

SECURING OUR FUTURE:

Cities and Communities in Election 2008

October 8, 2008

Table of Contents

Message from the FCM President.....	2
An Overview of Election 2008	2
Summary assessment of party platforms	3
Securing our Physical Foundations	3
Securing our Mobility.....	8
Securing our Communities	12
Securing our Homes	16
Securing our Environment.....	19
Securing our Rural, Remote & Northern Communities	23
Commitments on other municipal priorities.....	26

MESSAGE FROM THE FCM PRESIDENT

Near the end of every election, as a service to our members as well as citizens interested in municipal issues, FCM produces a detailed assessment of the platforms of the major parties.

FCM is a non-partisan organization and, as such, our election assessment rates ideas, rather than ideologies, and does not endorse platforms or parties. Our assessment measures party platform commitments against the election priorities of municipalities as described in our own platform, released at the beginning of the campaign, *Canada's Cities and Communities: Securing our Future* (<http://www.fcm.ca/English/View.asp?mp=960&x=966>).

We look forward to working with all Parliamentarians after the election to keep our cities and communities safe, secure, prosperous and healthy.

Sincerely,

Jean Perrault
President of FCM
Mayor of Sherbrooke

AN OVERVIEW OF ELECTION 2008

At the beginning of this election campaign, we said that Canadians sensed they and their country may be heading into rougher waters. At the time, we said that Canadians needed to hear where each party stood on helping their cities and communities continue to provide the basics that make our enviable quality of life possible. We said that the quality of our water, the availability of public transit, the condition of our bridges and roads, the safety of our neighbourhoods and the affordability of our housing are the bread-and-butter issues that matter to Canadians. We called on all party leaders and every candidate for Parliament to tell Canadians how they propose to keep our communities safe, secure, prosperous and healthy.

The economic crisis that has swirled through North America and around the world over the past several weeks only serves to reinforce our call and our needs.

Fortunately, we are able to report that all parties have listened. Election 2008 has seen an unprecedented focus on those bread-and-butter issues facing Canadians. Given the likelihood of a minority government, the focus on our priorities in every party platform gives cities and communities a good foundation on which to leverage all-party support for our priorities in the coming Parliament.

SECURING OUR PHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS

FCM Election Platform 2008

The 2007 FCM-McGill study, *Danger Ahead: The Coming Collapse of Canada's Municipal Infrastructure*, set the price for eliminating the municipal infrastructure deficit at \$123 billion. Successive federal governments have made important funding commitments to municipalities, including the permanent Gas Tax Fund. What is missing is a commitment to invest these funds as part of a long-term solution that will eliminate the municipal infrastructure deficit.

The Government of Canada should:

- Finance a 20-year solution to the \$123-billion infrastructure deficit in partnership with municipal, provincial and territorial governments. As a first step, make all current federal infrastructure funding permanent and work with cities and communities to design the most effective, efficient, accessible funding programs possible.
- Protect the purchasing power of investments in Canadian communities by indexing the federal Gas Tax Fund to keep pace with inflation, population growth and economic expansion.
- Protect over-burdened property tax payers by fully funding the costs of federal offloading and new infrastructure pressures, including national wastewater standards and climate change adaptation.
- Work towards a new fiscal pact among all orders of government, which includes sharing growth revenues like the equivalent of one cent of the GST, to ensure that municipal governments can provide the infrastructure and receive sufficient, sustained funding.

Conservative Party of Canada

- ✓ *A re-elected Conservative Government led by Stephen Harper will continue to invest in critical infrastructure for our cities and communities. The Conservative Government has already committed to investing \$33 billion in infrastructure between 2007 and 2014 under the Building Canada Plan and to continuing the gas tax transfer to municipalities at a permanent level of \$2 billion per year after 2014.*
- ✓ *A re-elected Conservative Government will continue to support rural and remote communities by investing in new infrastructure throughout rural and northern Canada.*

FCM analysis

The commitment by the Conservative government in Budget 2008 to make the federal Gas Tax Fund permanent was a major milestone in the history of federal-municipal fiscal relations. This commitment, along with the Building Canada Fund and dedicated investments in transit, lays the groundwork for a comprehensive, long-term plan to eliminate the \$123-billion municipal infrastructure deficit. The emphasis placed on infrastructure in this platform, although not any new commitments, is nevertheless a welcome signal that the party understands the role that these investments play in national prosperity, and is the foundation of a longer-term approach.

These platform commitments leave a number of outstanding issues unresolved with existing infrastructure investments, including the expiry of dedicated federal transit funding next year; the need for a long-term plan to eliminate the \$123-billion infrastructure deficit to guide existing and future infrastructure investment policy; and the need to protect the long-term value of the federal Gas Tax Fund against inflation, population growth, and economic

expansion. The proposed cut in diesel tax significantly reduces revenues that could be used for a more substantial investment in a national transit plan.

Liberal Party of Canada

- ✓ *The Liberal infrastructure commitment is worth \$70 billion over 10 years, with additional funding from future unanticipated surpluses and the resources of the infrastructure bank. ...Over the next four years, we will not spend any less than the current commitments of the federal government. With our [previous] commitment regarding unanticipated surpluses, we will likely invest more.*
- ✓ *A new Liberal government will also develop an Infrastructure Bank as an additional tool to finance infrastructure investment. This bank will... help finance long-term infrastructure projects such as regional energy grids or high-speed rail.*
- ✓ *The Gas Tax Transfer will be indexed to nominal GDP growth so that municipalities have the funding certainty they need to keep up with economic growth.*

FCM analysis

The Liberal Party's infrastructure investment strategy of \$70 billion over 10 years includes:

- at least \$10 billion of Strategic Infrastructure, particularly green infrastructure such as water and sewage treatment, clean energy grids;
- at least \$8 billion for a National Transit Strategy that will enable our cities to expand their transit systems and green their transit fleets;
- at least \$3 billion for a dedicated Small Communities Fund, to ensure that all Canadians are able to see strengthened, more resilient infrastructure;
- at least \$4.5 billion for our country's Gateways, Corridors and Borders to ensure that Canada's infrastructure facilitates, rather than hinders, our trade and tourism industries while keeping Canada safe and secure;
- at least \$3 billion for Sports and Recreational Facilities because an active society is a healthy society and Canada must renew and expand its arenas and other leisure facilities; and
- the indexing of the gas tax transfer to nominal GDP growth. This will see the gas tax transfer grow to \$25 billion in the 10 year time frame, an increase of \$5 billion over current funding levels. This transfer will give municipalities the funding certainty they need to keep up with economic growth.

