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Ron Bell, President

Canadians pay enough tax

That's according to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)'s report on the municipal fiscal imbalance, released on June 21. *Building Prosperity from the Ground Up: Restoring the Municipal Fiscal Balance* identifies the infrastructure deficit as being the result of a fiscal squeeze that has resulted in municipalities deferring capital projects in order to simply meet their daily service pressures and demands.

What is the fiscal imbalance? According to FCM, a fiscal imbalance exists when there is a mismatch between an order of government's responsibilities and its abilities to raise sufficient revenues to meet those responsibilities. We are all well aware that municipal governments today provide much more than basic property services, yet municipal revenues haven't grown sufficiently to handle these added responsibilities. In fact, out of every tax dollar collected in Canada, municipal governments receive only 8 cents (50 cents goes to the federal government and 42 cents goes to provincial and territorial governments).

FCM's report makes several recommendations on how to restore the municipal fiscal imbalance, including:

- Clarifying roles and responsibilities among governments;
- Developing a long-term plan to eliminate the infrastructure deficit;
- Diversifying municipal revenue tools;
- Focusing on integrated approaches to rural and northern development;
- Investing in public transit; and
- Changing municipal administrative practices.

The AMM will work with FCM to encourage both federal and provincial governments to move toward a realignment of the financial responsibilities facing municipalities across Canada. The report can be found online at www.fcm.ca/english/medialpress/june212006.html.

Turning our attention to the approaching municipal election, I want to take this opportunity to say how much I have enjoyed meeting with so many of you over the past four years. You have welcomed me into your offices and council chambers during municipal visits, and at these visits and our various events, shared your perspectives on the many issues we face. The AMM is blessed with an engaged and energetic membership and your input and advice have been instrumental in our lobbying efforts. For those of you whom are running for municipal government once again, I wish you the best of luck. Win or lose, you deserve a great deal of credit for allowing your names to stand in such an important process. For those of you who are retiring from the municipal arena, thank you for your dedication and hard work. Municipal work is no doubt some of the most important work you will ever do, and your efforts are truly appreciated. ☺

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