

# Manitoba Association of Cottage Owners



MACO's Position as of May 31, 2009



## **Summer Voting Municipal Elections**

### **Background:**

- Municipal elections are governed by the Municipal Elections and School Board Act of the Province of Manitoba. Elections are held every four years on the fourth Wednesday in October, with three exceptions. These exceptions are the Village of Dunnottar, the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach and the Town of Winnipeg Beach. Their elections are held on the fourth Friday of July as per Section 86 of the Municipal Act.
- Various Municipalities have chosen at some cost to taxpayers to have an additional voting poll in Winnipeg to accommodate cottagers for the October elections.
- Other alternatives such as advance poll voting and voting by mail are currently available to all eligible voters.
- Fall elections do not encourage participation by seasonal or non-permanent residents. The seasonal population in many Municipalities is often the majority population.
- This is a significant issue. For example only 48% of the dwellings in the RM of Lac du Bonnet are occupied by the usual residents. In the RM of Alexander the number is even less with 34% of dwellings occupied by the usual residents.
- For Winnipeg Beach the occupancy rate is 34%, for Dunnottar it is 30% and for Victoria Beach it is 16%. Each of these municipalities have less than 1500 dwellings in their municipality while Alexander has over 3770 dwellings.
- In most municipalities the resident occupancy rate is usually over 90%.

### **Cautionary Notes:**

- Remote voting sites and mail-in voting vary in their effectiveness.
- An option for summer voting in rural Manitoba Municipalities will require support from each Municipality to the Province of Manitoba, through Intergovernmental Affairs. This presumes a local political will for change to better meet the voting needs of constituents.
- An option for summer voting will need the support and endorsement of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM).

### **Policy or Program Implications: What is current Policy or Program for this issue?**

- Currently there are only three exceptions to voting in October.
- Province of Manitoba must be willing to amend Section 86(3) to allow for summer elections for those Municipalities who wish to choose summer voting.

### **Action Taken by MACO:**

- Printed article in Fall 2008 MACO Newsletter from the Twin Lakes Beach Assoc., Inc. who are lobbying with the RM of St. Laurent for summer voting.

- Preparation of an issue paper regarding summer voting.

***Recommendations for the Future:***

- Survey MACO membership to confirm support for summer voting.
- Make a presentation to all of the affected municipalities in favour of summer voting.
- Develop a brief for presentation to the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM).
- Solicit AMM support for summer voting.
- Prepare brief for the Province (through Intergovernmental Affairs Department) requesting change in legislation.

***Position of MACO***

- MACO believes that elections in rural Manitoba areas should be held at a time convenient to the majority of taxpayers and thus allow for their full participation.