The Liberals are the first party to commit to indexing the federal Gas Tax Fund so it keeps up with growing needs and economic growth. This 10-year plan provides the longer-term funding horizon, dedicated transit funding, and growth revenues needed to give the country the tools it needs to start turning the tide on the infrastructure deficit. While precedent setting and welcome, the 10-year investment horizon falls somewhat short of the capital planning cycle that municipalities follow; this investment horizon should be lengthened to 15-20 years to optimize investments and outcomes.

New Democratic Party of Canada

- ✓ *Invest the equivalent of one cent of the GST in increased funding of the important priorities of our cities and communities by 2011.*
- ✓ *Invest in new municipal water and wastewater infrastructure, and establish national standards to require a minimum of secondary treatment for all Canadian municipalities.*

FCM analysis

The commitment to invest “the equivalent of one cent of the GST” in cities and communities, refers to the cumulative total of (often existing) investments in specific areas (transit, policing, housing, as well as some items not strictly municipal like child care). Critically, it does not deliver the additional share of new growth revenues that municipalities are seeking. Nevertheless, this commitment does recognize that the growing infrastructure needs facing cities and communities are best addressed by sharing tax revenues that grow with the economy.

However, this ambiguity should not overshadow the significant and welcome commitment to provide stable and a presumably long-term source of transit funding by sharing an additional cent of the gas tax, as well as a recognition of the role that local transit providers play in supporting national climate change objectives. This new investment in transit, particularly if it is delivered as true revenue sharing rather than as a nominal transfer, would be a substantial step forward in federal-municipal fiscal relations, and would maximize the role that transit can play in supporting our nation’s competitiveness, in GHG reductions, and in providing a real alternative to the private automobile for those Canadians worried about rising fuel prices.

Bloc Québécois

- ✓ *The Bloc Québécois will continue to put pressure on the federal government to see the Gas Tax immediately increased to \$0.05/liter, instead of waiting for FY09-10.*
- ✓ *The Bloc Québécois will put pressure on the government so that financing of investments in infrastructure take into account the financial capacity of each order of government. Under that model the federal government would assume 50 per cent of investments, Quebec and provinces 35 per cent, and municipalities 15 per cent.*
- ✓ *The Bloc Québécois proposes to combine all current infrastructure funding programs into a single, recurring federal-provincial transfer.*

FCM analysis

Reducing the municipal contribution to cost-shared infrastructure programs would reflect their more limited revenue sources and the longer-term costs they bear for maintenance and repair. It would also improve access to these programs by rural, remote and northern communities who face even more acute revenue and maintenance challenges.

Restructuring federal infrastructure funding to provide a single annual transfer could provide increased funding predictability and flexibility for cities and communities if and only if it

included a provision that these funds be dedicated to municipal and not provincial infrastructure needs.

Immediately accelerating the federal Gas Tax Fund to its full value of \$2 billion is welcome, but since this will occur next year anyway, it is not a significant commitment. However, the Bloc's focus on this issue for the past three years likely contributed to the government's decision last year to make the Gas Tax Fund permanent.

Green Party of Canada

- ✓ *The Green Party Government will continue the gas tax commitment as envisioned by the previous government to allow for stable and predictable funding.*
- ✓ *The Green Party supports the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Large Cities Caucus request for a commitment of one cent from GST as a reasonable approach to stable financing.*
- ✓ *The Green Party will create a new pool of municipal infrastructure funding by changing tax rules to create a Municipal Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSPs) bond that can be held in RRSPs and self-directed RRSPs. In February 2006 alone, Canadians bought \$8 billion in mutual funds. Imagine if even half of that was available to our communities. This would be in addition to allocating an additional portion of the federal gasoline tax directly to the provinces for transfer to municipalities.*
- ✓ *Canada's biggest fiscal imbalance is the imbalance between municipal governments and everyone else. (...) The Green Party will redress the real fiscal imbalance facing the level of government least able to tax fully to cover its costs.*
- ✓ *Create six Municipal Superfunds of \$500 million/fund/year (an average of \$100 for every citizen per year) to which municipalities can apply for grant funding to replace the less specific Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund (CSIF). The proposed funds are: Community Brownfield Remediation (CBR) Fund; Water and Waste Treatment Facilities (WWTF) Fund; Sports, Cultural and Recreational Facilities (SCRF) Fund; Mass Transit Promotion (MTP) Fund; Cycling and Pedestrian Promotion (CPP) Fund; Community Housing Options Promotion (CHOP) Fund*
- ✓ *Apply "carbon conditionality clauses" to all federal funding to provinces, cities and institutions, requiring evidence of carbon reduction as a condition of payment.*

FCM analysis

The Green Party commitment to increase and then share the equivalent of one cent of the GST with municipalities refers to the cumulative total of infrastructure investments made in the platform, particularly the six Municipal Superfunds. Critically, it does not deliver the additional share of new growth revenues that municipalities are seeking. Nevertheless, this commitment does recognize that the growing infrastructure needs facing cities and communities are best addressed by sharing tax revenues that grow with the economy.

The Superfunds commitment represents a significant federal investment in high priority municipal infrastructure. However, by dividing the total funds available (\$3 billion per year)

into segregated and targeted funding envelopes, this approach will decrease flexibility and may distort local priority-setting and result in sub-optimal investments.

