

***National Urban Strategy Targeted Toward Canada's Largest Urban Centres Needed:
Canada's Major Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade***

Joint statement from 13 organizations notes need for "fiscal reform" to support economic growth

CALGARY, EDMONTON, FREDERICTON, HALIFAX, MONTREAL, OTTAWA, QUEBEC CITY, REGINA, SASKATOON, TORONTO, VANCOUVER, VICTORIA and WINNIPEG, November 30, 2010 – Canada's major chambers of commerce and boards of trade, representing the business communities in Canada's largest urban centres, today called upon the federal and provincial governments to establish a national urban strategy targeted toward Canada's largest urban centres.

Canada's economic growth depends on vibrant and competitive urban centres. Canada's major chambers of commerce and boards of trade call for a new national urban strategy: the establishment of a new fiscal framework for Canada's largest urban centres in return for a federally and provincially approved fiscal transparency and accountability structure in these municipalities.

This fiscal framework must ensure that tax revenues are sufficient to sustain the infrastructure, services and programs that are unique to Canada's largest urban centres without increasing the overall burden on taxpayers. One form the framework could take is for federal and/or provincial governments to abandon tax room to Canada's largest urban centres. This access to greater revenues, though, must go hand-in-hand with demonstrated fiscal discipline by Canada's municipalities. What this framework would ultimately look like needs to be negotiated between the three levels of government.

In a joint statement (available at www.bot.com/policynews) released today the 13 chambers of commerce and boards of trade make clear that all three levels of government need to work together and develop financial frameworks that properly address global pressures, ensuring the greatest economic growth, competitiveness and prosperity for all Canadians.

QUOTES:

"The Calgary Chamber of Commerce recognizes the importance of ensuring Canada's large urban centers are fiscally sustainable. However, any new municipal fiscal arrangement must have sufficient oversight and demonstrate value for taxpayers."

- Adam Legge, President & CEO, Calgary Chamber of Commerce

"Over 80% of Canadians live and work in large urban regions, and it is past time that all governments worked together to better define and take on the unique challenges faced by these city-regions. Edmonton shares these challenges with Calgary but equally so with our other sister-cities. A National Urban Strategy that respects regional and provincial differences but applies a consistent approach to urban issues would go a long way towards better addressing those issues as we move forward."

- Carman McNary, Q.C., Chair, Edmonton Chamber of Commerce

“As the largest chamber in New Brunswick, the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce applauds this inclusive National Urban Strategy initiative, recognizing the relative contribution that our region’s metropolitan centres have on the greater economy. Municipalities rely on clear, predictable arrangements and strategies in order to deliver long-term solutions to their residents, and the Fredericton Chamber believes a National Urban Strategy will help achieve that for our cities.”

- Susan Holt, Chief Executive Officer, Fredericton Chamber of Commerce

“Canada’s largest urban centres need a new tax framework that does not increase taxpayer burden but instead establishes a new fiscal framework with all 3 levels of government to ensure their sustainability and continued contribution to the national economy.”

- Valerie Payn, President & CEO, Halifax Chamber of Commerce

“Large urban centers in Canada are at a disadvantage in the global competition for economic development. Federal and provincial policy makers must give cities like Montreal the fiscal breathing room that takes into account their importance in a new economic order.”

- Michel Leblanc, President & CEO, Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal

“La Chambre de commerce de Québec est favorable à ce que les gouvernements se penchent sur la question de l’éventuelle création d’une stratégie urbaine nationale pouvant servir Québec et sa région métropolitaine.”

- Luc Paradis, President, Quebec City Chamber of Commerce

“The reality is the current model for funding municipalities throughout the country is broken and in dire need of repair. The time for action is now.”

- John Hopkins, Chief Executive Officer, Regina & District Chamber of Commerce

“Achieving Canada’s amazing potential requires a collaboration among all governments that is focused on creating globally competitive communities through the effective allocation of government resources aimed at that objective.”

- Kent Smith-Windsor, Executive Director, Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce

“Canada’s largest urban centers are the engines of our national economy. They need the right tools to succeed in a globally competitive marketplace.”

- Carol Wilding, President & CEO, Toronto Board of Trade

“Large urban cities are facing the reality of growing urbanization and economic growth with limited resources to deal with increasing service requirements. Funding models need to change to meet these pressures while still demonstrating discretion.”

- Bernie Magnan, Assistant Managing Director & Chief Economist, Vancouver Board of Trade

“Urban centres are the core of our economic growth and future. We need our tax sharing structure to progress along with the progression of our cities. At the same time, as a Chamber, we support a strong accountability framework to accompany increased federal funding transfers to cities. We encourage the federal government to establish a new framework that addresses both the funding and accountability concerns.”

- Bruce Carter, Chief Executive Officer, Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce

“The current funding model for municipalities consists of an over-reliance on property tax, provincial legislation that restricts the type of revenue models and taxes cities may utilize, and the downloading of responsibilities from other governments. For cities to truly succeed in the future we must remove the obstacles that impede their opportunity for growth and prosperity.”

- Dave Angus, President & CEO, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce

-- 30 --

For more information, contact:

(For English-language media)

Scott Brownrigg

Director, Public Affairs

Toronto Board of Trade

Tel: (416) 862-4514

sbrownrigg@bot.com

(Pour la média en français)

Sylvie Paquette

Coordonnatrice, Relations medias

Chambre de commerce du Montréal

métropolitain

Tél: (514) 871-4000, poste 4015

sylvie.paquette@ccmm.qc.ca