

Which policy issues matter in Canadian municipalities? New School of Public Policy report reveals survey results from over 1000 mayors across Canada

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Calgary – Big or small, all Canadian municipalities have core issues that their elected politicians are concerned about. Regardless of size, the daily business of a municipality must be managed and policies determined about core issues such as garbage collection, snow removal, wastewater and sewage, fire protection, economic development and fixing potholes.

Today, The School of Public Policy with authors Jack Lucas and Alison Smith released a report that examines the results of a cross-Canada survey of more than 1,000 mayors and councillors from communities ranging in population size from 5,000 to more than two million. The report provides the bread-and-butter on urban-policy issues that are vital to all. The report also lays the groundwork for future researchers who want to focus on specific problems in the area of urban policy-making.

According to Lucas, “Size matters. In Canadian cities, a long list of issues are important in every municipality – issues like policing, waste management and water supply – which we call the bread-and-butter issues of Canadian municipal policy-making. But as cities get bigger, an additional list of issues ranging from homelessness to immigrant settlement is layered atop the bread-and-butter ones. We call these the big city issues. The number one issue for municipalities regardless of size is economic development, since job creation and attracting investment are key for a healthy municipality regardless of its location or size. And nearly every politician surveyed listed planning, water supply and transportation infrastructure (roads, highways and bridges) as being of deep importance to their communities. Of almost equal importance in the survey were a second slate of issues including emergency planning, parks and recreation, public health, solid waste removal and policing.”

These findings are important both for policy-makers and for researchers. For policy-makers, the findings lend weight to the argument that big cities really are different from other municipalities. Big city politicians must continue to deal with the bread-and-butter issues of municipal policy-making, but they must also address a suite of additional policy challenges that are distinctive to their big city context.

The paper can be downloaded at <https://www.policyschool.ca/publications/>

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