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RESOLUTIONS FOR 2010-2011:**

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INTRODUCTION:

The Resolutions contained in this document represent policy positions debated, voted on and approved at the MCC’s Annual General Meeting. Accredited delegates of the local Chambers cast the votes.

The AGM was held from April 30 to May 2, 2010 at the Russell Inn in Russell.

Resolutions embody the official position of the MCC and form part of its advocacy program for the year following the AGM.

Because of their contemporary nature, Resolutions have an effective life span of one year, although they may be resubmitted at a subsequent AGM.

RESOLUTION: 911 SERVICE

Preamble:

Only one public service answering point (PSAP) exists to receive emergency calls coming from all Manitoba rural and northern communities. If something happens to the PSAP rendering it offline, 911 service would cease.

Experience, assets and levels of emergency preparedness vary across northern Manitoba. Thompson is northern Manitoba's service centre and provides advanced fire protection and emergency medical service to the City and immediate area. Linking a Northern-based 911 PSAP centre to Thompson Fire and Emergency Services can more effectively and efficiently provide 911 service to the North, as well as being an emergency backup to the existing PSAP.

Resolution: That the Government of Manitoba commit to the development and operation of a northern-based (preferably based in Thompson) 911 PSAP call center serving northern Manitoba.

RESOLUTION: NORTHERN AGRICULTURE

Preamble: By mandate of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, the Northern Food Prices Project was established in July 2002 and completed in December of that year.

The mandate of the Northern Food Prices Project was to submit a report to Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet identifying strategic options to address the concern about high food prices in northern Manitoba. This concern is related to the nutritional health and food security of northern citizens. The purpose was further defined to focus on one specific aspect of the issue: strategic options that could reduce the retail price of nutritious foods to northern citizens.

A primary recommendation of the Northern Food Prices Report, 2003 was as follows:

“Northern Food Self-Sufficiency Initiative – a comprehensive and long-term strategy to build local food provision activity and capacity in the north. As nutritious foods are produced, harvested, processed and marketed locally, the costs may be reduced by replacing the imported product with a local food supply.”

In the November 2006 Speech from the Throne the provincial government pledged to expand the Northern Foods Project, which among other things encourages and provides support for gardening, rearing poultry and food preservation.

Resolution: That the Government of Manitoba work with the University College of the North and the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences at the University of Manitoba to develop a research program for northern agriculture.

RESOLUTION: RURAL MEDICAL SCHOOL

Preamble: There is a well documented need for increased physician manpower in rural and northern Manitoba and in spite of significant efforts and expenditures of monies, little progress in recruiting for either foreign or Winnipeg trained physicians to stay in rural and northern locations has worked. Studies show that the location of training institutions and the originating of local students selected are the two most important signifiers on eventual practice location. Brandon University and the Brandon Regional Health Center have demonstrated capacity produce medical education programming at a high level.

Resolution: That the Government of Manitoba establish in Brandon rural and northern medical training of physicians.

RESOLUTION: TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE

Preamble: There are currently many hundreds of technical barriers to trade around the world, many in countries with which Canada has free trade agreements. Many of these technical barriers hold products exported from Canada to higher testing standards than domestic products and are not based on sound science. In many instances countries are attempting to provide support and protection to their domestic businesses through the general thickening of borders with arbitrary technical import requirements.

Resolution: That when negotiating all new Canadian trade agreements, the Federal Government ensure Canadian trade negotiators include provisions:

- to enforce reasonable prior notice when technical trade barriers are to be raised by the importing country, and
- for formal dispute resolution processes that are capable of rapidly resolving technical issues and removing technical barriers to trade.

RESOLUTION: REHABILITATING THE IMAGE OF THE INTERLAKE, SOUTHEASTERN MANITOBA AND THE RED RIVER VALLEY MANAGEMENT ZONE

Preamble: On November 8, 2006 the Manitoba Minister of Conservation made a request to the Clean Environment Commission (CEC) to investigate the environmental stability of hog production in Manitoba.