It is unclear how a “carbon conditionality” clause could be practically implemented. Local authorities, particularly smaller communities, cannot afford onerous application procedures and additional red tape. Municipal RRSPs, while perhaps a welcome addition to investment options for citizens, is unlikely to result in increased infrastructure investment, since it is the ability to service debt rather than access to capital that is the limiting factor for municipalities.

SECURING OUR MOBILITY

FCM Election Platform 2008

Canada is the only OECD country without a long-term, predictable, federal transit-investment policy. This policy failure could keep Canada from leveraging a market-driven shift in consumer behaviour from cars to transit that could change urban and suburban travel permanently.

The Government of Canada should:

- ❑ Put existing ad hoc, short-term dedicated transit funding provided through the Public Transit Fund and the Public Transit Capital Trust, worth just under \$350 million per year between 2005 and 2010, on a long-term footing, by topping up the federal Gas Tax Fund, to give transit systems the immediate certainty they need to respond to higher energy costs now; and
- ❑ Adopt the recommendations of the National Transit Strategy that were released by FCM and CUTA (Canadian Urban Transit Association) in February 2007, which calls for new federal investments of \$2 billion a year that will make public transit a success in both urban and rural Canada. This strategy will maintain transit systems in good repair and allow expansion to accommodate population growth, and a shift from cars to buses and light rail. It will also provide increased mobility for elderly, disabled and lower-income Canadians who require public transit options

Conservative Party of Canada

- ✓ *“A re-elected Conservative Government will cut the federal excise tax on diesel fuel in half, from four cents per liter to two cents per liter.... To cover rising costs, shipping companies have been forced to impose fuel surcharges on their customers, including manufacturers, food retailers and wholesalers, primary resource producers and public transit systems.”*
(Conservative Press Release, “Diesel Tax Reduction underscores choice in this election”, Sept 9, 2007, <http://www.conservative.ca/EN/1091/104415>)

FCM analysis

The priority for transit systems is new investments, not cuts to the fuel tax. A two-cent cut in the excise tax on diesel fuel is worth \$9.2 million per year to Canada’s transit systems – less than one-quarter of one per cent of their \$4.8 billion in annual operating costs (Source: Canadian Urban Transit Association, 2007). The proposed cut will cost the federal treasury \$600-\$800 million per year. Less than two per cent of those dollars, or one dollar in 60, will directly benefit transit systems. This excise tax cut will do nothing to get more buses on the road or improve existing commuter rail service, nor will it provide significant relief to municipal fleet operations when compared to the total fuel bill or daily market price fluctuations.

Liberal Party of Canada

- ✓ *“Liberal priorities for the \$70-billion [infrastructure] commitment will include... at least \$8 billion for a National Transit Strategy that will enable our cities to expand their transit systems and green their transit fleets.”*
- ✓ *“...[W]e will establish a policy to devote any unanticipated surplus — over and above a \$3-billion contingency fund to ensure fiscal prudence — to investment in infrastructure... The*

top priority will be investment in sustainable infrastructure: public transit, water systems, green energy, waste management and contaminated sites.”

FCM analysis

The Liberals are the first party to commit to a funded national transit strategy, with a longer time commitment than any other party as well, although the NDP platform promises a slightly larger annual allocation. FCM's National Transit Strategy calls for a permanent, dedicated allocation of \$2 billion annually.

New Democratic Party of Canada

- ✓ *“Jack Layton's legislation will... Invest stable, annual transit funding, combining an extra cent from the existing gas tax with revenue from making big polluters pay, investing \$4 billion in transit over the first four years of our program.”*
- ✓ *Increase support for rail transport — including developing high speed trains in urban corridors such as Edmonton-Calgary and Windsor-Quebec City.*

FCM analysis

The NDP plan calls for a \$750-million minimum annual dedicated investment to public transit, projected to ramp up to \$1.3 billion by 2012-2013, initially with \$400 million coming from an additional one-cent allocation of federal gas tax, and \$350 million from carbon auction proceedings. The four-year total allocation is \$3.65 billion. FCM's National Transit Strategy calls for a permanent, dedicated allocation of \$2 billion annually.

This commitment would provide stable and a presumably long-term source of transit funding, and recognizes the role that local transit providers play in supporting national climate change objectives. This new investment in transit, particularly if it is delivered as true revenue sharing rather than as a nominal transfer, would be a substantial step forward in federal-municipal fiscal relations. There is some uncertainty over the investment horizon of this commitment.

Inter-city commuter rail is a key component of FCM's National Transit Strategy and thus the commitment to Edmonton-Calgary and Windsor-Quebec City corridor high-speed rail would be welcome; however, no dollar commitments are offered in the platform.

Bloc Québécois

- ✓ *... il faut améliorer notre réseau de transport en commun. Or, l'Association canadienne du transport urbain estime qu'entre 2006 et 2010, les sociétés de transport en commun du Canada auront besoin de 20,7 milliards de dollars en investissements pour entretenir et élargir les réseaux de transport en commun déjà existants. Bien qu'environ 16 milliards soient actuellement financés, il subsiste encore un manque à gagner de 5 milliards de dollars. Cette situation illustre la nécessité d'ajouter un financement stable, que l'on pourra prévoir, aux programmes d'infrastructures afin que Québec puisse améliorer et développer son réseau de transport en commun.*

- ✓ «... stopper l'augmentation du nombre d'automobiles sur nos routes en favorisant une augmentation de 40 % de l'achalandage du transport en commun... Cela nécessite évidemment des investissements importants dans les infrastructures de transport en commun, notamment l'établissement de routes réservées pour le transport en commun, le développement de nouvelles lignes de trains de banlieue, de tramways et de trolley bus, l'établissement de voies réservées pour le transport en commun et le covoiturage, toutes des mesures qui doivent être assorties d'un bon contrôle, d'initiatives de partage de voitures, etc. Pour les seules régions de Montréal, Québec et Gatineau, ces développements demandent des investissements considérables.

FCM analysis

The Bloc commits to extending the public transit tax credit to all users by making it refundable (40 per cent of whom do not benefit from it now because their incomes are too low). They are also committing to providing stable, dedicated transit funding to address the transit deficit, and seek to increase transit ridership by 40 per cent through increased investment. These ambitious targets are welcome, but more detail is required to assess its viability.

