

85% OF MANITOBANS AGREE: MUNICIPALITIES DESERVE A FAIR SHARE AND A FAIR SAY IN INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING

Province-wide Coalition of Mayors and Reeves Unite to Encourage Manitobans to Help Advocate for Fairness

Winnipeg, MB – February 26, 2016 – In a recent public opinion poll* conducted for the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM), 85% of Manitobans agreed that local councils across the province deserve both a Fair Share of infrastructure tax dollars and a Fair Say in how they're spent.

"In Manitoba, local Councils are responsible for 60% of infrastructure yet receive just 8 cents of every tax dollar to get the job done," said AMM President and Steinbach Mayor, Chris Goertzen. "Adding to the pressure is that we often have little to no say in how the rest gets spent – despite the fact that we live and work in the communities we represent, so are in the best position to identify top priorities."

In launching a six week, multi-media "Fair Share – Fair Say" campaign leading up to the next provincial election, Goertzen was today backed by Winnipeg Mayor, Brian Bowman and the 137 member strong coalition of AMM Mayors and Reeves from across the province. One of its main goals is to encourage Manitobans to join them in speaking with one voice when it comes to advocating for improved infrastructure.

"Having recently returned from the Big City Mayors conference in Ottawa, I was struck by the federal government's willingness to prioritize municipal infrastructure spending to make funding more flexible to our needs and requirements," said Mayor Bowman. "This is a step in the right direction since it recognizes both the growing role cities play in Canada and how connected Mayors and Reeves are with local residents."

Bowman added that, at the provincial level, he sees tremendous potential to achieve similar progress, through partnership, under the Fair Share – Fair Say banner. Both Mayors pointed to a recent infrastructure report card released by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) that said one-third of all infrastructure in the country – streets, bridges, water and sewer pipes and plants, public transportation and recreation facilities – is at risk of rapid deterioration and that, despite the best efforts of local Councils, action needs to be accelerated or costs will continue to escalate.

In terms of examples, Mayor Goertzen said he is often asked what the AMM is looking for when it comes to increased funding. "Many think we're only looking for new dollars," said Goertzen, "when we believe a more efficient allocation of existing tax dollars could be one way to address our infrastructure challenges."

Some examples of ideas worth exploring as part a Fair Share – Fair Say partnership process could include but are not limited to:

- Exempting or rebating the \$25M municipalities pay to the province through the PST;
- Identification of “grow as we grow” sources of revenue;
- Ensuring all infrastructure dollars budgeted by the Province are fully allocated and spent in each budget year, a move that will benefit smaller municipalities;
- Dedicating to municipalities the full 1% of PST to infrastructure that they prioritize;
- Reverting the costs of health facilities back to the Province or, at least, reducing the municipal requirement to a fixed 5% from the current 10%;
- Relieving municipalities of the costs associated with recruiting and retaining doctors;
- Lessening reliance on application-based funding and transfers that come with ‘strings attached’ which can be taken away, thus requiring matching funds from local governments, which most won’t have.

“While we’re happy to get this Fair Share – Fair Say discussion going through our AMM partnership,” said Mayor Bowman, “we are counting on concrete plans being announced during the election by Manitoba’s Party Leaders to fairly resolve this growing infrastructure funding problem.”

As an Association, President Goertzen also stressed that he is looking forward to having Manitobans discuss the most pressing needs of their local communities when their own candidates come calling.

The Association of Manitoba Municipalities identifies and addresses the needs and concerns of its members in order to achieve strong and effective municipal government.

- 30 -

*NRG Research conducted 605 live agent telephone interviews January 18-21, 2016. Results represent a margin of error of 4.00+/- 19 times out of 20.

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