The Minister released the report of the CEC on March 3, 2008, at the same time announcing a further halt to industry expansion in:

- Southeastern Manitoba
- The Red River Valley Special Management Zone: This area includes the Capital Region of the province.

- The Interlake: This region borders on Lake Winnipeg to the east and Lake Manitoba to the west.

On October 9, 2008 Bill 17 received Royal Assent and became law, changing The Environment Act and imposing a permanent ban on the expansion of the number of hogs in the Red River Valley Special Management Area and the municipalities of Armstrong, Bifrost (and the Town of Arborg and the Village of Riverton), Coldwell, De Salaberry (and the Village of St. Pierre-Jolys), Eriksdale, Fisher, Gimli (and the Town of Winnipeg Beach), Grahamdale, Hanover (and the City of Steinbach and the Town of Niverville), La Broquerie, Rockwood (and the Town of Teulon), Rosser, Siglunes, Springfield, St. Andrews (and the Village of Dunnottar), St. Clements, St. Laurent , Ste. Anne (and the Town of Ste. Anne), Tache, and Woodlands.

As a result of this process, the entire Interlake has been portrayed as environmentally sensitive, not just for hog farms but for businesses generally. However, the region possesses a very diverse soil, drainage and environmental profile. This variation can have a great impact on the suitability of each farm and business operation in the area and many are environmentally well suited to the Interlake.

Resolution: That the Government of Manitoba rehabilitate the image of southeastern Manitoba, the Red River Valley Management Zone and the Interlake by publishing confirmation that these areas have a variety of environmental capacities, some which are well suited to a variety of farms and other businesses.

RESOLUTION: NUTRIENT REMOVAL FROM MUNICIPAL WASTEWATER

Preamble: The Clean Environment Commission (CEC) has mandated that municipal waste water systems remove nitrogen and phosphorous from the effluent streams prior to the effluent reentering the lakes and rivers.

This recommendation can have a significant financial impact on Manitoba's municipalities. For example, the City of Portage La Prairie is looking at a minimum of \$51 million dollars in capital (in 2008 dollars) to build a facility to do this nutrient removal.

Resolution: That the Government of Manitoba; over the next 12 months and in consultation with the CEC, Manitoba Conservation, provincial park communities and Manitoba's municipalities; determine the maximum levels of nitrogen and phosphorous that will be acceptable in wastewater effluent, work with the different levels of government to develop plans to reach these levels and, assist in the funding the construction of any facilities that are needed to help reach the identified levels.

RESOLUTION: A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO FISHING LICENSES

Preamble: For the 2008 fishing season resident Manitobans age 16-64 years had to pay \$19.83 for a regular license or \$13.94 for a “conservation license.” (A conservation license entitles the holder to the same rights as a Regular License holder except for reduced limits for some species: four walleye/sauger, four pike, one lake trout, one channel catfish, two small mouth bass and two stocked trout. Limits for other species remain the same.)

Resolution: That the Government of Manitoba provide all non-residents with a Manitoba fishing license at the same cost as Manitoba residents.

RESOLUTION: SHORTAGE OF CHILDCARE

Preamble: In today’s world more and more parents are required to enter the workforce instead of staying home to raise their children. However, for many of these parents the inability to find accessible and affordable childcare for their children is a barrier to employment.

The unemployment rate in Manitoba continues to be low and employers are still struggling to fill open positions. In some cases suitable employees are available but are unable to work because they either can’t find or can’t afford childcare.

Resolution: That the Government of Manitoba, in consultation with key stakeholders, develop and implement a strategy over the next 12 months to increase the number of accessible and affordable childcare spaces and modify staff requirements to enable such spaces in the province.

RESOLUTION: PAYROLL TAX REFORM

Preamble: Manitoba’s Payroll Tax is paid by employers with a permanent establishment in Manitoba.