Green Party of Canada

- ✓ *“Green Party MPs will... allocate one cent from GST on an approximate per capita basis to municipal governments for Green Cities initiatives, ensuring (through contractual agreements) that the funding is not used in ways that encourage urban sprawl, but instead to reduce sprawl and greenhouse gas emissions, conserve electricity and water, increase densification, expand convenient, safe, reliable and affordable public transit, and build cycling and walking paths. This funding could be transferred through Municipal Superfunds.”*
- ✓ *“Green Party MPs will...create six Municipal Superfunds of \$500 million/fund/year (an average of \$100 for every citizen per year) to which municipalities can apply for grant funding to replace the less specific Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund (CSIF). The proposed funds [include a...]: Mass Transit Promotion (MTP) Fund to improve and expand urban mass transit infrastructure and inter-modal connections, as well as car-sharing initiatives [and a...] Cycling and Pedestrian Promotion (CPP) Fund to support pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and smart-growth developments that transform urban areas and towns into walkable communities linked by transit to reduce the need for owning and using cars.”*
- ✓ *“Green Party MPs will... double existing funding to stimulate a massive re-investment in public transportation infrastructure in all Canadian towns and cities to make it convenient, safe, comfortable and affordable [and] Make transit passes tax-deductible to encourage workers and businesses to use public transport and provide financial support to provinces that provide free public transit passes to people living below the poverty line.”*
- ✓ *“A Green government will match provincial investments in transit with a baseline contribution of 25 per cent of the total cost, rising to 75 per cent where municipalities have established working policies to encourage smart growth and prevent sprawl and where transit authorities introduce progressive programs designed to increase ridership such as annual U-passes for colleges, eco-passes for neighbourhoods, commuter passes for businesses, and*

requirements that new developments must be served by transit and developers must provide three-year transit passes for all residents (as Boulder, Colorado has done).”

FCM analysis

The Green Party plan appears as if it would provide dedicated transit funding, but on an application basis only. The commitment to increase the federal share of investments to transit to 75 per cent recognizes the already significant contribution that municipalities make to transit operating costs. It is unclear how a “carbon conditionality” clause could be practically implemented. Local authorities, particularly smaller communities, cannot afford onerous application procedures and additional red tape.

SECURING OUR COMMUNITIES

FCM Election Platform 2008

All orders of government have a role in policing and these roles overlap. Each order of government must pay its fair share of policing costs, and all governments must be involved in planning and coordinating their activities. The cities and communities that fund, deliver, and receive police services should be full partners in that planning.

The Government of Canada should:

- As a first step, immediately invest funding currently provided through the Police Officer Recruitment Fund in a permanent program designed to directly support front-line, municipal police services;
- Appoint a special panel to review the existing distribution of policing functions. The panel, which must include municipal representation, should examine policing roles and responsibilities; resource allocation and capacity; and RCMP contract policing; and
- Commit to cover the cost to municipalities of carrying out federal police duties offloaded to municipal police departments.

Conservative Party of Canada

- ✓ *A re-elected Conservative Government will restore balance by introducing a new law dealing with young offenders.*
- ✓ *A re-elected Conservative government will prevent serious crimes from being punished by "conditional sentencing."*
- ✓ *To help in rehabilitating vulnerable youth and to avoid being drawn into a life of crime, we will extend the Youth Gang Prevention Fund and increase its budget to \$10 million per year.*
- ✓ *As a first step, a re-elected Conservative Government will launch a Joint Force Land and Marine Border Patrol Pilot Project with the Customs and Border Services Agency and the RCMP to patrol unguarded U.S. road and marine crossings to Canada in Quebec.*

FCM analysis

FCM applauds the Conservative Party for putting the issue of crime and safety squarely on the campaign agenda. However, for new legislation to have any real-world impact, the government needs to back it up with front-line resources.

While funding provided by the existing federal Police Officers Recruitment Fund has relieved some of the most pressing cost pressures, the fund falls well far short of providing the 2,500 police officers promised in the 2006 election campaign. In fact, at \$80 million per year for five years, this fund would only support 600 additional officers — and for only five years of the average 30-year career. Unfortunately, in this campaign, the Conservative Party is silent on the issue of additional resources for front-line policing.

FCM supports crime prevention programs that actively target youth before they become involved with gangs, drugs, violence and other criminal activity, and that provide alternatives for youth by developing parks and recreation facilities. However, the funding provided in this

commitment falls short of FCM's call for sustained investments in targeted services that prevent crime, including support for municipal governments to foster collaborative and evidence-based strategies to prevent crime before it takes root in our communities.

We welcome the recognition that the federal government must do more to patrol unguarded road and marine crossings along the U.S. border. While we support the objective of limiting the number of illegal handguns crossing the border, additional resources dedicated to border security should also ease some of the burden faced by municipal police forces that must take on what is otherwise a federal responsibility. However, the federal government must also do more to ensure that municipalities are not forced to underwrite federal police costs in other areas, such as cybercrime, terrorism and major drug investigations.

Liberal Party of Canada

- ✓ *A Liberal government will commit \$80 million to help police services across the country effectively fight crime.*
- ✓ *A Liberal government will create a \$40-million Gun Violence and Gang Prevention Fund, supporting community-based programs and skills development for youth at risk.*
- ✓ *A new Liberal government will make sensible amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YJCA) that maintain the balanced approach to youth justice while filling gaps in the legislation that relate to violent youth offenders.*
- ✓ *A Liberal Government will ban military assault rifles while ensuring that rifles with legitimate purpose are not prohibited.*

FCM analysis

While FCM welcomes the recognition of need for additional policing resources, the funding provided in this commitment falls well short of FCM's call for sustained funding to compensate municipalities for their work in performing federal policing duties.

