

## Mayor munching the numbers

By AMY PUGSLEY FRASER City Hall Reporter

The federal budget addresses the need for funding, but Halifax Mayor Peter Kelly says it's too early to tell what direct effect it will have on the municipality.

"We need more meat on the bones before we can determine what we're actually eating," he said in an interview Tuesday night at Halifax city hall.

The money that municipalities requested appears to be there in a "broad-brush approach," he said.

"But I can't say how much is there or where it's going to go. The outcome will be in the details."

Mr. Kelly said during a break in Tuesday night's council meeting that he has seen "pieces" of the budget, and it appears the federal government was listening when his Big City Mayors group addressed the issue in Ottawa about two weeks ago.

"This is a very generous budget and one that has hit a lot of avenues, a lot of plateaus and a lot of points that you would not have expected," he said.

The budget allows for the creation of a \$4-billion infrastructure stimulus package to be spent over the next two years on projects that are currently unfunded. But municipalities would be expected to match federal funding, he said.

"This may be a challenge, but HRM has determined that transportation and infrastructure are two of its key focus areas over the next four years, so we will do our best to do our part," he said.

Halifax has been trying to keep its aging infrastructure in working condition, Mr. Kelly said.

Although there are major new projects on the horizon, such as a new downtown library and a major rink complex, he said he's not sure they would fit under the new aid package.

Another question is how municipalities will receive the funding for their projects, he said. "We don't know if it's going to go through the provinces or the feds or directly through the municipalities."

Mr. Kelly said he was pleased about the money being set aside for home renovations.

"That is a good indication that people and small businesses will be back to work," he said.

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