The Manitoba Payroll Tax is a tax imposed based on remuneration that is paid to employees Payrolls of between \$1.25 Million and \$2.5 Million pay 4.3% on the amount in excess of \$1 Million and payrolls over \$2.5 Million pay 2.15% of the total payroll (the first \$1 Million is not a deduction).

The Government did move on this tax in the 2007 Budget, increasing the exemption from \$1 million to \$1.25 million and raising the second threshold from \$2 million to \$2.5 million. Prior to the 2007 Budget, the Payroll Tax had not been reduced for nine years. It has not been reduced since the 2007 Budget.

Manitoba's minimum wage has risen every year since 2001. In fact, it increased twice in 2009 (by 25 cents on May 1 and by another 25 cents on October 1). It will increase by 50 cents on October 1, 2010 to \$9.50 an hour. Undoubtedly, further increases to Manitoba's Minimum Wage will be under review.

Resolution: That the Government of Manitoba publicly commit to developing a plan to eliminate the Payroll Tax and, as a first step, increase the threshold of the Payroll Tax to \$2 million for the base threshold and to \$3.5 million for the second threshold.

RESOLUTION: LIGHTER –THAN-AIR TRANSPORT SYSTEM FOR NORTHERN MANITOBA

Preamble: Over the past 10 years, the ice road network in Manitoba has gone from 55 to 60 days of usage to 20 days or less in some years.¹

Manitoba and Ontario build 5,000 kilometres of ice roads each year. The costs of converting this ice road network into all-weather gravel roads is approximately \$2.5 billion with an annual maintenance cost of \$50 million. This is significantly more than the cost of building ice roads for Manitoba and Ontario which is less than \$20 million annually.

Airplanes could also be used to supply remote communities but in addition to their high operating costs, landing strips would have to be improved to accommodate larger aircraft. This idea is so easily dismissed that no estimates of using cargo airplanes to replace ice roads exist.

This has been an ongoing Resolution for the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce. While on the surface it appears that little progress has been made, the opportunity presented by airships is getting closer every year because of growing military and civilian interest. The largest airship since the days of the giant Zeppelins will be flying within 18 months providing the US military contract is let. Boeing Company has married up with SkyHook out of Calgary to build a hybrid airship-helicopter that could lift 40 tons. This vehicle could be certified and flying before 2015.

Resolution: That the Government of Manitoba, as part of an overall northern infrastructure and transportation strategy, consult with the University of Manitoba Transport Institute to investigate and promote the use of airships as a year-round means of freight transportation to service northern Manitoba and Nunavut, and

¹ The information in this preamble is incorporated from "Global warming forcing a re-think of how best to supply remote communities", October 23 2007, by Barry Prentice, a professor of supply chain management at the University of Manitoba

that it target as soon as possible a ‘test run’ in Manitoba between a northern community and at least one remote community.

RESOLUTION: NEW AIR TERMINAL, THOMPSON

Preamble: All of northern Manitoba is served by the Thompson Regional Airport. It is located 6 miles northwest of the City of Thompson, the largest municipality in northern Manitoba. It has a catchment area of 37 communities and villages, servicing 50 per cent of the geographic area of Manitoba – a market area population of approximately 65,000. Many of the communities it services are accessible only by air during a major portion of the year.

While the historical economic growth of Thompson has been rooted in mining, the economy has become more diversified with the majority of residents employed in the health, education, mining, government and service industries. Thompson has become recognized by all levels of government as the regional centre of trade and services for all of northern Manitoba.

Based on 2009 aviation statistics, Thompson Regional Airport is the second most important airport in the province based on passenger and aircraft movements.

