
PLANNING MANITOBA'S
CAPITAL REGION

NEXT STEPS



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government of Manitoba has a strong commitment to the Capital Region. The Province has responsibility for land management, municipal government, resources and the environment. It also contributes financially to infrastructure, educational and health services, some 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.

Recent events regarding water quality illustrate that the wise use of our water resources is also critical. This was recently highlighted by the tragic events in Walkerton, Ontario, but water quality issues also affect communities and individual residences in Manitoba. The Province concurs with the Drinking Water Advisory Committee, that a high level of water quality should be a principal consideration in any discussions of development planning. The Province is concerned about the reliance on private wells and septic fields in the region. Also, the significant issues associated with waste management, drainage and flooding have been highlighted by many citizens and municipalities and must be an important part of regional planning discussions.

There has been an uneven pattern of development over the last decade which does not foster smart growth, nor the best and most efficient use of available resources. The City of Winnipeg is the core of the Capital Region and contains over half of Manitoba's population. It has experienced slow growth over the last decade or more. At the same time, almost all municipalities in the Capital Region outside Winnipeg have experienced growth and tax base increases. The Province and municipalities believe that making the most effective use of existing infrastructure and resources is of critical importance.

In the broader planning context, there have been concerns expressed that Manitoba's *Provincial Land Use Policies* require strengthening, that their application needs to be broadened, and that they must be applied diligently and consistently.

Some of the issues associated with development in the Capital Region have occurred because planning authorities (municipalities, planning districts and the Province) have not always considered development in the larger regional context. Many issues are inter-municipal in nature (transportation, drainage, environment, resources, etc.), and often development in one municipality impacts on another. It makes the most sense to review land development with a regional perspective in mind.

For a city and its surrounding region to grow together, there must be a recognition of equity issues across various boundaries. Growing inequalities, whether they are reflected in levels of education, income, basic services, or matters of health and safety, do not foster consistent prosperity. That is why the Province began the process of strengthening Winnipeg and the region with a new approach to revitalizing Winnipeg's inner city. The *Neighbourhoods Alive!* community development programs have begun the process of rebuilding some inner city neighbourhoods, through education, recreation, and support for families and community organizations. This will be a long process, but the community-based plans that will be developed now in the inner city will not only enable strong neighbourhoods to be built over time, but will be a part of a Capital Region which speaks a common language of equity and growth.

The Province's Framework for Action - It is the Government's view and the view of many municipalities, that Provincial leadership and local co-operation are needed to effectively address this broad range of issues challenging the region.

Accordingly and in consultation with municipalities and the public, the Province will immediately begin the process of developing planning policies that will better address the issues facing the Capital Region. These policies are expected to be more detailed than the current *Provincial Land Use Policies*, forming in effect, a strategic regional policy plan. This plan will provide guidance and context for the more detailed municipal or planning district development plans. Eventually, municipal and planning district development plans will be consistent with this new regional planning framework.

This regional planning exercise will facilitate a more efficient use of the region's finite resources. It will enable the Province and municipalities to more effectively improve the health and quality of life of a significant proportion of Manitoba's citizens.

More specifically, the following 10-point action plan summarizes the next steps:

1. The Province will take the lead in developing planning policies that better address the growth management issues facing the Capital Region .
2. The Province will appoint a Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC) to assist in stimulating public discussion and to provide advice on regional planning policies. RPAC membership will represent regional interests. Public participation in the process will be encouraged.
3. The Province will dedicate professional planning staff whose responsibilities will be to deal specifically with the Capital Region.
4. The Province will diligently apply *The Provincial Land Use Policies* and begin a review process with a view towards enhancing the Policies and extending their application province-wide.

5. The Province will undertake a review of the statutes governing planning in Manitoba with a view towards modernizing and streamlining legislation.
6. The Province will develop and maintain common databases containing information on a wide range of topics related to the Capital Region and will provide public access to the information. The Province will also undertake research to provide additional data where necessary to assist in defining regional issues and their scope, and to indicate potential solutions. Such research may cover areas such as: groundwater / water quality, septic fields, lot availability / demand, updated population analysis, and developmental cost benefit analyses.
7. The Province will give priority to maximizing the use of existing infrastructure before approving developments which require new infrastructure. The Province will also review its current approval processes and regulatory requirements for wells and septic fields, with a view towards strengthening them. The Province expects to implement the Drinking Water Advisory Committee's recommendations in this area.
8. The Province will work with the municipalities in the Capital Region towards developing tax-sharing models that are mutually beneficial.
9. The Province will use the existing Capital Region boundaries in initiating the regional planning process (see map at Appendix B). The Regional Planning Advisory Committee will also solicit public views respecting the boundaries that best meet the region's planning objectives and make recommendations to the Province.
10. As a part of the regional planning process and in consultation with municipalities and the Regional Planning Advisory Committee, the Manitoba Government will develop strategies to resolve inter-municipal disputes.