

**FCM Annual Conference 2009**

Whistler, B.C.

# **PROTECTING THE FEDERAL GAS TAX FUND:** A Workshop on Effective Advocacy and Communications

**Presentation by** Brock Carlton,  
Gabriel Miller and Michael Buda,  
FCM, and Massimo Bergamini,  
InterChange Public Affairs

FCM.ca

June 8, 2009

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# FCM's Gas Tax Advocacy

## Laying the foundations (2001 – 2004)

- C-5 is created
  - Montreal, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Calgary
- A number of studies and reports on urban issues
  - TD Bank Report on Canadian Cities (2002)
  - Prime Minister's Caucus Task Force on Urban Issues
  - Early Warning: can Canadian Cities compete

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# FCM's Gas Tax Advocacy

## Laying the foundations (2001 – 2004)

- Paul Martin's New Deal for cities (and communities)
- FCM Big City Mayors' Caucus endorses fuel tax
- FCM Board endorsed fuel tax

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# FCM's Gas Tax Advocacy

## Laying the foundations (2001 – 2004)

- Story primarily framed in media as cities' narrative
- Urban news outlets (Toronto Star)
- 30,000 foot narrative
- Making the policy case

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# FCM's Gas Tax Advocacy

## Laying the foundations (2001 – 2004)

"All politics is local"

**Thomas "Tip" O'Neil**

Former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# FCM's Gas Tax Advocacy

## Laying the foundations (2001 – 2004)

- FCM's Bridging the Gap campaign (2003) - local engagement
  - Cities and communities narrative
  - Engaged and empowered local councils to lead campaign
  - Framed local MP's accountability
  - Moved story to street level
  - Media engagement

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# FCM's Gas Tax Advocacy

## Some lessons

- Sound policy analysis is an essential foundation...
- ...but effective advocacy must revolve around real stories about real people
- The media prefers stories about people to stories about policies
- Local MPs more likely to become engaged on local issues

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# Challenges to the Gas Tax

## When is permanent not permanent?

- Permanence a relative term
- Canadian history is full of examples of “permanent” programs that were cancelled
  - The Crownest Pass Rate (Crow Rate)
  - Canada Assistance Plan

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# Challenges to the Gas Tax

## When is permanent not permanent?

- Economic and political context changes
  - 1995 federal budget
  - Country was facing a fiscal crisis
  - Deficit elimination became the number one priority

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# Challenges to the Gas Tax

## When is permanent not permanent?

- Canada in the midst of a deep recession
- Heavy federal spending in cities and communities
- After a decade of balanced budgets, we are facing a massive deficit

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# Challenges to the Gas Tax

## When is permanent not permanent?

- Deficit this year project at \$ 50 billion (likely higher)
- TD Bank forecasts accumulated debt of \$ 170 billion in next 4 years

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# Challenges to the Gas Tax

## When is permanent not permanent?

- Deficit likely to again become key public policy issue
- Government will look at areas that have received proportionally more money

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# Challenges to the Gas Tax

## When is permanent not permanent?

- A political truism

*"Politicians want visibility and recognition"*

- A preference for ribbon cutting

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# Challenges to the Gas Tax

## Characteristics of the Gas Tax

- Poor alignment between projects and funding source
- Poor visibility protocols in fed/prov agreements

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# Challenges to the Gas Tax

## What does this mean?

- The federal government sees few political benefits from investment
- Local MPs see little political benefits (visibility)
- In a period of scarce resources MPs will want to maximize
- the political benefits of the programs they support

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# Communications Strategies

- Increase visibility for government and local MPs
- Establish a direct link between community outcomes and Parliament
- Most important:
  - Establish a link between success and local MP

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# Communications Strategies

## Telling the Gas Tax Story

- Focus on local stories
- Local success stories and benefits
- Stories about people
- Always identify the gas tax as the source and give credit

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# Communications Strategies

## Telling the Gas Tax Story

- Share with your local media
- Share with civil society
- Share with your residents

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



# Communications Strategies

## Some practical strategies

- Create a Gas Tax Page on your community's web site
  - [www.calgaryinfrastructure.ca](http://www.calgaryinfrastructure.ca)
  - [www.toronto.ca/gastaxworks](http://www.toronto.ca/gastaxworks)
- Brand each year a number of projects as Gas Tax Projects
  - Invite your MP to these ribbon cuttings

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

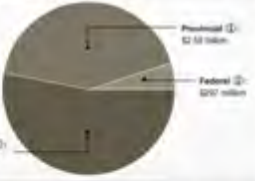
Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités



City of Calgary Building Infrastructure, Ensuring Accountability Capital Project Interactive Microsoft Internet Explorer

Approved Capital Budget Funding Sources

By clicking on portions of the pie, you can show or hide projects funded by that partner. National funding will be available in subsequent years.



Provincial \$2.58 billion  
Federal \$207 million  
Municipal \$1.21 billion

Project Types

- Community Safety
- Community Development
- Utility
- Environmental Sustainability

Capital Project Interactive Map



City of Toronto: Gas Tax Fund - How has Toronto used this money? Microsoft Internet Explorer

Government of Canada Gas Tax Fund - Helping to Keep Toronto Moving!

The Government of Canada Gas Tax Fund (GTF) is an excellent example of federal funding for cities and communities that works.

First announced in the 2005 Federal Budget, the GTF provides a predictable, long-term source of funding for municipalities to support investment in sustainable infrastructure which contributes to:

- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- Cleaner water, and/or
- Cleaner air

The program's flexibility and predictability allows municipalities to plan for the future and invest in projects that address local priorities.

Recognizing the GTF's success, the Government of Canada extended the program for an additional five years in 2007 and then committed to making the program permanent in the 2009 Federal Budget. This is great news for Toronto and municipalities across Canada.

Toronto will receive \$407.3 million from the Federal Gas Tax Fund between 2005 - 2010. This year alone (2009/2010) Toronto will receive \$152.9 million.






FCM.ca

Federation of Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne des municipalités

# Communications Strategies

## Some practical strategies

- Table a yearly report in Council on Gas Tax projects
  - Focus on community outcomes
  - Clearly recognize funding source
- Share local Gas Tax information with your MP
- Calculate what the gas tax represents in terms of property tax points for your community

Federation of  
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne  
des municipalités