The role of the Thompson airport has not changed significantly over the course of its history and the following role statements were developed for the 2007-2027 Land Use Plan:

- ➔ The airport serves the air transportation needs of northern Manitoba and is considered the air “*Hub of the North*”;
- ➔ The operation of the airport is vital for the social and economic well-being of the City of Thompson and northern Manitoba by providing scheduled and charter air passenger services, air cargo, air ambulance and aviation support services. Air freight services provided by the airport are essential to allow regional businesses to operate efficiently and to provide essential supplies for residents without any interruptions;
- ➔ The airport will increase its role serving the air freight needs of northern communities, resulting from reduced reliance on winter roads and rail service due to regional climate changes which have already reduced the reliability and service periods of winter roads in northern parts of Manitoba and the rail link (Omnitrax);
- ➔ In addition to the airport owner/operator, and Canadian Air Transportation Safety Association there are fourteen organizations currently operating at the Thompson Regional Airport. Eight of the tenants (57%) provide carrier services on a commercial or private basis. Thompson is also the headquarters of the Calm Air International, the major carrier based at the airport, servicing clients from both the north and from Winnipeg.

Other tenants include Custom Helicopters, Missinippi Airways, RCMP Air Division and Manitoba Government Air. During the fire season, the airport is home to the Manitoba

Government air water bombers. Of the remaining six tenants, two provide aviation support services (e.g., fuel), three provide airport commercial services (e.g., car rentals, food concessions).

Resolution: That the City of Thompson, the Provincial Government and the Federal Government , as part of an overall northern Manitoba transportation and infrastructure strategy, support the efforts of the Thompson Regional Airport Authority to develop a new air terminal in Thompson so as to ensure all our outlying northern communities and residents have year-round access to health care, retail goods/services, and education.

RESOLUTION: FEASIBILITY STUDY – ALL WEATHER ROAD NORWAY HOUSE – GILLAM

Preamble: The Governments of Manitoba, Canada and Nunuvut’s study into linking an all-weather road from Rankin Inlet and Churchill to the National Highway system in Manitoba has concluded that this is feasible, and has recommended that the preferred route would begin at Gillam.

Currently, there is a winter road between Norway House and Oxford House, linking to Gods Lake Narrows and Gods River.

The *Northern Food Prices Report 2003* states:

“It is important to note that there is a direct relationship between road access to a community and lower costs for nutritious foods. In communities that have all-weather road access, the freight costs, the cost of doing business and therefore food prices are relatively competitive with southern food retailers. In addition, all weather road access allows residents to drive to nearby centres that offer even lower prices and sales.”

Resolution: That the Government of Manitoba, as part of an overall Northern Manitoba transportation and infrastructure strategy, conduct a study to examine the feasibility of building an all weather road between Norway House, Oxford House, Gods Lake Narrows and Gods River, with a view to extending the all-weather road north to Gillam.

RESOLUTION: KEEPING THE LINK TO THE UNITED STATES OPEN

Preamble: Provincial Highway 75 is the main north-south artery connecting much of western Canada to the United States and an integral part of the CentrePort concept for Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba. There are over 800,000 vehicles that pass through the Emerson/Pembina border crossing every year, nearly half of which are commercial vehicles. There is over \$12 billion worth of raw materials, manufactured goods and grain that crosses annually. The vast majority of this is either coming from or

going to Winnipeg and travels along highway 75 to get to its destination, making this a vital byway in our province.

Provincial Highway 75, however, runs parallel to the Red River which is prone to flooding during the spring. It has been closed off six times in the last 12 years, often for weeks at a time. While this has very tragic results to the local economies of the towns along its route, there is a much larger picture that is affected on a much larger scale. The flow of goods is diverted hundreds of kilometers adding to the cost of shipping (not to mention the environmental impact of extra fuel). There are often delays and, at times, cancellation of shipments due to the detours involved. The extra costs involved are mostly passed on to the consumer. Tourism, which is just getting warmed up for the season, is stalled as travelers find alternate routes. Many areas of all Manitoban's lives are affected by even a small flood in the Red River Valley.

The main issue is the closing of Highway 75. Very little of the highway is ever actually submerged. In April 2009 there was only 10 miles (16 km) covered in water with most of it being only a few inches deep. Raising this portion of the highway would keep this main transportation link open in any flood to date.

Resolution: That the Government of Manitoba and the Government of Canada raise the section of Highway 75 outside of the Morris dike with the purpose of keeping the highway open for the movement of goods along this vital trade corridor.

