



## Joint Finance Committee Hearing Testimony

April 21, 2021

RHINELANDER – Thank you to the members of the joint Finance Committee for coming to Rhinelander today.

I'm guessing you've heard from my fellow mayors and managers and administrators about some of the critical budget priorities we're asking you to look at this cycle. I started with a much bigger list but I decided to just hunker down on one specific issue that will help every municipality in Wisconsin: shoring up shared revenue.

Inter-governmental grants and aids make up the second largest revenue source for the City of Wausau. We've been through recessions and booms but shared revenue hasn't seen a significant increase in 20 years. If you were wondering, I was in high school the last time cities saw an increase in shared revenue from the state. I have grey hair now.

Over the last two decades, funding under the program for cities, villages, and towns has been cut by \$94,000,000. This has never been restored. At the same time, municipalities also adhere to the strictest levy limits in the nation.

A slight increase in shared revenue will help us fund public safety, public works, and infrastructure programs that address the needs of our communities. Did you know it costs a million dollars to build a mile of road in Wausau? That's a lot of coin but our shared constituents demand that we take care of our streets, ensure their water is safe to drink, and that someone responds when they call 9-1-1.

The Governor recommended a 2% increase in shared revenue funding. For Wausau, that would be an additional \$81,000. What does that look like? For Wausau, we could retrofit 145 more city street lights and convert them to LED. That would help us save taxpayer dollars and our shared resources for the next 30 years. We could replace a boiler in our public safety building to ensure our firefighter paramedics don't wake up to a cold surprise if our only back up stops working. We could update a neighborhood park, ensuring every kid has access to recreation to keep them mentally and physically healthy.

Please include at least this minimal 2% increase to help us address the needs of our shared constituents. Thank you very much for the state's partnership. We look forward to working together over the next biennium.