FCM supports crime prevention programs that actively target youth before they become involved with gangs, drugs, violence and other criminal activity, and that provide alternatives for youth by developing parks and recreation facilities. However, the funding provided in this commitment falls short of FCM's call for sustained investments in targeted services that prevent crime, including support for municipal governments to foster collaborative and evidence-based strategies to prevent crime before it takes root in our communities.

New legislation as proposed could prove to be an additional burden for front-line policing. For new legislation to have any real-world impact, the federal government needs to back it up with front-line resources.

FCM has long stressed that new firearms' controls must recognize the unique circumstances in urban, rural and remote parts of Canada. New measures should not impact upon those whose livelihood depends on the responsible safe use of firearms, and this commitment appears to meet that criterion.

New Democratic Party of Canada

- ✓ *Spend \$100 million each year over four years to put 2,500 new police officers on the streets.*
- ✓ *To stop the spread of gangs, we will work with at-risk youth by providing them real alternatives. We will invest \$50 million a year for crime prevention strategies.*
- ✓ *Ensure first-degree murder charges for gang related homicides.*
- ✓ *Enable provinces, cities, and communities to choose to implement an “absolute ban” on handguns.*

FCM analysis

While FCM welcomes the recognition of need for additional policing resources, the funding provided in this commitment will cover the costs associated with barely half the number of officers advertised. Moreover, this funding will expire in four years, meaning that municipalities will likely be forced to pick up the ongoing costs of any new officers hired. The municipal sector has long called for multi-year, sustainable funding; regrettably, the funding for policing provided in this commitment fails to meet this criterion.

FCM supports crime prevention programs that actively target youth before they become involved with gangs, drugs, violence and other criminal activity, and that provide alternatives for youth by developing parks and recreation facilities. Without knowing over how many years funding will be provided, it is difficult to determine whether this commitment responds to FCM's call for sustained investments in targeted services that prevent crime.

FCM has long stressed that new firearms' controls must recognize the unique circumstances in urban, rural and remote parts of Canada. New measures should not impact upon those whose livelihood depends on the responsible safe use of firearms, and this commitment appears to meet that criterion.

Bloc Québécois

- ✓ *Implement a series of measures to provide police forces with the means to fight street gangs.*
- ✓ *Abolish release after one-sixth of a sentence has been served.*
- ✓ *Eliminate the almost automatic statutory release (release after two-thirds of a sentence as been served).*
- ✓ *Oppose toughening the Young Offenders Act which boils down to imprisoning children with hardened criminals.*

FCM analysis

While this commitment does not specify the funding commitment, FCM welcomes the recognition of need for additional policing resources. While amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act may or may not be needed, what is clear is that front-line police officers need additional resources to meet growing challenges.

Green Party of Canada

- ✓ *Dedicate resources to computer crimes specialists combating the online sexual exploitation of children through child pornography and Internet luring. It is important that the RCMP is provided with the necessary resources and tools to tackle this problem on a national scale.*
- ✓ *The risks created by having dangerous weapons in our urban centres are significant. We will introduce balanced and fair measures to eventually ban handguns and semi-automatic firearms.*
- ✓ *At the same time, the use of guns in our urban centres is typically not the same as the use of guns in our rural communities. We will ensure that law-abiding citizens are free from unreasonable fees and the threat of criminalization.*

FCM analysis

While this commitment does not specify the funding commitment, FCM welcomes the recognition of need for additional policing resources, especially in areas that have been offloaded to municipalities, including cybercrime. However, this commitment fails to mention other offloaded mandates, such as port policing and border security.

FCM has long stressed that new firearms' controls must recognize the unique circumstances in urban, rural and remote parts of Canada. New measures should not impact upon those whose livelihood depends on the responsible safe use of firearms, and this commitment appears to meet that criteria.

SECURING OUR HOMES

FCM Election Platform 2008

Finding adequate housing is becoming increasingly difficult in Canada, even for middle-income families, and homelessness persists. At this critical time, the downward trend in federal investment in housing, which was halted in 2001, may soon resume. The Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) and the Homeless Partnering Strategy (HPS), together worth \$526 million, will both expire in March 2009, as will the Bill C-48 housing trust funds, with an allocation of \$1.4 billion.

The Government of Canada should:

- Maintain existing levels of investment in housing beyond March 2009 as a bridge to a long-term national housing strategy;
- Develop and fully fund a long-term housing strategy that includes a clear commitment to the elimination of homelessness within a decade.

Conservative Party of Canada

- ✓ *A new Conservative Government will phase in, over four years, a tax credit for first-time homebuyers for up to \$5,000 of the closing costs on the purchase of a new home. This will reduce first-time homebuyers' tax payable by 15 per cent of their eligible closing costs, up to \$5,000. (The cost of this program was estimated at \$200 million annually).*
- ✓ *On September 17, 2008 the Conservative Government announced a commitment of more than \$1.9 billion in funding over five years (\$387.9 million per year) to in support of housing and homelessness programs in Canada. This funding ensured that the Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI), the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) and the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) would not expire on March 31, 2009.*
- ✓ *[From their election platform:] Stephen Harper and the Conservatives are committed to ensuring that all Canadians have an adequate quality of housing. We have extended the Homelessness Partnering Strategy for the next two years and will maintain funding to deal with homelessness at least at the current levels. We will work with provinces, municipalities and charitable organizations to look at ways of improving the effectiveness of federal dollars spent on homelessness initiatives.*
- ✓ *We have also renewed funding for the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program to assist low-income Canadians in renovating their homes and for the Affordable Housing Initiative, which supports the creation of new rental housing units.*

FCM analysis

It is still not clear whether the September 17 housing program extension was a government announcement or a campaign promise by the party. The September 17 announcement differs in some key details, particularly the renewal period, from the platform commitment. Regardless, it eliminates the ongoing uncertainty over these soon-to-expire programs and lays the foundation for a long-term national action plan on housing and homelessness. The platform commitment also paves the way for all orders of government to work in partnership

towards an improved, long-term approach to Canada's affordable housing and homelessness challenges.

