

News Release

Big City Mayors to Tackle Policing Costs and Other Fiscal Imbalances

(Wednesday, May 28, 2008) - The Big City Mayors' Caucus (BCMC) will keep fighting this week to address the severe fiscal imbalance that exists between municipalities and other levels of government. One area of focus will be national policing costs.

HRM Mayor Peter Kelly will join his BCMC mayoral counterparts from across Canada today in Quebec City to discuss issues of concern to larger municipalities prior to the annual meeting of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) that begins Friday.

"So many of our concerns relate to the fiscal imbalance because it underlies almost everything we try to do as municipalities," said Mayor Kelly. "For the federal and provincial portions of the services we provide, we are forced to pass on the costs to our residents through property taxes, as that is one of the only ways we have to generate revenue to pay for services we provide."

Mayor Kelly noted that policing services is one example that highlights the fiscal imbalance: "Municipal police forces across the country are doing more and more federal enforcement, such as providing border and port control; combating cyber, drug-related and organized crime; and providing national security and protection. Policing costs for all municipalities continue to escalate and include upwards of \$500 million per year we pay for federal policing costs. Yet there is no guarantee we will be reimbursed in a consistent manner - or at all in some cases - for providing these federal services.

"The bottom line is that property taxpayers are subsidizing the federal government, and it's not right. We need a system in place that is fair and equitable to municipalities, and most importantly to property taxpayers."

FCM will release a report this week on municipal policing costs with recommendations to address the inequities.

Mayor Kelly is among 22 mayors of the largest Canadian municipalities that comprise the BCMC. Other topics to be discussed at this week's meeting include the BCMC's campaign for the federal government to devote one cent of the GST to municipalities; recommendations for a national action plan on housing and homelessness; greenhouse gas measurement criteria; "catch and release" justice; and the film and video tax credit portions of Bill C-10.

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