



Contact:
Lynne Bereza, AMM Communications Coordinator
Telephone: (204) 856-2366
Cell: (204) 871-0517
Fax: (204) 856-2370
Email: bereza@amm.mb.ca
1910 Saskatchewan Avenue W.
Portage la Prairie, MB R1N 0P1

News Release

Building Canada Fund lacks clarity: Manitoba Cities Caucus

April 23, 2014 - The mayors of Manitoba's cities met in Brandon last week and agreed infrastructure, the need for alternate revenue sources and public safety continue to be the top issues facing their communities.

Of major concern is the recently released New Building Canada Fund, which lacks clarity, according to City of Steinbach Mayor Chris Goertzen. Goertzen, who was acclaimed to serve his second one-year term at the helm of the Cities Caucus, noted questions remain about the design of the Fund.

"After the 2013 federal budget, cities were feeling positive about the next generation of the Building Canada Fund," explained Goertzen. "One year later, new rules about stacking of funding and exclusion of local roads from the main component of the fund raise concerns for municipalities."

"Manitoba cities would like to see transparent numbers from the federal and provincial governments, as it is an unacceptable challenge to figure out where money is coming from and where it is going to."

The group agreed that given this uncertainty, the need for alternate revenue to fund municipal infrastructure programs is becoming a higher priority. The AMM has lobbied for both a share of the Provincial Sales Tax (PST) to be dedicated to municipal infrastructure, along with a rebate on the PST municipalities pay on infrastructure projects.

Although the public safety issue has moved forward since the Caucus formed, and the group met with Justice Minister Andrew Swan in February to discuss the cost of policing, challenges remain. The amount of time police officers spend in court and the inequity between how rural and urban policing is funded still need further discussion.

According to Goertzen, there is a direct benefit of having an organized group working within the auspices of the AMM. "Cities share similar issues and we felt collectively we could all benefit from an organized forum to share our specific concerns and find ways to lobby for the things our cities need," he said.

-30-