

# Big City Mayors Call for Commitment in Federal Budget

(Calgary) - The federal budget (Feb 2005) must spell out a permanent funding commitment to Canada's cities to address their pressing needs. That was the message from the mayors of Canada's largest cities, who are meeting in Ottawa today.

The FCM Big City Mayors' Caucus (BCMC) is meeting to discuss next week's federal budget and map out a strategy to build a permanent partnership with the Government of Canada.

"The New Deal for cities does not end with next week's budget. This is not something that you can put a checkmark next to. It will involve collaboration and a permanent plan," said BCMC chair, Regina Mayor Pat Fiocco. "Canada's cities drive economic growth in this country - cities need a flow of permanent resources to maintain this growth."

The Mayors congratulated the Prime Minister and Infrastructure Minister John Godfrey for the announcement earlier this month of a formula for allocating a portion of federal fuel-tax revenue to provinces and territories.

The Caucus is specifically looking for the next Budget speech to deliver on these priorities:

- Address the pressing needs of the largest cities by ensuring that federal-provincial negotiations deliver adequate funding to meet public transit needs;
- A federal commitment to a long term plan to eliminating the municipal infrastructure and transportation deficit;
- A commitment that the \$5 billion in fuel-tax revenue be phased in as quickly as possible over five years, and that it be predictable, permanent and protected from clawback;
- As of year six, a permanent, recurring commitment of \$2.5 billion in annual revenue sharing with municipalities;
- A commitment to making this funding stream "bankable" allowing municipalities sustainable funding to borrow against, for infrastructure priorities;
- A commitment to maintaining existing targeted infrastructure programs at a minimum average of \$1.1 billion per year;

The Mayors also focused on the need for cities to have a seat at the table where issues affecting Canada's cities are discussed.

"A seat at the table means that cities are not lumped in with various advocacy groups," said Mayor Fiacco. "We look to the Government to include us in discussions that affect our cities, our citizens and the business community."

As a first step, the Caucus proposes that the chairs of its five issue working groups be included in federal–provincial discussions on those issues