

MAYOR'S COALITION AND MINISTER MEILLEUR MEET AGAIN IN LESS THAN A WEEK ON RISING COST OF POLICING

Toronto, Ontario - June 19, 2012: Mayors 'Coalition on Affordable, Sustainable, Accountable, Policing (ASAP), met with The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Madeleine Meilleur on June 13, 2012 in a long anticipated face to face on the building momentum in the province around escalating policing costs and municipalities highly publicised struggle to manage them. An unusually quickly scheduled second meeting took place on June 18, 2012 at Minister Meilleur's office to follow-up the discussion.

There was a full appreciation for the magnitude of the meeting and the seriousness of the issue, as the Minister was joined by the Deputy Minister, Assistant Deputy Minister, OPP Superintendent, and two staffers. The Mayors' Coalition was represented by their Steering Committee of six Mayors from across Ontario. Again the group had an open and frank discussion on the issues and what the next steps should be.

The Mayors' Coalition has provided the Minister with an invitation to work together at the top level, as the political leaders on both ends of the spectrum. The intention would be to find the innovations needed, including the possible need to shift policy, and form a new partnership on policing that will see:

- The municipalities have the appropriate amount of control on costs required to meet their obligations to the tax payer;
- A more equitable cost distribution model; and
- High level involvement of the community in development of policing strategy.

The Mayors' Coalition (ASAP) continues to offer the Ministry and the Minister our support and willingness to partner with them and work toward solutions that will see the best interests of Ontarians as the result. The Minister asked for some time to contemplate the result of the discussions and the offer to collaborate as described, and we expect an answer in the coming days.

Following the meeting Cochrane Mayor Peter Politis stated, "The Minister continues to listen to our issues and our offer to work together on them. While there are several task forces working for the Ministry at the moment, none have the mandate to go beyond the status quo and shift policy. Working within the status quo only puts about 15% of the costs on the table for discussion which will realistically only result in a fraction of that having any hope of adjustment. It's simply not anywhere near the gravity of change required to stop an unsustainable trend. Our coalition is established for that reason and the we have reached out to the Minister as fellow political leaders with a shared interest. I look forward to her response".

Norfolk Mayor, Dennis Travale said, "While this second meeting involved other senior personnel the outcome was not what we had hoped for. It is difficult to understand why there is a reluctance to accept an offer to assist from elected officials representing those most affected."

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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 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 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. Much more information can be found at their website at www.mayorscoalition.com.

Contact:

Peter Politis, Cochrane Mayor – 705-272-4361 / 705-471-9564; peter.politis@cochraneontario.com
Gerry Marshall, Penetanguishene Mayor – 705-549-7453; gmarshall@penetanguishine.ca
John Lessif, Tillsonburg Mayor – 519-688-3009 ext 3234; jlessif@tillsonburg.ca
David Reid, Arnprior Mayor – 613-623-4231; dreid@arnprior.ca
Jamie McGarvey, Parry Sound Mayor – 705-938-0953; Jamie.mcgarvey@townofparrysound.com
Dennis Travale, Norfolk County Mayor – 519-42-5870 ext 1220; dennis.travale@norfolkcounty.ca