The proposal for a tax credit for first-time homebuyers will cost \$200 million annually, and will be restricted to first-time home buyers of only newly constructed housing. A more efficient use of these would be a more targeted initiative to help lower income people enter the home ownership market with a focus towards already existing homes which are often more affordable and do not incur the additional GST cost.

Liberal Party of Canada

- ✓ *Provide for 30,000 new social housing units and refurbishing another 30,000 existing units to make them more liveable. As part of this commitment, we will look to expand subsidies for dedicated units for low-income Canadians in federally funded co-operative housing. We will renew the Residential Rehabilitation Program and the Homelessness Partnering Initiative.*
- ✓ *A Liberal government will provide powerful incentives for green home renovations that will trigger a boom in home improvement to capture the 20 to 40 per cent energy savings that are easily available for most homes. Our objective is to retrofit 50 per cent of all Canada's homes and buildings by 2020, and 100 per cent by 2030.*
- ✓ *A Liberal government will introduce a \$140-million Low-income Homes Retrofit Partnership Fund to help upgrade low-income housing across Canada, including federally administered co-operative housing, and reduce energy costs for those least able to pay.*

FCM analysis

The Liberals have committed \$620 million over five years to build 30,000 and refurbish another 30,000 social housing units (which may not be sufficient investment to achieve these results) in addition to the costs of renewing the two programs (\$526 million). A new and innovative approach to financing these new and refurbished units is proposed although not detailed. The total contribution of \$1.1 billion over five years, in addition to the relatively short-term investment horizon, appears to fall short of municipal needs in this area, although more details on the approach is required for a full assessment.

New Democratic Party of Canada

- ✓ *Implement a durable, comprehensive and fully-funded affordable housing strategy that meets Canada's international obligations, as set out by the United Nations. We will build towards the 10-year goal of the One Percent Solution — with one per cent of federal spending allocated for truly affordable housing. Non-profit and co-operative homes for families and single individuals, including students. Upgrading homes: Funding to expand federal housing rehabilitation programs to maintain and retrofit existing substandard homes. Homelessness services and transitions: Funding to extend federal homelessness programs to ensure that services and transitional housing are available across Canada.*
- ✓ *Re-vamp the ecoEnergy programs to provide low-interest loans and improved grants for energy efficient home and building retrofits [and] a new program to retrofit low-income homes.*

FCM analysis

With annual federal expenditures at just over \$200 billion, the One Percent Solution would deliver \$2 billion annually to housing, which represents slightly more than currently allocated to the federal housing programs and mortgage subsidies. Because this commitment would grow and be sustained over time, the result would be stable, long-term funding for housing — a core ask in FCM's national action plan on housing. In addition, the platform calls for a 10-year housing and homelessness strategy, also a core ask.

Bloc Québécois

- ✓ *Implement a 10-year interest-free loan program for first-time buyers and provide financing to maintain and build social housing.*

FCM analysis

More details would need to be provided to provide a proper analysis. An interest-free loan program for first-time buyers might help to lower pressure on rental stock, but at an unreasonably high opportunity cost. Those funds might be more efficiently deployed elsewhere.

Green Party of Canada

- ✓ *Build new subsidized affordable homes; Provide rent supplements or shelter assistance; Provide credit and loan guarantees to non-profit housing organizations and cooperatives; Subsidize private developers to include a percentage of affordable housing in their housing projects; extend provisions in the Income Tax Act to offer tax incentives to build affordable, healthy, energy-efficient, multi-unit rental housing; and dedicate funding to the co-operative housing sector to enable more new affordable housing projects to proceed.*
- ✓ *Funding for a nation-wide program to energy upgrade all low-income rental housing on a phased, year-by-year basis by 2025, as Germany is doing.*

FCM analysis

The Green housing platform responds to many of FCM's asks: building new and refurbishing existing social housing units (although at lower numbers than FCM's national action plan); providing credits and loan assistance to non-profit housing cooperatives; subsidizing costs to developers to encourage them to build affordable housing in their new projects; and tax incentives to increase the development of rental properties. However, there is neither reference to renewing the existing social housing programs nor any specific dollar amounts.

SECURING OUR ENVIRONMENT

FCM Election Platform 2008

North American cities are vulnerable to the effects of climate change and need to prepare for these effects. These effects include severe weather, longer and hotter heat waves, floods and droughts, pest infestations and changing freeze-thaw cycles. Canada's North will be especially hard hit, as winter ice roads disappear and permafrost melts.

The Government of Canada should:

- Adopt a long-term national transit strategy;
- Help municipal governments improve their energy efficiency, and the energy efficiency of public and low income housing, through a national building energy retrofit program; and
- Establish a fund to help municipal governments assess and respond to their vulnerabilities to climate change and severe weather events.

Conservative Party of Canada

- ✓ *A re-elected Conservative Government will bolster the protection of our water, air and land through a new Environmental Enforcement Action Plan that takes meaningful, achievable steps to hold environmental offenders accountable once and for all.*
- ✓ *A regulatory framework that will impose mandatory emissions reduction targets on Canadian industry and reduce Canada's greenhouse gas emissions by an absolute 20 per cent by 2020 [using a 2006 baseline year].*

FCM analysis

The Environmental Enforcement Action Plan proposal is intriguing and would be a welcome tool to support municipal efforts to limit pollution at source. However, care must be taken to ensure that this new enforcement tool does not inappropriately target municipal planning and development services who are co-regulators, alongside federal, provincial, and territorial governments, of businesses and citizens.

The GHG emission control plan does not recognize the potential role that municipalities could play in contributing to national GHG reduction objectives.

Liberal Party of Canada

- ✓ *A Liberal government will reduce greenhouse gas emissions to at least 20 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020, and increasing this goal to at least 25 per cent if other countries make comparable efforts; reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 60 to 80 per cent below 1990 emission levels by 2050.*
- ✓ *A Liberal government will coordinate a National Adaptation Strategy so that all orders of government can better understand and prepare for the effects of climate change that are already inevitable. Our new Interdisciplinary Sustainability Fund will provide funding for*

research into these effects and our substantial infrastructure spending will, of course, consider adaptation needs.

