

## **Municipal Governments are Seeking Leadership and Investment from All Federal Parties**

Toronto, Ontario, September 8, 2008 -- The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) today called upon national party leaders to ensure the needs of Canada's municipalities and property tax payers are front and centre as Canadians go to the polls on October 14, 2008.

"Canada can only be as strong as its communities," said Peter Hume, President of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. "All federal parties must recognize that investment in communities is needed to promote job creation and economic competitiveness, and to better protect our environment. Canadians are now looking at all Federal parties to see who best shares their desire to build strong, competitive, environmentally and fiscally sustainable communities."

AMO's immediate priorities for the next Parliament:

Establishing Fairness, Employment Insurance and Immigration - Equitable treatment for Ontario taxpayers would eliminate Employment Insurance rules that provide lower benefits to unemployed Ontario workers. Furthermore, immigrants who choose Ontario should receive fair and equitable funding for services that help them successfully settle into the economic and social fabric of our communities.

Investing in our Social Foundation - Ontario municipalities are required to spend more than \$220 million a year on child care and more than \$1.2 billion a year for housing and homelessness programs. These expenditures on social programs force municipalities to divert property tax revenue away from core municipal priorities, including infrastructure investment and other community services. The federal government's revenue sources, not municipal property taxes, should fund basic social housing and child care. Ontario municipalities want the federal government to fulfill its responsibilities for child care funding and to adopt a national housing strategy.

Growing Infrastructure -- Ontario's massive municipal infrastructure deficit undermines productivity, contributes to gridlock, and discourages investment and job creation. While the Building Canada Plan, which includes Federal Gas Tax Fund revenue sharing with municipalities, is helpful, the needs of Ontario municipalities are not being met. In the face of Ontario's daunting infrastructure deficit, an escalator formula is needed to ensure that gas tax sharing keeps pace with inflation, and additional funds are needed for priority infrastructure investment, including social housing.

"These priorities are all investments that will put communities first. When communities come first and do well, the nation does well," said Hume.

AMO will be evaluating the policy platforms of all the political parties against these priorities and providing the analysis to its members.

AMO is a non-profit organization representing almost all of Ontario's 445 municipal governments. AMO supports strong and effective municipal government in Ontario and promotes the value of municipal government as a vital and essential component of Ontario and Canada's political system.

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