

## Section Three

# An effective planning and policy framework

The Regional Planning Advisory Committee is calling on the Government of Manitoba to develop a policy framework and periodic policy statements that would create the legal framework for the planning activities of local governments. This section of the report examines the principal means by which the provincial government can influence trends and developments with the Manitoba Capital Region.

The Government of Manitoba is the only government with a formal, legal and political mandate to identify, promote and to protect the present and long-term interests of the Capital Region as whole. This is not meant to imply that the sixteen local governments that comprise the Capital Region do not care about regional matters or cannot be counted upon to cooperate voluntarily to achieve regional goals when circumstances favour joint action. However, the legal and political mandate of the mayors, reeves, and councillors is, first and foremost, to meet the needs of their individual communities within the framework

of laws and policies prescribed by the provincial government.

It would be unrealistic to assume that there will never be conflicts among the municipalities, or between one or more of the municipalities and the provincial government. Given the different mandates and perspectives of local and provincial governments, disagreements are bound to arise. Also governments may find it politically convenient to overturn local decisions when there is a public outcry about the plans of a local government. Conversely, local officials may find it politically convenient to make “the popular decision,” knowing that the provincial government will be obliged to overturn it. Given the interdependence among different levels and types of decisions being made within the Capital Region, some overlap and confusion about roles and authority is inevitable.

An important aim of a sound planning process should be to resolve conflicts in a constructive, timely, and fair manner so as to generate the maximum support possible for the eventual outcomes, as well as to generate

trust and confidence in the process. The planning system should be sufficiently transparent and accountable that it allows the public to easily identify which level of government deserves the credit or the blame for decisions.

Provincial leadership in identifying “the regional interest” and “the provincial interest” need not and should not normally be unilateral and top-down; ideally it should be based upon information sharing, consultation, and a partnership approach to working with the sixteen municipalities. The provincial approach should recognize that the sixteen local governments have ideas of their own about future developments within the Capital Region and assist them in taking initiative on a collective, consensus basis to promote those ideas. However, the provincial government has the legal authority, the financial capacity, and the political credentials to have the final word on regional matters. The Government of Manitoba must match this authority with a clear, consistent, and committed approach to the identification, promotion, and protection of regional goals and activities.

This section of the report sets out the RPAC’s vision of a principled, open, and accountable provincial government approach to the performance of its responsibilities within the planning and development processes in Manitoba’s Capital Region. Chapter Eleven reviews the current planning regulations and policies. Chapter Twelve summarizes current growth patterns and relevance of proposed policy options for directing regional growth. Chapter Thirteen examines the environmental implications of Capital Region Development. Chapter Fourteen contains the RPAC’s recommendations for changes in planning policy and regulation.