

PLANNING MANITOBA'S CAPITAL REGION

NEXT STEPS

REPORTS AND ISSUES AFFECTING THE REGION

The Manitoba Government has reviewed the Capital Region Review Panel's Final Report. It has done so in light of:

- The 1996 Capital Region Strategy, developed in partnership with the public, the region's 16 municipalities and the Manitoba Round Table on Environment and Economy;
- Public submissions during the Capital Region Review Panel's public consultation process;
- Public comments on the Panel's report;
- Emerging issues such as water quality, infrastructure, and livestock production;
- The final Report and Recommendations from the Consultation on Sustainable Development Implementation (COSDI) Core Group (June 1999); and
- The Drinking Water Advisory Committee Report (November 2000).

These reports and public submissions along with more recent events (described briefly below) have helped shape the Government of Manitoba's view on the next steps in the Capital Region planning process.

CAPITAL REGION STRATEGY - In May 1996, the Province of Manitoba released the Capital Region Strategy. Developed in partnership with the public, the region's 16 municipalities and the Manitoba Round Table on Environment and Economy, this Strategy identified five policy areas (Partnerships, Settlement, Economy, Environment and Resources, and Human Resources), 30 policies, and 200 actions to guide regional decision-making. It was prepared as part of Manitoba's overall Provincial Sustainable Development Strategy.

CAPITAL REGION REVIEW PANEL FINAL REPORT - In June 1998, the Manitoba Government agreed to a recommendation of the Capital Region Committee of elected officials to establish an independent panel to seek community and municipal input, and *"to undertake a review and make recommendations to the government respecting the effectiveness of the existing legislative, policy and procedural framework guiding land use planning and development, and the provision of services in the municipalities in the Capital Region"*. The Capital Region Review Panel delivered its Final Report in December 1999. Subsequently, the Manitoba Government invited public comment on the Panel's report.

The Capital Region Review Panel reported on several weaknesses in the existing legislative, policy and procedural framework guiding land use planning and development, and the provision of services among Capital Region municipalities. The Panel's main recommendation concluded that much of the solution to the region's

problems lay in enacting a statute which would allow municipalities to join together to solve problems. The Panel stated that such an association of municipalities should be voluntary and the Province of Manitoba should play mainly a supportive role. It also made four other recommendations on: statutory consistency, Provincial departmental organization and administration, service-based budgeting and full cost accounting, and municipal costs and revenues.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - Most of the responses received by the Capital Region Review Panel during its public review process, as well as the majority of responses received by the Province on the Report, expressed strong support for some form of regional planning. Respondents also expressed concern with the Panel's proposed exclusion of the Manitoba Government from regional structures. The need for Provincial leadership was a common theme in the submissions. Comments were also received advocating stronger application of *The Provincial Land Use Policies*.

COSDI - The Consultation on Sustainable Development Implementation (COSDI) was launched in 1998 as a multi-stakeholder consultation initiative, "*to consider and make recommendations to government on how Manitoba can best implement Sustainable Development Principles and Guidelines into decision-making, including environmental management, licensing, land use planning, and regulatory processes*".

The COSDI Final Report (June 1999) made 60 recommendations in eight subject areas, including: large area planning, based partially on a consensual multi-stakeholder process, and mandatory municipal planning consistent with the large area plan. The Province accepted the report in June of 2000 and announced its intention to implement its recommendations as a part of its Sustainable Development Strategy.

THE DRINKING WATER ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT - The Drinking Water Advisory Committee Report issued by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health on November 6, 2000, made 29 recommendations to the Province including: a single drinking water coordinating agency, better private well testing, better regulations on semi-public and public water systems, enhanced education, communication and standards in all aspects of Manitoba's drinking water system, and enhanced resources to make the overall system work better.

Recent events regarding water quality illustrate that the wise use of our water resources is a critical public issue. Concerns about water in the Capital Region suggest a need to rethink past development patterns. Some of these problems can be attributed to the amount of growth occurring in the region using private wells and septic fields. Also, significant related issues such as waste management, drainage and flooding must be taken into account in these discussions.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS - Municipalities are facing increasing challenges in funding infrastructure renewal, highlighting the urgent need to make better land use decisions which will minimize the need to extend that servicing base. Urban centres in particular have pointed to the growing infrastructure deficit and the need for more strategic action on the part of all governments to address this issue.

While the City of Winnipeg has about 60% of Manitoba's population, it has experienced slow growth over the last decade or more. At the same time, some municipalities in the Capital Region have grown quite rapidly. For Winnipeg, the problem has been compounded by the need to maintain old infrastructure and by the decline of some housing stock, particularly in the inner city.

While some peripheral development may not be problematic and in some cases may even be desirable, stronger planning measures may be needed to encourage better use of the region's existing land, resources and infrastructure.

THE PROVINCIAL PERSPECTIVE - The Manitoba Government concurs that the regional issues cited by the Capital Region Review Panel merit attention. It also agrees that municipalities have an extremely important contribution to make in strengthening the region. However, the Panel's conclusion that "*primary responsibility for advancement of regional thinking is best left to the voluntary initiative of the municipal governments within the Region*" (p. 74), is considered by the Province to be only one part of the solution. Also key will be forging strong and stable partnerships among governments, while also instituting an effective, policy and decision-making framework.

In light of the issues noted above, the Government of Manitoba believes maximizing the use of existing public infrastructure and ensuring a safe water supply are of critical importance. Efficient use of existing infrastructure will assist in ensuring safe, healthy and economically sustainable growth within the region.

The Province has constitutional responsibilities for land management, municipalities, resources and the environment. It also contributes financially to infrastructure, educational and health services, certain municipal services, and a number of economic development initiatives. Ensuring a safe, healthy, prosperous and efficient Capital Region is important to Manitoba as a whole and is a significant Provincial interest. The Manitoba Government also believes that it is vital to ensure that Manitoba's capital city, Winnipeg, must be strong and vibrant and should grow in harmony with its neighbouring municipalities.

The Manitoba Government believes that Provincial leadership is required to address inter-jurisdictional issues and to ensure that Manitoba's Capital Region is competitive with other Canadian urban-centered regions like Edmonton, Calgary and Ottawa. The Manitoba Government also believes that effective land use policies for the Capital Region will support and encourage a strong region, a strong capital city and a strong downtown Winnipeg. Dealing co-operatively on regional issues will provide a basis for citizens and leaders to work together towards a common vision. Through a strengthened regional partnership, new directions can be defined which will enhance the region's future prospects and meet the priorities of its citizens.

This *Next Steps* paper has been organized into three broad areas, under which the major issues affecting the Capital Region are discussed:

- **Effective Regional Planning**
- **Planning For A Sustainable Region**
- **Regional Co-operation**

The Government of Manitoba believes that the ten Actions described in the following pages will be useful in moving towards co-operative solutions in the region.