

Why it's not enough

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There is no doubt as greater attention has been paid to crumbling municipal infrastructure the other orders of government have increased their support. Federally, municipalities have benefited from a GST rebate, the sharing of the federal gas tax, and will benefit from the new Building Canada Fund. Provincially, municipalities have benefited from the sharing of provincial income tax, the Building Manitoba Fund, and several other specific programs. Each year municipalities watch and wait as the federal and provincial budgets are introduced to see which programs are getting a little more and which are holding steady or being decreased.

In 2005 a national study was done to review where municipalities get their revenues. Manitoba fared extremely well when it comes to grants from other orders of government. But this only tells a small part of the story. There are inherent problems with municipalities having to continually apply for grants. How is a municipality expected to plan long-term when it is never sure where the next pot of money is coming and whether they will be the lucky winner? Over the last few years the demand for infrastructure programs was far greater than the funding available, meaning many much needed projects were left unfunded. And while a comparison of revenues tells one part of the story, it is incomplete without also considering municipal responsibilities.

While Manitoba fared well in the 2005 study, the other provinces are catching up. Across Canada there is a new trend within government to take a look at these issues:

- In 2006 Ontario's Premier created the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal Delivery Review, and the final report from this process was recently completed. The review examined government relationships and the delivery of services, and ultimately recommended a shifting of responsibilities and funding between the two orders of government.
- BC developed a Community Charter that lays out the requirement that "the Provincial Government must not assign responsibilities to municipalities unless there is provision for resources required to fulfill the responsibilities." As well, it highlights that consultation is needed on matters of mutual interest, including consultation by the Province

on proposed changes to local government legislation, proposed changes to revenue transfers to municipalities, and proposed changes to Provincial programs that will have a significant impact in relation to matters that are within municipal authority.

- Saskatchewan instituted sector tables to discuss municipal issues with the intent to improve governance.

- Quebec has also taken a look at the needs of municipal government, and has begun a phased-in process of rebating the provincial sales tax to municipalities.
- Alberta also undertook a major review of the roles, responsibilities, resources and relationships of municipal government with the intent of finding ways to improve the delivery of services.

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