

PRESS RELEASE

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MAYORS' COALITION ON POLICING CONTINUES TO PROGRESS REFORMS TO POLICING COSTS AT ANNUAL AMO CONFERENCE

Ottawa, Ontario - August 23, 2012: The Mayors' Coalition For Affordable, Sustainable and Accountable policing costs (ASAP) continued its efforts at seeking reforms to how policing is expensed throughout the province at the annual Association Of Municipalities Of Ontario (AMO) conference in Ottawa. Several dialogues took place between the Mayors' Coalition (ASAP) and key groups in the field that have led to more advancements toward the Coalitions goals of:

- creating a better partnership between the Province and municipalities on administering policing;
- exploring the removal of payment for policing from the municipal budget if partnerships cannot be reformed adequately;
- and correcting the unsustainable trend of rising costs.

The Mayors' Coalition (ASAP) has invited the major municipal associations to work with them on behalf of the Tax Payers of the province that everyone ultimately represents. A good example of this kind of collaboration is work the group did together with AMO to formulate questions for the Minister during the Ministers forum. As well as the networking done with the leaders of the other two provincial parties and building consensus on the needs going forward. The Mayors' Coalition (ASAP) is pleased that in answering their questions during the Ministers' forum, around the need to include reforms in the discussion, The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services indicated that exploring different models and possible reforms needed to be part of the process going forward. We were encouraged by the Ministers constructive receptiveness to our concerns. She has developed a good understanding of the issues and is starting to focus on the possible solutions.

The Mayors' Coalition (ASAP) reached out to OPP Commissioner Chris Lewis and the lead on the file for the OPP Superintendent, Rick Philbin, to have a roundtable discussion seeking commonalities that could help further build the collaboration needed to move such a complicated issue. The meeting was cordial and all agreed very constructive. Of the three pillars the Mayors' Coalition (ASAP) are seeking, the group was able to identify commonalities and consensus on some of the pressing issues, such as; around the need to build better partnerships for the municipalities and to address the unsustainable cost of policing, while recognizing the need to also maintain the current high standard of the service. The group has agreed to continue to meet and work collaboratively toward evolving the administration of the service and bringing satisfaction to everyone involved.

Mayors Coalition (ASAP) spokesperson, Cochrane Mayor Peter Politis says, "The AMO conference was quite productive for the Coalition and our efforts to advance police costing and partnership reforms. A lot of work has been done in advance of the Conference and we were successful in continuing to build the collaboration needed to achieve the meaningful results our member municipalities are seeking. I'm very pleased about the progress made with Commissioner Lewis and the OPP directly and look forward to everyone we have reached out to continuing to work with us on this challenge. Municipalities simply cannot afford to ignore the trends in these costs and while it can be sensitive, dialogue needs to continue to be frank while everyone continues to recognize that we are all accountable to the tax payer and need to work together on the outcomes."

Tillsonburg's Mayor John Lessif was quoted as being encouraged with the results of the meetings which took place at AMO. "The Minister has recognized this to be a very serious issue and is committed to finding a solution. I had an opportunity to meet with Andrea Horwarth to discuss the police costing issue and the impact this is having on municipalities. As part of the Mayors' Coalition I met with Commissioner Chris Lewis and Superintendent Rick Philbin, which was a very productive discussion. We identified areas to move forward of common interest and we have committed jointly to pursue and discuss items as they arrive. I continue to have concerns with these issues being resolved with some urgency as notwithstanding the complexity, municipalities cannot continue to carry this burden on the tax levy. I am confident there will be positive change; the question is—how soon?

The Mayors' Coalition (ASAP) is working with their public relations company to develop a newsletter that will be forwarded to its members on a monthly basis articulating the advancements as they arise. At the same time, membership continues to grow and every municipality who have concerns with the cost of policing on the municipal budget and wish to reform the partnership with the municipality is welcome to become members of the Mayors' Coalition on Affordable, Sustainable, and Accountable policing. Our website is www.mayorscoalition.com.

BACKGROUND:

Currently, municipalities are handed a bill from the province to pay for policing services and have little say in the strategic and spending practices behind it. This has resulted in an unsustainable model that continues to add costs annually instead of managing those costs in accordance with the needs of the people paying the bill, the municipalities. The model is premised on a complicated formula that has created an unfair distribution of costs across municipalities while being an obstacle to the accountability required by elected municipal leaders to the people whom they collect taxes from.

The current approach leads to situations where municipalities have no direct control over how their policing budget is spent; little input into strategy, and little ability to report back to their constituents of how the monies were spent. These issues need to be addressed through direct dialogue with the Ministry and the Mayors Coalition, working together as political leaders and collaborating together to form a real partnership between the Province and Municipalities on this issue.

The Mayors' Coalition for Affordable, Sustainable, Accountable, Policing is a consortium of over 75 concerned municipalities who have formed a coalition of municipally elected representatives, seeking to address the unsustainable cost of police service through a reformed partnership model, or alternatively, the complete removal of the payment for the service from the municipal tax levy all together. The coalition continues to receive new members and new commitment to resources daily on this issue.

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