

Executive Summary

A partnership for the future

In its final report, the Regional Planning Advisory Committee is calling on the Government of Manitoba and the leaders of the sixteen Manitoba Capital Region municipalities to engage in a conscious exercise in region building. Through this process, the Region's citizens, leadership, resources, and communities can begin to unite around a shared agenda for improving economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and quality of life within the Region. Regionalism in this sense is about more than improved intergovernmental cooperation. It involves creative problem solving and the identification of opportunities by all segments of the regional community: business, labour, non-profits, community-based organizations, research institutes, the Aboriginal community, universities and colleges, and others.

A stronger Manitoba Capital Region will allow Manitoba to:

- compete more effectively
- efficiently address social, environmental, and economic issues that cross municipal boundaries

- make the best use of available funds
- ensure that Capital Region development is sustainable

The RPAC is proposing two broad sets of policy initiatives to further the development of the Capital Region. One set of initiatives would work to strengthen regional ties and cooperation. Section Two of this report outlines these initiatives which include:

- the creation of a Partnership of Manitoba Capital Region Governments
- service sharing
- tax sharing
- joint action on economic development
- improved mechanisms for conflict resolution

The second set of initiatives work toward the establishment of a clearer and more comprehensive planning and land-use policy for the region. Section Three of this report outlines these initiatives, which includes such measures as:

- the adoption of a statement of planning principles
- the issuing of policy planning statements
- streamlining of the planning process
- strengthening provincial land use policies.

Four points must be made at the outset about these initiatives. The first is that they do not contemplate the creation of a new level of government. The second is that they do not contemplate the introduction of any new level of taxation. The third is that they do not involve the amalgamation of existing municipalities—indeed, the RPAC is recommending a five-year moratorium on forced amalgamations. Finally, the provincial government has an important role to play in bringing these communities together and facilitating their joint activities. The long-term aim should be to foster regional partnerships of various kinds and to promote regional consciousness among residents of Manitoba’s Capital Region.

An open, consultative, responsive, and accountable process of region building will identify opportunities, encourage cooperation, promote fairness, and build trust and confidence. While there will be short-term benefits from the investment of ideas, time, money, and political goodwill in strengthening regional efforts, the greatest payoffs will be over the longer term. Commitment, patience, and perseverance must be the hallmarks of the regional effort being called for in this report. Elected leaders, administrative officials and the various stakeholders throughout the Capital Region must be prepared to explain the long term benefits of regionalism and to remain committed to a mutually agreed upon game plan for the Region’s future. All citizens of Manitoba will benefit if this is the case.