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Report to council

FCM Board of Directors meeting

Hybrid: Ottawa and online
November 24-25, 2021

This document presents highlights from the most recent meeting of the Board of Directors of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), including for the benefit of local and regional councils with representatives on FCM's board and its committees.



Message from FCM's president

Dear friends and colleagues,

It was wonderful to see so many of you *in-person* this November. It had been 20 long months since our last on-site board meeting. Even though we've done a great job of adapting to the pandemic's virtual reality, nothing beats being together in the same room.


For this Report to Council, we're trying something a little different. Some of you have said you'd appreciate a shorter summary that can go to councils sooner. Let us know what you think. It's all part of our ongoing efforts to evolve how we work together to make the best use of everyone's time and expertise.

Whether you were online or on-site, I hope you found our November meeting energizing. I certainly did. I especially enjoyed hearing directly from some of *you* about local initiatives in reconciliation, mental health and networking infrastructure. And I valued our conversation on how municipal leaders are bridging Canada's political divides to get things done for people—something that matters more than ever in these times.

Of course, our meeting coincided with Parliament's return, and we seized the opportunity to release FCM's call to federal action: *Partners for Canada's Recovery*. Not only that, as a Board, we took our message directly to two key federal ministers and two senior opposition members. It was a solid start to the next phase of FCM's advocacy for our members—and all of you will have an important role to play.

As always, thank you for your commitment to FCM, and to FCM members everywhere.

See you soon,



Joanne Vanderheyden
FCM President
Mayor, Strathroy-Caradoc



Political highlights

- FCM’s Board of Directors meeting coincided with the opening of Canada’s new minority Parliament. We seized the opportunity to keep municipal priorities front-and-centre. FCM released a major recommendations document—*Partners for Canada’s Recovery*—and Board members engaged directly with federal ministers and senior opposition representatives. Maintaining strong working relationships with all federal parties continues to be key to FCM’s approach to advocacy.
- FCM released *Partners for Canada’s Recovery* on November 25, after briefing Committee of the Whole a day earlier. The nearly-40-page document calls on the federal government to partner with municipalities to achieve national recovery objectives—from creating jobs to ending homelessness, closing the rural broadband gap, and setting Canada on a path to net-zero emissions.
- Senior federal officials joined us to discuss FCM’s recommendations, with the full group and with Executive Committee. Our guests included Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities—as well as his Official Opposition counterpart Andrew Scheer, Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Communities. We also met with Rural Economic Development Minister Gudie Hutchings and NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh.
- Discussions with Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities) focussed on opportunities to scale up the federal-municipal partnership to drive a strong, inclusive recovery that is rooted in our communities. We also emphasized the need for much deeper investment in local climate resilience—and for an urgent federal commitment to tackle pandemic-induced operating budget shortfalls that transit systems continue to face.
- Discussions with Andrew Scheer (Official Opposition Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Communities) ranged from climate resilience to housing affordability and brought significant emphasis to rural priorities—including expanding flexible infrastructure funding tools, supporting inter-community passenger bus service, expanding broadband infrastructure faster, and protecting municipalities from unexpected new costs associated with RCMP contract police services.
- Discussions with Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development) picked up on many priorities we had put to Andrew Scheer—including rural infrastructure, broadband, regional bus service, and RCMP policing costs. Our meetings underscored the special value of having access to a standalone Minister of Rural Economic Development, and FCM has been building a productive relationship with Minister Hutchings since her appointment in October.
- Discussions with Jagmeet Singh (Leader, New Democratic Party) doubled down on the urgency of bolder federal investment in climate resilience and disaster mitigation. With Parliament returning, we explored opportunities to collaborate on shared priorities, including housing affordability and homelessness, as well as prioritizing infrastructure tools for communities of all sizes, including rural communities.



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More highlights

- **State of the union:** President Joanne Vanderheyden and CEO Carole Saab updated the Board on FCM’s recent progress. They outlined FCM’s latest achievements and shared inside looks at FCM’s advocacy strategy with the return of parliament. The CEO’s Report included a staff-led presentation on FCM’s Future of Work initiative—including the upcoming transition to a technologically innovative hybrid work environment that will empower FCM to maintain a diverse, talented and well-served professional team.
- **“Bridging Canada’s Divides”:** Municipal leaders are stepping up as the order of government most capable of reaching across political and regional divides to drive the recovery Canadians deserve. President Vanderheyden moderated a session on doing just that—to help achieve national economic, climate and equity. Special thanks to Councillors Randy Goulden (Yorkton SK), Rowena Santos (Brampton ON) and Director Daniel Arbour (Comox Valley BC) for framing out our major themes for this discussion.
- **BoardTalks:** This new feature gave board members a platform to showcase local innovations. Burlington Councillor Rory Nisan presented on innovations in mental health support in Ontario’s Halton Region. Saskatoon Councillor Mairin Loewen presented on reconciliation efforts in her community. King Township Councillor Steve Pellegrini welcomed a virtual presenter from YorkNet—a York-Region-owned agency that plans, builds, operates and manages a regional dark-fibre broadband network.
- **FCM’s Green Municipal Fund:** Managing Director Chris Boivin showcased the success of two initiatives created with federal funding from Budget 2019. Community Efficiency Financing (CEF) is supporting residential retrofit programs in communities across Canada. Sustainable Affordable Housing (SAH) is helping to retrofit or build tens of thousands of units of deeply efficient housing. Together, CEF and SAH have already moved municipal projects worth more than \$150 million through approvals.
- **Anti-racism and anti-oppression training:** Zahra Ebrahim and Kofi Hope from Monumental led an extensive workshop for Board members. From a foundation of understanding the basics of personal identity and how it relates to social power, we explored how identities can create barriers to engaging in community planning and building—and looked at some initial approaches to removing bias from these important processes.
- **Board committees:** The Executive Committee, the Finance and Audit Committee, and the Governance Working Group discussed pressing issues. Our November board meetings conventionally focus on direct advocacy and do not feature a full slate of standing committee meetings.

