

# ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA MUNICIPALITIES POSITION PAPER

MINISTER OF FAMILIES | ROCHELLE SQUIRES | APRIL 12, 2021



## ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA MUNICIPALITIES

The AMM appreciates the opportunity to meet with Minister Rochelle Squires and representatives of Manitoba Families.

The AMM encourages the Province 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 Families portfolio.

### PRIORITY ITEMS:

**ACCESSIBILITY  
LEGISLATION AND  
STANDARDS**

**HOUSING IN  
MANITOBA**

### **PARTNERS IN GROWTH**

The AMM looks forward to working with the Province of Manitoba to strengthen provincial-municipal growth and partnership opportunities.

## Priority Item #1

### Accessibility Legislation and Standards

The AMM recommends the government:

✓ ***Reduce administrative and financial burdens as a result of the Accessibility for Manitoba (AMA) Act and corresponding standards.***

- The AMM supports a barrier-free Manitoba that is accessible and inclusive for all through proactive identification, removal and prevention of accessibility barriers.
- Since 2011, the AMM has voiced concerns over the lack of provincial funding to municipalities to support effective implementation of the AMA standards.
- These concerns can be found in AMM's official submissions regarding the proposed accessibility standards, which can all be found on the AMM website.
- While the AMM welcomes the establishment of quarterly meetings with departmental staff to discuss accessibility standards and compliance requirements, we continue to call on the provincial government to develop a compliance framework that adopts a collaborative approach rather than sanctioning municipalities into compliance.
- Designing an accessible Manitoba involves collaborative municipal-provincial support. It is vital that costs are not financially downloaded and regulatory changes do not negatively impact municipalities.
- Meanwhile, it is essential that the Accessibility Advisory Council be mindful of the implications of its recommendations on stakeholders and the Manitoba Accessibility Office (MAO) provide resources responsive to the needs of local communities.
- We urge the Province to recognize the unique needs of municipalities by providing financial and resource support to help identify, prevent, and remove barriers to accessibility within local communities.
- Given the ongoing pandemic and significant financial pressures municipalities are facing, the AMM urges Manitoba Families to reduce the administrative and financial burdens on municipalities by implementing reasonable standards and regulations.
- Moreover, we strongly encourage the department to continue consulting with the AMM to ensure a smooth transition process once the accessibility compliance framework is operationalized.

## Priority Item #2

### Housing in Manitoba

The AMM recommends the government:

✓ ***Consult with the AMM on how municipalities can leverage federal funding with the Province to address the need of affordable housing in local communities.***

- A strong housing system is essential to community and economic growth, as every dollar invested in Canadian housing earns \$1.40 in GDP.
- Currently, there is a significant gap between housing options available and housing needs in Manitoba. While social and rental housing are viable options, the availability of these options falls short of supply and lack affordability, especially in rural communities.
- Moreover, there is an inherit need for assisted and supportive living opportunities as the number of seniors in Canada is expected to double over the next 25 years.
- As municipalities look to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be critical to explore supportive and affordable options to promote aging in place.
- In June 2019, the AMM welcomed the 10-year, \$450.8 million Housing Agreement announced by the federal and provincial governments.
- Investments in affordable housing presents fiscal value as it will help lower health care costs by allowing the most vulnerable to remain in their communities.
- As the COVID-19 pandemic has certainly heightened the need for affordable and accessible housing options, the AMM urges the Province to expedite housing options across Manitoba through the 10-year housing agreement and provide an update on the status of this agreement.
- The AMM also encourages the provincial government to kick-start discussions on how a partnership could be formed under the auspices of the National Housing Co-Investment Fund (NHCF) to move projects forward in local communities.
- We encourage the Province to develop partnerships with local services to help establish community-based housing strategies and better assist and educate municipalities on the benefits of the Age-Friendly communities initiative.

## Appendix – AMM Active Resolutions

### **AMM Resolution #41-2017**

#### **Topic: Accessibility Legislation & Standards**

Sponsor(s): Municipality of Russell-Binscarth (Midwestern District)

Department(s): Manitoba Families

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba has mandated that municipalities must create an Accessibility Plan in accordance with the *Accessibility for Manitobans Act* and its corresponding standards; and

WHEREAS the costs associated with developing and implementing an Accessibility Plan are expected to be borne by municipalities; and

WHEREAS the requirement for an Accessibility Plan is just another example of provincial downloading by creating legislation or regulations that impose costs on municipalities without the provision of funding;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to significantly reduce the administrative and financial burdens on municipalities as a result of the *Accessibility for Manitobans Act* and its corresponding standards.

### **AMM Resolution #39-2016**

#### **Topic: Eliminating Municipal Contributions to Income Assistance**

Sponsor(s): City of Thompson (Northern District)

Department(s): Manitoba Families

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba amended *The Manitoba Assistance Act* legislating municipal contribution levels for income assistance; and

WHEREAS as a result of this legislative change municipalities are required to pay annual contributions to the Province of Manitoba for income assistance which is a provincial responsibility; and

WHEREAS the City of Thompson was not in favour of the legislative changes that were enacted which resulted in increased costs for municipalities; and

WHEREAS the downloading of this provincial responsibility to Manitoba municipalities is not fair and equitable;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to amend *The Manitoba Assistance Act* to eliminate the requirement for municipal contributions to income assistance.

### **AMM Resolution #40-2016**

#### **Topic: The Manitoba Assistance Act**

Sponsor(s): RM of Ste. Anne (Eastern District), RM of Ritchot (Eastern District)

Department(s): Manitoba Families

WHEREAS Manitoba municipalities received a letter from Manitoba Employment and Income Assistance, dated January 20, 2016, announcing changes to *The Manitoba Assistance Act*, specifically Section 16.3: Promotion of Employment Opportunities, which states, “Every municipality must identify and promote employment opportunities for recipients of income assistance and general assistance in accordance with the terms of an agreement to be reached between municipalities and the minister”; and

WHEREAS a Memorandum of Understanding was reached in consultation with the AMM which describes municipal obligations, including the requirement to designate a community liaison and provide quarterly activity reports to the government advising of available employment opportunities in municipalities; and

WHEREAS most rural municipalities, particularly those with agricultural communities, have extremely limited employment opportunities; and

WHEREAS municipal boundaries do not necessarily define or factor into an individual's search for employment; and

WHEREAS many municipalities do not have the resources, knowledge and/or qualifications to determine where employment opportunities are available, as the information is more likely available at the provincial government level; and

WHEREAS Manitoba Employment and Income Assistance is a provincial branch dedicated to the development of the workforce and income support as well as employment and income assistance, to which retail sales tax funding is allocated to staff the department and complete the tasks which are now being downloaded to municipalities;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to amend *The Manitoba Assistance Act* to remove the new municipal responsibilities of the designation of community liaisons, collection of data pertaining to employment opportunities and provision of quarterly activity reports to government.



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