



ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA MUNICIPALITIES

POLICY BRIEF – April 20, 2023

| Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services |
| James Teitsma |

The AMM appreciates the opportunity to meet with Minister James Teitsma and representatives of Manitoba Consumer Protection and Government Services. 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 Consumer Protection and Government Services portfolio. The AMM looks forward to working with the Province to strengthen provincial-municipal growth and partnership opportunities.

TOP POLICY IMPLICATIONS



- While the AMM welcomes recent announcements for wastewater and water management projects in Manitoba, demand far outpaces provincial and federal dollars as municipalities have identified more than **\$752 million** to upgrade or construct water and wastewater treatment facilities as well as sewer infrastructure across Manitoba.
- The AMM commends the Province for increasing infrastructure investments, with \$20 million dedicated to water and wastewater projects via the Manitoba Water Services Board.
- Municipalities welcome the services provided via the Manitoba Water Services Board (MWSB). Thus, it is vital that the Province allocate staff and increased funding so that the Board can continue to assist municipalities with water projects in a timely manner.
- Moreover, the growing road and bridge infrastructure deficit is also a concern for all municipalities which translates into a heightened need for continued infrastructure investments from all orders of government.
- As many federal funding programs are over-subscribed and reaching expiration, it is critical that next generation programming is reflective of the needs and demands of municipal Manitoba.

MUNICIPAL PRIORITIES

1. ICIP AND NEXT GENERATION FUNDING

Municipalities manage 60 per cent of Canada's core public infrastructure yet collect less than 10 cents of every tax dollar. The Canadian municipal infrastructure deficit has been estimated at more than \$238 billion for maintenance of both existing and new infrastructure.

AMM is very pleased to participate as a member of the Manitoba Local Consultative Committee to review applications and recommend local priorities for the various streams under ICIP.

The AMM recommends the government:

- ❖ ***Support municipalities by advocating for a dedicated water and wastewater infrastructure funding program at both the federal and provincial levels; and***
- ❖ ***Ensure government services, such as the Manitoba Water Services Board, are fully staffed and financially supported to keep up with local infrastructure priorities.***

TOP POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted many vulnerabilities across municipal Manitoba.
- Perhaps the greatest vulnerability is the heightened digital divide between communities and the need for better broadband access, so all residents have equal access to high-quality Internet.
- While our association welcomed the provincial government's commitment to invest up to \$20 million to increase broadband Internet access in northern Manitoba as well as leverage Manitoba Hydro's dark fibre-optic network to boost connectivity across the province, investments and initiatives aimed at supporting network infrastructure like these are key to economic development.
- Further, the AMM understands that UBF projects are being prioritized with MoU signatory provinces with targeted federal-provincial funds, yet Manitoba is one of two provinces that is not a signatory.
- Broadband connectivity in Manitoba continues to lag behind other parts of the country. It is essential for all orders of government to work together to ensure available funds to support broadband connectivity, including funds under the Universal Broadband Fund (UBF), are fully maximized to support projects in local communities.
- Moreover, cellular network coverage remains sparse in many areas, which not only hinders our competitiveness and potential for growth but also undermines public safety.
- It is critical that the Province of Manitoba facilitate partnerships with cell carriers and other stakeholders to address barriers to investment in rural, remote and northern communities.

MUNICIPAL PRIORITIES

2. ESSENTIAL CELL SERVICE

3. BROADBAND

Manitoba continues to experience some of the slowest Internet download speeds in the country and only 29 per cent of rural residents have access to Internet download speeds between 16 and 25 mbps, compared to near universal access in medium and large urban centres. Reliable broadband will be key to future productivity growth and economic development.

The AMM recommends the government:

- ❖ *Leverage federal funding programs, such as the Universal Broadband Fund (UBF), to expand broadband and cellular programs across Manitoba; and*
- ❖ *Work with municipalities to develop solutions to expand cellular services across Manitoba.*

ACTIVE AMM LABOUR, CONSUMER PROTECTION AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES RESOLUTIONS

AMM Resolution #07-2019: No Unilateral Downloading

AMM Resolution #29-2017: PUB staffing

AMM Resolution #44-2016: FIPPA

AMM Resolution #28-2015: Water and Wastewater Fund

AMM Resolution #05-2014: Municipal Board and Public Utilities Board

AMM Resolution #25-2011: Implement Infrastructure Funding Council Report

AMM Resolution #26-2010: Strategy to Address Municipal Infrastructure Deficit