RESOLUTION: ENHANCING IMMIGRATION

Preamble: Manitoba continues to have one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada.

For example, for January-February 2010 Manitoba's unemployment rate was 5.4%, the second lowest unemployment rate among the provinces.

Initiatives are being undertaken by the provincial government, municipalities and private industry to emigrate workers from foreign countries to fill positions that would otherwise remain open due to a tight labour market.

In many ways this approach is working. An estimated total of 13,101 immigrants made their new homes in Manitoba in 2009. This is well above the 10,902 who arrived in the previous 12-month period. It is also the largest immigrant arrival since at least 1971.

However, a number of immigrants are having difficulty getting consistent answers on the qualifications needed to work and become permanent residents in Manitoba.

There appears to be difficulty in getting consistent answers from Citizenship and Immigration and The Provincial Nominee program and this appears to be worse in the case of those parties trying to set up businesses in Manitoba. As a result these individuals are often having to return to their home country having expended a lot of dollars to meet

the requirements and yet not achieving the goal that they were courted to come to Manitoba and Canada for.

Resolution: That Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Government of Manitoba provincial nominee program develop and administer clear and consistent guidelines that enable new immigrants to work and become permanent residents in the communities where there is a need for skilled labour.

RESOLUTION: A REGIONAL WORKERS COMPENSATION BOARD OFFICE FOR SOUTHWESTERN MANITOBA

Preamble: The Workers Compensation Board (WCB) is a statutory agency governed by a Board of Directors representing workers, employers, and the public interest. The WCB is committed to providing superior compensation services to Manitoba workers and employers in a manner that is sensitive, responsive and effective.

The Workers Compensation Board has its main office in Winnipeg with one other regional office in Thompson established in 2002.

Questions, claims, and complaints from the southwestern region of the province are currently all directed to Winnipeg as there is no regional office.

Resolution: That the WCB create a regional office in southwestern Manitoba to better serve the employers and workers.

RESOLUTION: PROMOTING THE BOYNE VALLEY WATER INITIATIVE

Preamble: In the 1960s, the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration studied the section of the Boyne River north of Treherne Manitoba and recommended that a dam be built on the River to form a reservoir and create a recreational area with potential for irrigation. More study was done in 1987 with the Assiniboine-South Hespeller Study.

With the arrival of Simplot in Portage la Prairie, and the encouragement of local producers to grow irrigated potatoes for Simplot, the concept was re-activated. Over the past 10 years, the South Norfolk-Treherne Community Development Corporation with support from its councils, the Pembina Valley Water Co-op, and both the federal and provincial governments has commissioned several studies and the results are summarized below.

Proposed project details:

- Location 19-8-9 W1, approximately 3 miles north of Treherne
- Approximate height of dam is 65 – 70 feet
- Flooded area of 950 acres
- Shoreline length of 18 miles

- Average depth of 23.5 feet
- Reservoir storage of 24,300 acre-feet at full supply level (1158.1 ft)
- Normal water level fluctuation of 6 feet each year
- Diversion of 50 cubic feet per second for 2 months

Due to the soil types, the slopes would need to be very gradual - 16 feet horizontal to 1 foot vertical. The cost would be \$76M which includes \$9M to divert water from the Assiniboine River during the spring freshet when flows significantly exceed the current requirements downstream and/or the late fall when the gates at Shellmouth Dam are opened to lower levels there.

More environmental, economic and geo-technical study is needed and will cost in the area of \$500,000. This cost is included in the \$76M. These studies could be done concurrently, and construction would be completed over a two-year time frame to allow soil settlement in the valley.

Resolution: That the Government of Manitoba and the Federal Government

- a) immediately review these pre-feasibility studies,**
- b) provide funding to complete the necessary feasibility studies, and**
- c) upon confirmation of the very positive benefit-cost ratio by these studies, move forward with construction of the dam and reservoir on the Boyne River north of Treherne.**