



Dear Editor:

As President of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, I read with interest the Canadian Federation of Independent Business' latest report, "[Manitoba Municipal Spending Watch](#)". The report suggests municipalities in Manitoba have a spending problem. As the organization representing all of Manitoba's incorporated municipalities, including the 24 spotlighted in this report, the AMM finds the methodology used in this report to be not only flawed, but blatantly unfair.

It is an undisputed fact that only 8 cents of the taxes Canadians pay are collected by municipal governments, while the other 92 cents are collected by federal, provincial and territorial government. With these 8 cents municipalities are expected to continually do more with less. Increasing responsibilities and demands from citizens, combined with downloading from other orders of government, mean today's municipal governments are being squeezed from both ends.

The report also fails to mention that transfers from other orders of government can be taken away at anytime and often require matching funds from local governments for projects that may or may not match local priorities.

Interestingly, the report strongly criticizes labour costs as the primary reason for a perceived rise in municipal spending. But at the same time, municipalities who contract out work in order to try to reduce costs or operate more efficiently are criticized. Who wins?

The report also unfairly paints all municipalities with the same brush, going so far as to highlight two northern communities as being the worst offenders. This is breathtaking in its ignorance, when northern communities deals with a host of unique challenges ranging from geographic isolation, transportation, communication, employment opportunities, social conditions, infrastructure, and others. Scolding these municipalities for excessive spending is irresponsible.

The fact of the matter is municipalities do have a problem – they are forced to rely on an antiquated property tax system to pay for local services and any costs other governments choose to offload.

It is time for municipal governments to get a fair share of the taxes collected in this country. So in a sense, the CFIB report gets one thing right – this is an issue that deserves attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Dobrowolski". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Doug Dobrowolski, President  
Association of Manitoba Municipalities