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Report to council

Virtual meeting of FCM's Board of Directors

September 21-24, 2021

This document summarizes key updates from the most recent meeting of the Board of Directors and Standing Committees of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). It is designed to support board and committee members in reporting back to their local and regional councils on their progress with FCM.

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Governance in the COVID era: FCM’s 2021-2022 Board of Directors meets safely online.

Message from FCM's president

Dear board and committee members,

When we first planned our September Board of Directors meeting, we couldn't have known it would coincide with a federal election. Of course, that's exactly what happened—and this led to some truly engaging discussions.

Throughout the week, we explored how FCM can shape the new Parliament. Minority parliaments are all about building bridges to get results—and that's where local leaders excel. We deliver frontline solutions to big national challenges, and we'll be essential partners in driving the nationwide recovery Canadians deserve. So we examined how we can work with every federal party to secure swift action on key election commitments—on housing, climate, broadband, transit and more—to build on progress we've already made.

We're already shaping things: When the Prime Minister appointed ministers for each of Canada's regional economic development agencies on October 26—ministers coming from those regions—that was a *direct response* to the motion we passed at this Board meeting.

We also continued improving *how* we meet. We're carving out more opportunities for committee chairs to lead strategic conversations. Our regional caucuses have refreshed their agenda so they can better shape conversations that follow. And we've begun bringing in more outside expertise—like Abacus Data's David Coletto, who helped us unpack what the election means for municipalities. This is a work-in-progress, and we'll continue to strengthen how we work together to drive results for members on the road ahead.

As board and committee members, you all play an important role in serving our members, and in keeping FCM strong. That's a privilege—and a responsibility. It's one I'm honoured to share with you. Thank you for your commitment. I know we're going to do some exciting work together.

Sincerely,



Joanne Vanderheyden
FCM President
Mayor, Strathroy-Caradoc



New government, new opportunities

This fall's federal election was another milestone on the road to empowering our municipal members. Key commitments that FCM secured—from all the major parties—strengthen our advocacy position as Canada's new minority Parliament comes together.

Before and throughout this election campaign, FCM kept municipal priorities front and centre. Staff and board members intensified their direct outreach with the major parties. We released our comprehensive policy recommendations: *Frontline Solutions for Canada's Recovery*. Our [campaign website](#) featured a [party commitment tracker](#), plus [engagement tools](#) that members used to press our message with local candidates. Overall, we earned more than 1,000 print and broadcast media hits, plus millions of impressions on social media.

Our goal was to establish municipalities as key partners in Canada's recovery—for any federal government. By election day, all the major parties had made key commitments on municipal priorities, including housing, transit, broadband, infrastructure, climate resilience and more. A good example is the incoming government's pledge of a \$4 billion Housing Accelerator Fund to directly help municipalities tackle affordable supply challenges.

Our next step is to shape the concrete policy and legislative agenda of the incoming government and Parliament. We're already reaching out to the government, opposition parties, and individual MPs. And Board members will have critical roles to play. FCM staff will equip you with tools to take our message directly to MPs and media in your regions—culminating in FCM's annual Advocacy Days event, where board members connect directly with key decision-makers in Ottawa.

We'll press for swift action on commitments with cross-party support. We'll also seek solutions for municipalities facing rising costs for RCMP contract policing and/or public transit operating shortfalls. But we won't stop there. As FCM CEO Carole Saab emphasized, no party brought a full recovery plan to this campaign. That creates space for FCM to position municipalities as fuller co-pilots of the recovery Canadians deserve.

After all, our communities are the places where people live, work, raise families and start businesses. These are the places where a sustainable and truly inclusive nationwide recovery needs to take root. And we'll be showing our federal partners how empowering our members with new tools and investment will get the job done.



Read FCM's 2021 election recommendations

Committees & forums

FCM's Board of Directors oversees various committees and forums that provide direction and insight on a wide range of issues and priorities. Highlights from this virtual meeting include:

Anti-Racism and Equity: *Our inaugural meeting!* Discussed themes from chair engagements with individual committee members that took place before meeting—including desires for a best practices toolkit to implement within their communities, removal of barriers to equity-seeking groups in municipal governance, the need for education on anti-racism and equity, and the development of a board statement. Discussed opportunities, gaps, tools and resources needed to enhance FCMs work on anti-racism and equity. Next steps for the committee include education and training, and a plan to meet more often to advance their work.

Community Safety and Crime Prevention: Approved two new positions in response to proposed federal legislation on handguns, calling for federal (rather than municipal or PT) oversight and calling on the federal government to study the best national levers to prevent cross-border trafficking of unregistered handguns. Discussed financial impacts of RCMP unionization on municipalities, calling on the federal government to cover all retroactive costs stemming from the new collective bargaining agreement.

Conference Planning: Received a staff update on FCM's first-ever virtual Annual Conference and discussed the success of the event. Also received reports on planning for the 2021 Sustainable Communities Conference and 2022 Annual Conference. Committee members voiced enthusiasm for returning to in-person events—but supported a hybrid model that would allow members to attend if they're unable or uncomfortable about joining on-site. Members emphasized the value of a clear strategy for a Board election process that includes online voting.

Environmental Issues and Sustainable Development: Adopted a set of principles to guide the development of planned federal landfill gas regulations; while these can reduce GHG emissions, they must come with financial resources and be designed in partnership with local governments. Adopted new policy calling on the federal government to consider electric vehicle charging in the National Model Building Codes. Discussed local impacts of climate change and how communities are increasing resilience. FCM is helping the federal government draft a National Adaptation Strategy.

