
Innovation and New Technology

Meeting with Minister Mike Moroz

July 15, 2025



Association of
Manitoba Municipalities

Summary of Municipal Priorities

The AMM appreciates the opportunity to meet with Minister Mike Moroz and representatives of Manitoba Innovation and New Technology. The AMM encourages the provincial government 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 Minister Moroz's portfolio. The AMM looks forward to working with the Province to strengthen provincial-municipal growth and partnership opportunities.

1. Essential Cell Service and Broadband Connectivity

Recommendations:

- ✓ *Leverage federal funding programs like the Universal Broadband Fund (UBF) to collaboratively expand both broadband and cellular services across Manitoba; and*
- ✓ *Develop and implement a provincial connectivity strategy that sets clear targets and timelines to eliminate cellular and broadband service gaps.*

2. Cybersecurity Risk Management

Recommendations:

- ✓ *Collaborate with our organization and municipalities to enhance cybersecurity resilience and support responsible AI readiness; and*
- ✓ *Provide an update on the status and next steps of the provincial AI strategy.*

Essential Service and Broadband Connectivity

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- ✓ ***Leverage federal funding programs like the Universal Broadband Fund (UBF) to collaboratively expand both broadband and cellular services across Manitoba; and***
- ✓ ***Develop and implement a provincial connectivity strategy that sets clear targets and timelines to eliminate cellular and broadband service gaps.***

Insufficient cellular network and broadband coverage continues to impact many areas of Manitoba, posing significant challenges to public safety, economic growth, and regional competitiveness. While recent incidents have further emphasized the urgency of addressing these service gaps, they represent only a small part of a broader, province-wide concern raised by many municipalities.

For example, in June, the RM of St. Laurent raised concerns about intermittent cellular service affecting the ability of local fire departments to receive and respond to emergency calls. While the municipality is prepared to construct new towers to improve coverage, they continue to face barriers, with no telecommunications companies willing to lease space on the infrastructure.

Similarly, in March, the RM of Fisher reported a troubling incident in which residents were unable to contact 911 during a medical emergency due to poor cellular coverage. The inability to access emergency services in critical situations is deeply concerning and unacceptable. These issues are particularly alarming as Manitoba prepares to transition to Next Generation 911 (NG911), while coverage gaps remain widespread across the province.

The AMM supports enhancements to 911 services, but it is imperative that the Province actively engage with telecommunications providers and stakeholders to ensure reliable, province-wide cellular coverage. Ensuring connectivity across all communities is essential to safeguarding public safety and reducing risks to Manitobans.

Further, while the Universal Broadband Fund now totals \$3.225 billion, publicly available data shows that only \$9.6 million has been allocated to Manitoba since the fund's inception. This disparity highlights an ongoing concern that broadband connectivity in Manitoba continues to lag behind other regions, limiting our competitiveness and potential for growth.

While the AMM understands that the UBF application window is closed, it is important to note that project prioritization has historically favoured provinces that have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the federal government. Manitoba is one of only two provinces not to have signed such an agreement. To ensure that available funds, including those from the UBF, are fully leveraged to improve connectivity, it is crucial that all levels of government collaborate closely and work together to maximize investments at the local level.

Cybersecurity Risk Management

Recommendations:

- ✓ ***Collaborate with our organization and municipalities to enhance cybersecurity resilience and support responsible AI readiness; and***
- ✓ ***Provide an update on the status and next steps of the provincial AI strategy.***

In recent years, cybersecurity incidents have increasingly affected municipalities, school divisions, and other public-sector organizations across Manitoba. These events have led to service disruptions, financial losses, and concerns about public trust. Incidents involving cyber fraud, ransomware, and internal vulnerabilities demonstrate that both external and internal threats can have significant impacts on local governments and the communities they serve.

For municipalities, such incidents may compromise critical services, delay emergency response, disrupt financial operations, and expose sensitive information belonging to residents and staff. These risks underscore the importance of continually reviewing cybersecurity policies, enhancing training, and fostering collaboration among municipalities to manage cyber risks effectively.

One recent example involved a data breach of a widely used Student Information System, which led to unauthorized access affecting approximately 80 per cent of Manitoba school divisions. The AMM recognizes the Province's commitment to protecting personal information and addressing emerging threats through policy development and best practices. We would be interested in learning more about any insights or lessons learned from this incident and exploring how governments, law enforcement, and cybersecurity experts might collaborate to strengthen preparedness. Establishing standardized cyber response protocols and frameworks could also contribute to improved resilience across sectors.

Additionally, the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping how organizations across all sectors operate – including how municipalities deliver services, manage data, and engage with citizens. The AMM understands the Province has formed a working group to explore AI applications and develop a provincial strategy. We would appreciate an update on the status of this work, as well as the next steps in establishing a framework that ensures AI is implemented ethically, transparently, and in a way that supports municipal operations. The AMM is also aware of a recent \$2-million provincial AI training initiative for businesses and encourages the Department to work with the Department of Municipal and Northern Relations to develop a similar program to support municipalities in adopting AI responsibly and effectively.