

Cities of NB Association
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August 11, 2020

The Honourable Blaine Higgs
Premier
Province of New Brunswick
Chancery Place
P.O. Box 6000
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1

Dear Premier

The announcement this week of a potential agreement with each of our elected political parties to work together in the coming months to avoid the need for a provincial election at this time is a bold and important step towards moving this province forward in a post-covid economy. We applaud your commitment to working together in the best interests of all New Brunswickers.

As the mayors representing New Brunswick's 8 cities, we wanted to take this opportunity to reach out to each of you to outline some key areas that need to be added to the agenda within this new model of cooperative governing. Specifically, we are calling on each of you to bring municipal reform, binding arbitration reform and increased municipal infrastructure spending to the top of your shared agenda for moving New Brunswick forward.

An imbalance currently exists in New Brunswick that results in municipal resident taxpayers paying more than their fair share for key infrastructure and services that benefit the majority of New Brunswickers. This has created a financial crisis in some of our municipalities that is having a negative impact on the entire province.

It is our belief that the Province must consider the importance of strong cities and strong municipalities as well as ensuring a level playing field for all New Brunswickers when it comes to paying for access to the infrastructure and services they use.

Another key issue limiting the growth and prosperity of our cities and, in turn, our entire province is the ongoing issue of sky-rocketing costs for emergency services. Since 1994, the cities of New Brunswick have paid an estimated \$133 million in wage increases to police and fire that are higher than wage increases for all other municipal employees not eligible for binding arbitration. While our cities strongly value the work of police and fire there is no ability today to find a better balance between protective services wages and other key city wages – all the while ensuring the ability to pay for everything without forcing citizens to pay more tax.

In fact, if nothing changes by 2030, New Brunswick municipalities will be paying \$31.6 million per year in excess police/fire wages and will have paid over \$390 million in excess wages since 1994. This is a significant increase that today will be paid for by city tax payers.

That's why the 8 Cities have continued to ask government to continue with efforts to address this key affordability challenge associated with legislated interest arbitration and look to make changes that would consider the affordability of these escalating costs as part of ongoing negotiations with these important employees.

Finally, we urge each of you to further examine New Brunswick's opportunities under the Government of Canada's Integrated Bilateral Agreement that would lead to more infrastructure spending in communities cross this province. These potential developments would come at a time when all New Brunswick municipalities could benefit significantly from these types of investment. These opportunities are too important to ignore – especially as we continue to deal with impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic - both on businesses and our citizens.

We believe each of these important topics are foundational as you continue to chart the future of New Brunswick. Supporting the continued growth of our cities and municipalities is key to providing opportunities and benefits to all New Brunswickers. We urge you to again review our white paper "In Search of a Balance – Strengthening NB's Municipalities to Benefit New Brunswick" (https://www.8citiesnb.com/uploads/8/6/6/5/86656454/8_cities_document_en_new.pdf) as a starting point for your discussions. In addition, we would be pleased to meet with the leadership group to talk about these important issues and how their resolution would have a positive, lasting impact on all New Brunswickers.

This historic move by the elected political parties in New Brunswick shows that we can move past partisan politics and made decisions that are in the best interests of our citizens and our province. We applaud your leadership and now ask that you continue to show this commitment and resolve towards moving our province forward for all New Brunswickers.

Sincerely



Adam Lordon
President, Cities of N.B. Association

Cc: Mr. Kevin Vickers – Leader of the Liberal Party of New Brunswick
Mr. David Coon – Leader of the Green Party of New Brunswick
Mr. Kris Austin –Leader of People's Alliance Party of New Brunswick