too easy, which led to a massive backlog which resulted in delays of eighteen months or even two years to get a hearing.
- Over time, the Ontario government publicly admitted the backlog was holding up approvals on tens of thousands of new homes. We don't want to see this repeated here in Manitoba.
- We want to see the government require anyone filing an appeal to state their reason for appealing in the filing, limit permissible grounds and the scope for appeals, and clarify accountability measures in the event that delays in hearings or closing appeals create a backlog.
- The argument from the beginning is that Bills 48 and 37 were simply a matter of copying best practices from other provinces.
- We are committed to ensuring the needs and concerns of our members are addressed by the provincial government, so our efforts moving forward will focus on the Bill 37 Working Group and discussions with the Minister's office



and department to achieve sound regulations and other relevant legislation that will limit the scope of appeals and keep more power in the hands of elected Councils where it belongs.

- Thank you very much for your attention.