- ✓ *At least \$8 billion for a National Transit Strategy that will enable our cities to expand their systems and green their transit fleets*
- ✓ *A Liberal government will provide powerful incentives for green home renovations that will trigger a boom in home improvement to capture the 20 to 40 per cent energy savings that are easily available for most homes. Our objective is to retrofit 50 per cent of all Canada's homes and buildings by 2020, and 100 per cent by 2030.*
- ✓ *A Liberal government will introduce a \$140-million Low-income Homes Retrofit Partnership Fund to help upgrade low-income housing across Canada, including federally administered co-operative housing, and reduce energy costs for those least able to pay.*

FCM analysis

These proposals respond well to FCM's platform priorities on the role that transit can play in climate change mitigation, the need for support for municipal energy efficiency initiatives, the retrofitting of low income housing, and climate change adaptation. It is not yet clear whether the resources and incentives made available for green home renovations and retrofits will be provided over a long enough time period to allow for appropriate planning, but they are an excellent start.

New Democratic Party of Canada

- ✓ *Build on the Climate Change Accountability Act, a bill that sets the target of an 80 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and a medium-term target to bring emissions 25 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020.*
- ✓ *Make polluters pay for costs of pollution, through a cap-and-trade system that rewards big polluters who reduce emissions, and punishes those who don't.*
- ✓ *Introduce Canada Environment Action Bonds, a secure new investment that Canadians can purchase to help fight climate change by raising capital for environmentally-friendly infrastructure and renewable energy.*
- ✓ *Invest stable, annual transit funding, combining an extra cent from the existing gas tax with revenue from making big polluters pay, investing \$4 billion in transit over the first four years of our program.*
- ✓ *Re-vamp the ecoEnergy programs to provide low-interest loans and improved grants for energy efficient home and building retrofits [and] a new program to retrofit low-income homes.*

FCM analysis

This NDP climate change platform does not explicitly recognize municipalities as a partner in supporting national climate change objectives; however, it does link investments in transit with revenues from their climate pricing regime, which is an important and welcome step.

Details are insufficient on the ecoEnergy program, particularly with regards to levels of investment, to analyze fully, although the commitment to revamp these important programs is welcome.

Bloc Québécois

- ✓ *Quebec has a strategic and sustainable interest to reduce its dependence on oil in order to ensure its prosperity and protect the environment.*
- ✓ *Fight climate change — apply the Kyoto Protocol, with a true carbon market, based on a territorial approach.*
- ✓ *Provide tax incentives to help families convert their home heating system from heating oil to electricity, which is mainly produced from renewable energy.*
- ✓ *Provide a refundable tax credit for transit passes.*

FCM analysis

The Bloc's platform focuses mainly on reducing Quebec's dependence on oil and adhering to the Kyoto protocol. The Bloc also highlights tax incentives for heating electrically and a tax credit for transit passes, the former of which is a component of FCM's transit strategy.

Green Party of Canada

- ✓ *Reaffirm Canada's commitment to come as close as possible to Kyoto, and beyond 2012: 30 per cent below 1990 by 2020, 80 per cent by 2050. Adopt carbon taxes, carbon markets, and cap and trade.*
- ✓ *Apply "carbon conditionality clauses" to all federal funding to provinces, cities and institutions, requiring evidence of carbon reduction as a condition of payment.*
- ✓ *Establish special task forces involving all stakeholders, all levels of government and scientific experts to prepare over the next two years area-specific climate change adaptive strategies. The first such task forces shall be set up in places particularly vulnerable to climate shift and disruptions, the Canadian Arctic, coastal zones, the Prairies, and the Interior of British Columbia.*
- ✓ *Set up a Climate Change Adaptation Fund to assist those areas hard hit by "natural" disasters linked to global warming.*
- ✓ *Megastore retail outlets which depend on customer use of cars will be encouraged to adopt parking charges, combined with transit access and the home delivery of purchases by means of conditionality clauses signed with municipalities seeking federal funds.*
- ✓ *100 per cent of Canada's power from renewable energy by 2040 (includes steps towards reduced consumption per capita).*

- ✓ *Funding for a nation-wide program to energy upgrade all low-income rental housing on a phased, year-by-year basis by 2025, as Germany is doing.*

FCM analysis

The Green Party Platform recognizes the importance of including municipalities and communities in national environmental discussions and initiatives. The platform addresses housing and building efficiency and the need to upgrade all low-income rental housing. In addition the Green party would fund climate change adaptation targeting vulnerable areas such as the arctic and coastal zones. It is unclear how a “carbon conditionality” clause could be practically implemented. Local authorities, particularly smaller communities, cannot afford onerous application procedures and additional red-tape. Furthermore, it would charge a methane tax on landfills which could further burden municipal solid waste efforts particularly in small communities where methane capture technology has not yet been developed to the appropriate scale or complexity.

SECURING OUR RURAL, REMOTE & NORTHERN COMMUNITIES

FCM Election Platform 2008

Depending on the definition used, anywhere from 22 per cent to 38 per cent of Canadians live in rural areas. These communities are struggling with shrinking tax bases, dwindling populations and rising fuel prices.

The Government of Canada should:

- Strengthen the federal Rural Secretariat as a champion for rural issues within the federal government and especially in Cabinet;
- Ensure all federal infrastructure funds — including the new Public-Private Partnership Fund (P3s) — deliver dedicated funds for smaller communities and may be accessed by rural, remote and northern communities;
- Provide long-term funding for infrastructure and transportation that supports rural sustainability, including: small airports and other critical transportation infrastructure; water and wastewater; and broadband Internet access;
- Recognize that northern sovereignty depends on northern settlement, and that an agenda for northern sovereignty must begin with a strategy to keep our northern communities economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable.