International Relations: Received an update from an international researcher on the evolving role of local governments in international cooperation and the development of a global policy paper on the topic. Program representatives presented updates on activities, with particular attention to the PMI-LED and the BIGM programs which will both close in the fall. Discussed opportunities for international programming and agreed to develop a strategy to guide the direction.

Municipal Finance and Intergovernmental Arrangements: Received a presentation from Professor Brenda Gunn on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action that directly implicate municipal governments, including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) which was brought into Canadian law through new legislation passed in June 2021 (Bill C-15).

Municipal Infrastructure and Transportation Policy: Discussed Internet/cellular access issues in communities of all sizes, and directed FCM to develop a policy position on digital affordability for consideration in March 2022. Received a Railway Association of Canada presentation on the FCM-RAC Proximity Initiative and the **Guidelines for New Development in Proximity to Railway Operations**. Discussed infrastructure trends and community priorities in order to assess needs beyond the end of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. Resolved to support existing calls from national Indigenous organizations to accelerate progress on ending boil water advisories in every community.

Northern and Remote Forum: Discussed northern and remote priorities including the implementation of Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework, substance use and addictions, housing affordability and broadband internet. On broadband, concerns were raised regarding reliability and a lack of competition between carriers. On housing, discussion focused on ensuring funding streams are tailored to the unique circumstances of northern and remote communities.

Rural Forum: Received an update from FCM CEO Carole Saab on FCM's rural advocacy, including coordination of pre-election Rural Forum meetings and the expert panel that FCM organized with the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation in August. The Forum discussed how every major national party included a rural section in their platform this election. Received a presentation from Sean Speer, PPF Scotiabank Fellow in Strategic Competitiveness at the Public Policy Forum, on the economic potential of rural Canada.

Social-Economic Development: Received updates on the new Federal-Municipal Housing Working Group, FCM's advocacy on housing and homelessness policy, FCM's Anti-Racism and Equity Committee, as well as the Sustainable Affordable Housing Initiative of FCM's Green Municipal Fund. Received a presentation by Dr. Carolyn Whitzman, lead investigator on the University of British Columbia's Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART) project.

Women's Participation in Municipal Government: Learned about the women of European local and regional governments and their work to promote gender equality. Heard about the Canada Women in Local Leadership (CanWILL) program and its funding initiatives. Shared results of FCM's Women in Local Government Scholarships and Awards. Promoted FCM's communication tools to promote women in local leadership and discussed the work of FCM's international programs focused on gender equality.

Resolutions

FCM members submit resolutions for the Board’s consideration on subjects of national municipal interest. Our process recognizes diverse voices while providing a focus for building a united municipal voice to drive concrete action. Resolutions adopted at this meeting include:

Federal Financial Incentives for Heritage Places:

This resolution calls on the federal government to establish financial incentives, such as a tax credit, for the rehabilitation of heritage buildings in order to encourage private sector investment.

TRC Calls to Action: Missing Children and Unmarked Graves:

This resolution calls on the federal government to take immediate action to address Calls to Action 71 to 76, including allocate sufficient resources to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to allow it to develop and maintain the National Residential School Student Death Register.

Preventing Seaplanes from Spreading Invasive Species:

This resolution calls on the federal government to include seaplanes as part of the national aquatic invasive species strategy, including by establishing an education and awareness program for pilots similar to what is currently in place for boaters.

Updating Restroom Regulations:

This resolution calls on the federal government to work with other orders of government to apply an equity-based policy on menstrual supplies through the National Model Building Codes and Occupational Health and Safety Regulations.

FCM resolutions database:

<https://fcm.ca/en/about-fcm/corporate-resources/fcm-resolutions>

Key points to share

- **FCM’s member-elected Board of Directors met this September 21-24.** The meeting was originally set for Brandon, Manitoba, but we continue to meet safely online amid the COVID-19 pandemic. FCM unites 2,000-plus municipalities of all sizes at the national level, representing more than 90 percent of all Canadians.
- **We reviewed FCM’s efforts to shape the 2021 federal election campaign.** Through direct advocacy, media, digital channels and our own **election platform** launch, we kept municipal priorities front-and-centre and earned significant policy commitments from all major federal parties.
- **We assessed gains that FCM secured through the election campaign.** That includes platform commitments from multiple parties on municipal priorities—including housing, climate, broadband and infrastructure. For instance: the incoming government’s pledge of a \$4 billion direct-to-municipalities Housing Accelerator Fund.
- **We were focused on shaping the agenda of a new minority Parliament.** That includes pressing for action on commitments to municipalities with cross-party support. We’re also looking to build on progress started in the last parliament—including through the Rapid Housing Initiative and the Canada Community-Building Fund.
- **FCM’s committees and forums** studied and recommended action on a wide range of priorities—from broadband through to gun control, climate action, women’s participation in local government, Indigenous reconciliation, asset management and housing affordability. We also held the first-ever meeting of our new Anti-Racism and Equity Committee.
- **Board members previewed the final report of FCM’s Western Economic Solutions Taskforce.** Since late 2019, WEST earned support from all major federal parties and helped secure billion of dollars in federal investment to help tackle pressing economic challenges that our western communities face.
- **Board members considered resolutions calling for federal action on key priorities.** Those include financial support for heritage buildings; taking action on unmarked residential school graves; combating aquatic invasive species; and updating building codes to include menstrual supplies.
- **At this meeting, we continued to evolve how this Board works to service FCM members.** That includes carving out more space for committee chairs to lead conversations on strategic priorities—and bringing in more outside expertise (like Abacus Data’s David Coletto on the federal political landscape).