

September 28, 2011

Mayor Nenshi, thank you for your call earlier today.

As I stated when I began this campaign, and in our one on one discussions, I believe the best decisions are made at the local level, closest to the people.

This is why I was the first leadership candidate to propose a comprehensive policy to enhance the fiscal sustainability of our local governments, and to establish the foundation for a true partnership between the provincial government and municipalities.

As you are aware, my policy gives local governments full access to the education portion of the property tax and allows them to focus their spending of that money as they see fit. In this way local governments are in charge of setting their own priorities.

I understand that local governments need the stability and predictability to respond to local needs. While my proposal is revenue neutral, there will be administrative savings that stay locally. As well, municipalities will have the ability to determine whether their rate of education/property tax is the right level for their jurisdiction. I have spent the last six months talking with Albertans and clearly understand they expect their elected representatives to be looking for value out of the tax dollars currently being collected and spent.

This being said, there are many ideas about how my proposed partnership between the province and municipalities could and should work. For my part, I will be open to all ideas. Further, I will support them being considered as part of the agenda for the Premiers Council.

To be clear, any municipality should have the ability to offer any solution to help fund their priorities. If local governments believe there is an idea worth considering I want them to bring it forward to the council. Let's have this discussion at that table and examine the merits of all approaches.

Specific to the one percent GST proposal, I see it as a federal/provincial issue; I don't see an active role for the provincial government. If your administration and Calgarians want to pursue this increase, my view is that it is a Calgary issue to be determined by Calgarians.

I regret if my comments to Rick Bell today caused you alarm and look forward to a productive working relationship.

*Gary D. Mar*

**Gary Mar**