Conservative Party of Canada

- ✓ *A re-elected Conservative Government will continue to support rural and remote communities by investing in new infrastructure throughout rural and northern Canada.*
- ✓ *We will establish a new regional development agency to cover Northern Canada, consolidating existing northern development activities into one agency.*
- ✓ *We will make sure that rural and low-employment communities of Southern Ontario will be able to access regional development programs along with Northern and Eastern Ontario.*
- ✓ *A re-elected Conservative Government led by Stephen Harper will take additional steps to ensure that Canada's communities and hospitals have more doctors and nurses where they are most needed.*
- ✓ *Improve the regulatory process for Northern natural resource projects, as recommended by The Road to Improvement, a report our Government commissioned.*

FCM analysis

FCM has asked for a fully-resourced, federal economic development agency in the North, with a strong emphasis on diversifying northern economies. This proposal refers to consolidating existing INAC and other federal northern development agencies into one, but it is not clear if there will be new funding or if it will simply be redistributing existing funding. Regardless, this type of change could inject new energy and a refined focus into the government's work on northern sustainability. This new focus must include building strong, vibrant communities.

This part of the platform does not refer to enhancing community infrastructure; without that, any attempts at resource development will be weakened or hampered by the lack of roads to drive on, homes to live in and safe water to drink. Our position is that one of the strongest demonstrations of sovereignty is the existence of economically strong and sustainable communities, which require both the infrastructure and resources to support them. Nevertheless, this focus on northern sovereignty provides a good starting point for a refined program that recognizes the contributions that municipal government could play.

Liberal Party of Canada

- ✓ *Allocate at least \$3 billion for a dedicated Small Communities Fund, to ensure that all Canadians are able to see strengthened, more resilient infrastructure.*
- ✓ *Complete the job of making broadband Internet service available to rural communities; and keep rural post offices open, recommitting to the Liberal moratorium on closing rural post offices.*
- ✓ *Help rural communities attract more doctors by forgiving \$10,000 of student debt for doctors in exchange for each year of practice in a rural or under-serviced area for a minimum of five years; and support volunteer firefighters by providing a refundable tax credit of \$2,000 for volunteer firefighters and emergency service workers.*
- ✓ *A Liberal government will secure our claim to the Arctic. We will promote the sovereignty and interests of the Arctic not only through military or marine infrastructure, but also through environmental protection, surveillance, search and rescue, and by encouraging the sustainable use of the Arctic's natural resources by our Arctic peoples.*
- ✓ *A Liberal government will work with Northern communities and territorial governments to find ways to mitigate the effects of climate change and to support innovation and research on cold-climate technologies.*

FCM analysis

The platform addresses several FCM asks: completing Internet service to rural Canada, ensuring continued postal service to rural communities, improving access to health care, tax credits for rural volunteer emergency workers and maintaining regional development centres. However, there are no dollar figures attached to these commitments. There is a commitment to a dedicated \$3-billion Small Communities Fund to ensure that smaller rural, communities will have access to infrastructure funding which responds well to FCM's ask for dedicated funding for small communities.

The Liberal platform also includes enhancing the military, environmental protection, sustainable use of northern resources, mapping the seabed, and climate change and adaptation. However, there is little or no reference to the need to increase or enhance northern community infrastructure. Increasing a military presence will not work if you do not have the roads for them to drive on or homes for them to live in. Strengthening Canada's sovereignty in the North must include enhancing the infrastructure, and providing resources to develop and diversify northern economies.

New Democratic Party of Canada

- ✓ *Build Northern infrastructure like small craft harbours, highways, water plants, and airstrips, including appropriate local renewable energy sources, and a deep water port in Iqaluit.*
- ✓ *Close the Northern Prosperity Gap by increasing the Northern Resident's Tax Deduction.*
- ✓ *Create an economic development agency for the North.*
- ✓ *Invest in essential services — such as health care — based on the true cost of delivering these services in the North, rather than the Liberal and Conservative approach of using pan-Canadian benchmarks that short-change northern people and communities.*

FCM analysis

While the NDP sovereignty platform does include many of the same commitments as the other parties, increased military presence, mapping the seabed, and climate change and adaptation in the North, it is the only party platform that specifically raises the need for enhancing Northern infrastructure including small harbours, highways and water. The NDP platform also promises to create an economic development agency for the North and enhanced access to services, which are core FCM asks.

Bloc Québécois

- ✓ *The Bloc did not make any commitments specific to rural, remote or northern communities.*

Green Party of Canada

- ✓ *Develop a comprehensive pan-Arctic waste management strategy that addresses issues like dumping of wastes into water and open dump burning on land and that integrates community, mining, fishing, cruise ships, tourism, commercial shipping and military waste management strategies.*
- ✓ *Establish terrestrial and marine protected areas in an ecologically representative network in the three northern Territories.*
- ✓ *Invest in renewable local energy sources (wind and solar to avoid the hugely expensive and polluting dependency on imported diesel).*

FCM analysis

There is an understandable emphasis on environmental protection for the Arctic as well as a focus on climate change, adaptation and renewable local energy resources in the Green platform. The focus on adaptation is particularly welcome. However, there is no real reference to enhancing northern infrastructure, developing and diversifying northern economies and creating economically viable, sustainable northern communities as an essential element of northern sovereignty.

COMMITMENTS ON OTHER MUNICIPAL PRIORITIES

New Democratic Party - Railways

- ✓ *Reduce accidents and railroad derailments. We will establish and better enforce high standards of public safety in air, rail, road and marine transport based on carrier responsibility, best practices, and recommendations from regulatory and legal investigations.*

FCM analysis

Municipal governments are often in the position of providing front-line emergency response to rail accidents, even though this responsibility is in federal jurisdiction. A proactive federal approach to improving rail safety as well as developing appropriate compensation frameworks for municipal front line response would be welcome.

All parties – Arts & Culture

- ✓ *All parties have committed to either restoring or even expanding funding for arts and culture programs.*
- ✓ *All parties have committed to not re-introducing Bill C-10, which may have resulted in the censorship of Canadian-supported film productions.*

FCM analysis

The arts and culture and film industries play a significant role in the local economies of many cities and communities across Canada. Continued federal investments in these industries will support local economic development.