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**Introductory comments:**

The Green Party is committed to addressing many critical municipal issues like sustainable funding for infrastructure, the development of a national transit strategy, and national housing strategy.

1. Will your party commit to providing additional sustainable, permanent infrastructure funding to cities in order to address the national municipal infrastructure deficit which affects the competitiveness of our country?

**RESPONSE**

To support communities, we need to invest in critical infrastructure of transport and water works to modernize and reduce energy demand. Municipalities need stable and predictable funding so that they can invest in critical infrastructure such as mass transit, sewage treatment, energy efficiency improvements, better water systems to reduce waste and cope with erratic precipitation patterns of a changing global climate, as well as community amenities like sports fields, arts and cultural opportunities.

The Green Party will create a new pool of municipal infrastructure funding by changing tax rules to create a Municipal Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSPs) bond that can be held in RRSPs and self-directed RRSPs. In February 2006 alone, Canadians bought \$8 billion in mutual funds. Imagine if even half of that was available to our communities.

This would be in addition to allocating an additional portion of the federal gasoline tax directly to the provinces for transfer to municipalities. The Green Party supports the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Large Cities Caucus request for a commitment of one cent from GST as a reasonable approach to stable financing. This is made possible through carbon tax revenue. Municipal governments must enter into agreements to ensure that sprawl is not permitted through extensive infrastructure funding. Densification, speedy, safe and pleasant mass transit, safe cycling paths and other investments to conserve electricity and water will all merit stable GST-sourced financing.

We commit to..

- Change tax policy to create a new pool of long term municipal infrastructure funding by allowing municipalities to issue new Municipal Registered Retirement Savings Plans Bonds (MRRSPsBs) which can be held in RRSPs and self-directed RRSPs.
- Allocate one cent from GST on an approximate per capita basis to municipal governments for “Green Cities” initiatives, ensuring (through contractual agreements) that the funding is not used in ways that encourage urban sprawl, but instead to reduce sprawl and greenhouse gas emissions, conserve electricity and water, increase densification, expand convenient, safe, reliable and affordable public transit, and build cycling and walking paths. This funding could be transferred through Municipal Superfunds.
- Create six Municipal Superfunds of \$500 million/fund/year (an average of \$100 for every citizen per year) to which municipalities can apply for grant funding to replace the less specific Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund (CSIF). The proposed funds are:
  1. *Community Brownfield Remediation (CBR) Fund* to provide assistance in cleaning up toxic and brownfield sites;
  2. *Water and Waste Treatment Facilities (WWTF) Fund* to upgrade water treatment, sewage treatment and recycling facilities to make them efficient, safe and sustainable;
  3. *Sports, Cultural and Recreational Facilities (SCRF) Fund* to support the development of green recreational and cultural facilities and refurbish existing facilities;
  4. *Mass Transit Promotion (MTP) Fund* to improve and expand urban mass transit infrastructure and inter-modal connections, as well as car-sharing initiatives;
  5. *Cycling and Pedestrian Promotion (CAPP) Fund* to support pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and smart-growth developments that transform urban areas and towns into walkable communities linked by transit to reduce the need for owning and using cars; and,
  6. *Community Housing Options Promotion (CHOP) Fund* supporting a national housing program to build energy efficient co-ops and affordable housing units where there is a shortage of such housing options.
- Increase the Gas Tax Transfer to municipalities to 5 cents/litre to be used in funding the above sustainable transportation initiatives such as public transit, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure and rural roads.
- Make transit passes tax-deductible to encourage workers and businesses to use public transport and make employee parking a taxable benefit.

2. Will your party commit to the creation of a National Transit Strategy that will provide cities with a framework for sustained public transit expansion which will meet our needs for the 21st century?

## **RESPONSE**

Urban sprawl means commuters crawl. More roads don't solve the problem, they make it worse, quickly filling up with more cars. Gridlock means more air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. We have to break this vicious cycle.

We must build our way out of the problem of clogged roads and smog-choked cities, not by building more roads and bridges and more distant suburbs, but with "smart growth" infrastructure. Excellent public transit and efficient housing in high-density nodes along existing transit corridors will make cities livable and people-friendly. The federal government must take the lead in funding the "greening" of Canada's cities. (For more details also see the section on government: Federal-Municipal Relations.)

We commit to...

- Increase federal funding for pedestrian, cycle and car-sharing infrastructure in towns and cities.
- Double existing funding to stimulate a massive re-investment in public transportation infrastructure in all Canadian towns and cities to make it convenient, safe, comfortable and affordable.
- Make transit passes tax-deductible to encourage workers and businesses to use public transport and provide financial support to provinces that provide free public transit passes to people living below the poverty line.
- Cancel all funding for specific highways and bridge expansions (like the Gateway Program in Greater Vancouver) that encourage urban sprawl, increase private vehicle use, truck transport of goods and consequently increases greenhouse gas emissions.
- Ensure federal infrastructure funding does not go to expanding highways and roads.

3. Will your party commit to creating a National Housing Strategy that will provide sustainable, predictable funding for affordable and supportive housing, including the renewal of funding for all federal housing programs before March 2009?

## **RESPONSE**

The Green Party believes it is the right of every Canadian to have affordable, safe and secure housing. It enhances people's health, dignity and life opportunities. It is an essential prerequisite to an equitable society. The Green Party supports the delivery of social housing dollars to provincial, territorial and municipal governments through the traditional vehicle of the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). The funding for social housing needs to be dramatically increased. CMHC programs must be directed to the communities most in need and fast-tracked to provide homes for people at risk.

We commit to...

- Create a National Affordable Housing Program that provides sufficient funds annually through the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to community-based agencies across Canada to:
  - Build new subsidized affordable homes: 20,000 new and 10,000 rehabilitated affordable units per year for the next ten years using capital grants and changes in tax and mortgage insurance regulations;
  - Provide rent supplements or shelter assistance for an additional 40,000 low-income households per year, for ten years;
  - Provide credit and loan guarantees to non-profit housing organizations and cooperatives for the building and restoration of quality, energy-efficient housing for seniors, people with special needs, and low-income families;
  - Subsidize private developers to include a percentage of affordable housing in their housing projects;
  - Extend provisions in the Income Tax Act to offer tax incentives to build affordable, healthy, energy-efficient, multi-unit rental housing and to include tax credits for gifts of lands, or of land and buildings, to community land trusts to provide affordable housing; and,
  - Dedicate funding to the co-operative housing sector to enable more new affordable housing projects to proceed.