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Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2019
Student Report for August 19th, council meeting

I would again like to thank council for the incredible opportunity of attending the 2019 annual Federation of Canadian Municipalities conference in Quebec City, it is amazing how much someone can learn and absorb over the span of a few days. Over the last couple of years Prince George continues to show themselves as leaders in youth engagement with their mentorship program on a national stage at the conference, highlighted in Councilor Frizzell's speech and conversations throughout the conference. Not only does the city bring a student along, they include and support the student throughout the conference, showing the enthusiasm they have for this program.

One of the highlights from the conference was of course the political keynote speakers. Being able to see the four major political party leaders speak in person was enlightening. It was clear who have natural public speaking abilities and who have good speech writers. In the speeches it was evident that it is an election year as there were several promises made that I trust the FCM will remind whichever party is elected, of said promises. All leaders mentioned how important municipal governments are to Canada, so it is reassuring that the resolutions put forth by such a large body could make a difference. All seven of the resolutions proposed in advance were passed by delegates from around the country, showing that regardless of geography, or political beliefs, Canadian municipalities can enact change with the help FCM provides through conferences like this one, for example.

There were many different workshop offerings and I was happy to see that Prince George city councilors, mayor and staff worked together in order to get a good spread across the workshops, and the most out of the conference for the city. As my background is in environmental sciences and natural resources I naturally gravitated towards related workshops and was told to be ready to share.

Procuring low-carbon solutions session takeaways:

- Do Life Cycle Assessment, and look at energy efficiency
- Use 'Future Cities' as a tool funded by Infrastructure Canada
- Looking to the future of green building standards: embodied carbon (e.g. city of Vancouver 'green building for rezoning process and requirements'), Environmental product declarations (e.g. 'buy clean' California now requires enviro. product declarations at facility level for materials).
- Easy way for reducing CO₂ emissions is with use of 'Contempra' cement, which has a 10% decrease in CO₂ but comparable strength and durability of conventional cement.

Climate caucus session:

Although not an official session on the conference program, it was heartening to see the room overflowing with delegates. Topics discussed were wins made in local communities, issues faced, and priorities. To highlight some comments that were well supported were: to mobilize youth, come together, not polarize the country especially with an election year ahead, having accountable, binding and comprehensive targets and looking to the FCM resolution on public transit.

I was thrilled to see that Prince George is already working on youth engagement through the student mentorship program and I am looking forward to seeing the results from the public climate change engagement sessions in Prince George and hope that the city follows the science and requests from the public on what will be most effective and educational for the community.

Forestry solutions for urban and rural communities session takeaways:

- Forests are dynamic and we need to manage for sustainability to promote future growth and support ecosystem services.
- Forests for climate adaptation and reducing flood risk and associated costs.
- Tall wood buildings (I won't elaborate as Prince George already has some great work happening with researchers from the university in this area)
- There are resources available like hydrology assessments and forestry regulations, fire smart for home protection, building new energy efficient homes like passive houses, educating developers to use wood.

Powering Canada through energy development:

I was most impressed by this workshop. When walking in the room it was clear that people were bringing their own agendas with them with t-shirts saying 'I ♥ Canadian Oil and Gas' but the panelists and the crowd were diplomatic and applauded everyone. This was uplifting, even with very differing views there was constructive conversations and I learnt so much from this session. There were panelists who were delegates from cities that have renewable energy partnerships, from the north with resources development and innovative infrastructure, areas of high rates of hydro power development and someone from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. One of the questions asked was 'how is the FCM getting past the rhetoric and presenting the facts from all sides of Canada?' The response was that the workshop was a good start, not boycotting but having discussions in all areas of Canada and the FCM's goal is to unite. Hopefully these conversations will keep going.

There were many other events, plenaries, and trade show booths visited, all of which were part of my educational experience and networking potential. Not only was I able to roam but everyone at the conference was so impressed by Prince George for bringing a student that delegates wanted to help me network with people that they thought would be good to connect with, creating such a wonderful environment.

In closing, the theme of the conference was 'building better lives', I am constantly reminded of how Prince George is doing that for our city. Going to the FCM Conference opened my eyes to just how much municipal governments do to better the lives of the public from being the most trusted form of government to providing on the ground services. The city of Prince George has been part of building a better life for myself by being a welcoming community when I moved here, providing services, asking for public and youth engagement and especially by providing me with the mentorship experience at the FCM conference. The mentorship opportunity has inspired me to continue to look to municipal politics as an option in the future.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions on the different sessions or booths I attended. I hope as this program continues that there will be more chances for engagement and mutual benefits to students, youth and the city. Thank you for this opportunity, inclusion and support at the largest ever FCM Conference bringing together municipal delegates from across the country.

Kind regards,

Kristen Hirsh-Pearson