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Policy Begins Today*

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- **Part One: From Sea to Shining Sea: AIMS provides expert comment on cities' report.**
- **Part Two: Are some family businesses more equal than others: AIMS Pork op/ed triggers instant reaction.**
- **Part Three: The three Cs of local government: Competition, Cooperation and 'Ccountability.**
- **Part Four: Examining Canada's role in Afghanistan: AIMS Intern in Security and Defence Policy clarifies some misunderstandings.**
- **Part Five: Protect Yourself: Stay Informed.**
- **Part Six: Put Development back in R&D: Provide tax credit to companies.**
- **Part Seven: Join the team: AIMS is looking for summer interns.**

Part One: From Sea to Shining Sea: AIMS provides expert comment on cities' report.

Ottawa doesn't need to bail out Canadian cities, nor should it focus its resources on ten of the country's largest cities. That is part of the message delivered by AIMS acting president Charles Cirtwill in radio interviews from St. John's, NL to Victoria, BC. Contacted by CBC radio to talk about the "Mission Possible" report on cities published by the Conference Board of Canada, Cirtwill told listeners from one end of the country to the other that all levels of government have to remember there is only one taxpayer.

He said too much focus is placed on quality of life and not enough on standard of living. And he said the Conference Board report is wrong to argue cities need more power. Our constitutional framework is up to the task of giving major cities the power and resources they need for success.

Cirtwill said the Conference Board report does contain some good ideas, including the recommendation to collect better data on city performance to inform urban public policy. He says little information is now available so the introduction of user fees is difficult and better costing almost impossible. Better reporting and a national municipal database will clarify not only how much service costs, but who uses it.

"Without such basic information taxpayers are left in the dark," he said. "Taxes go up, services go down and we don't know who to blame and you don't know where to go to get it fixed."

Cirtwill said another positive recommendation from the report is the removal of barriers to trade. He said that's not just the barriers between provinces, but even the barriers to trade between municipalities in the same province.

To read a transcript of one of the interviews with Cirtwill, [click here](#).

Part Two: Are some family businesses more equal than others: AIMS Pork op/ed triggers instant reaction.

A protest at the Nova Scotia legislature by hog farmers demanding more money from the provincial government prompted AIMS Director of Research, Ian Munro, to ask why. In this article that appeared in both major dailies in Nova Scotia, Munro suggests farmers cannot expect to be treated any differently than any other long-term family business.

The op/ed triggered letters to the editor and e-mails. The piece has also prompted invitations for AIMS to speak or meet with several agriculture groups both in the private sector and within government.

To read the article that started it all, [click here](#).

Part Three: The three Cs of local government: Competition, Cooperation and

'Ccountability.

Bigger is not necessarily better, particularly with municipal governments. This Commentary based on remarks by AIMS acting president Charles Cirtwill shows that amalgamation does not provide the most efficient local government.

He explains that local governments are much better off if there is competition, cooperation and accountability, or the three Cs. In this Commentary, ***A New Golden Rule***, Cirtwill provides a number of tips on how to tell whether your local government is applying these principles.

More importantly he suggests local governments could follow the lead of the law in New Zealand.

"Here there are laws obliging local governments to use compulsory competitive tendering for all services. Local governments undergo regular audits, where service levels and taxation levels are compared. This permits the publication of league tables and other instruments of accountability that grant to local voters much greater insight into the performance of their local government and hence more means to hold them accountable."

Cirtwill explains, "It is this broad based, easily understood, comprehensive and readily available data that is the backbone of the local government reform movement in New Zealand. No longer is it possible for solutions to be based on the apparent logic or reasonableness of an idea. Reformers have to prove that an experiment has worked and that a new idea is worthy of broader application."

Click [here](#) to read the complete Commentary.

Part Four: Canada's role in Afghanistan: AIMS intern in Security and Defence Policy clarifies some misunderstandings

It can be a divisive discussion among friends, family, co-workers – Canada's involvement in Afghanistan. The discussion is an emotional one and as is often the case with emotions, not based on fact.

Recent CBC polls suggest that a majority of Canadians continue to badly misinterpret Canada's mission in Afghanistan. In this op/ed, Alex Wilner, AIMS Intern in Security and Defence Policy steps back from the emotion. He sets out to ameliorate the situation and in this Op/Ed, Wilner outlines three compelling reasons for Canada's continued military involvement in the beleaguered state.

To read the complete article, [click here](#).

Part Five: Protect Yourself: Stay Informed

This op/ed appeared in the Seniors' Advocate in Nova Scotia and prompted numerous

radio and television news stories both regionally and nationally. Written by Dr. David Zitner, AIMS Fellow in Health Care Policy, and his colleague Grace Paterson, it is a tragic story of a 62 year old man who died after waiting nine months for critical surgery. Zitner says it shows the structural problems within our health care system. And he says it is a lesson to us all that we need to be much more involved in our own health care and much more aggressive about receiving treatment. The advice is all that much more poignant because it comes from their personal experience.

To read this article, [click here](#).

Part Six: Put Development back in R&D: Provide tax credits to companies.

In this front page story, AIMS acting president Charles Cirtwill explains there needs to be more focus in Atlantic Canada on the development portion of Research & Development spending. He suggests a way to encourage that is to provide tax credits to companies that actually produce a product. Cirtwill told the New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal he'd like to see existing tax credits for research and development "beefed up" and tied to a production credit.

"That way, if a company invests in R&D which then leads to products being produced and sold, the company gets credit for the exploration, production and manufacturing," said Cirtwill.

Current suggestions focus only on expanding existing research credits or making larger credits available to specific industries or specific (mostly rural) regions. By tying credits to actual production and making them available to everyone we get more spending, more research and more development.

To read more, [click here](#).

Part Seven: Join the team: AIMS is looking for summer interns.

It could be one of the most challenging summers of your life. The Atlantic Institute for Market Studies is looking for summer interns.

Internships are intended to introduce bright and innovative final-year doctoral students to the policy making process, involve them in the important questions and issues of the day, and give them a chance to make a tangible and worthwhile contribution to the work of the Institute.

If you are interested in this position, or know someone who may be, read more [here](#).

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