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Report to council

Meeting of FCM's Board of Directors

September 10-13, 2019

Cities of Waterloo and Kitchener, Ontario

This document summarizes key themes 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/regional councils on their progress with FCM.

Message from FCM's president

Dear board and committee members,



What a week we had together in Kitchener-Waterloo! I feel so honoured to be working with such a dedicated and effective group of local leaders. Together, we are continuing to achieve some truly historic milestones through FCM.

On Wednesday morning, we were sitting together when the Prime Minister officially opened the 2019 federal election campaign. With 24 hours, we responded by releasing FCM's platform of recommendations to all parties: *Building Better Lives*. And with that, we kick-started the next phase of FCM's biggest-ever pre-election push—set in motion by this Board nearly two years ago.

Of course, FCM's cornerstone recommendation is to double the Gas Tax Fund transfer. This is about equipping municipalities to strengthen the core infrastructure that supports our quality of life. This also has me thinking about FCM itself in a fresh way: *FCM is core infrastructure for our emerging local order of government*.

Though advocacy and programming, FCM helps every Canadian municipality build better lives back home. Just as municipalities need the right tools to strengthen those roads and bridges, FCM needs the right tools to continue delivering outstanding results in Ottawa. And at this meeting, we finalized key steps to strengthen FCM's long-term foundation—unanimously adopting our first member-dues realignment in 10 years.

As the unified voice of local government, FCM's strength is rooted in nearly 2,000 local and regional councils across the country. This Report to Council is a tool to help you keep your colleagues updated on our progress. Its key messages can also support you in reaching out to municipalities who are not yet FCM members—to strengthen our united voice for the road ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Karsten". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Bill Karsten
Councillor, Halifax Regional Municipality
FCM President

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Kitchener City Hall

Federal Election 2019: Building better lives

Nearly two years ago, FCM’s Board of Directors identified the 2019 federal election as a vital opportunity to empower local governments—and called for the most intensive pre-election advocacy push in FCM’s history. In Kitchener-Waterloo, our first gathering of the Committee of the Whole featured a comprehensive update led by Carole Saab, Executive Director of FCM’s Policy and Public Affairs unit.

Highlights of progress to date:

- **National polling:** FCM commissioned a nationwide Abacus Data poll on Canadians’ priorities—providing key validation as we take our recommendations to federal parties. It also confirmed that municipalities are, by far, the most trusted order of government.
- **Direct outreach:** From meetings with national leaders to regular contact with their platform architects, FCM representatives have continued to take our message and priorities directly to every national party. Our influence has never been stronger.
- **Issue sprints:** In July, FCM began rolling out mini-campaigns on key issues—from the Gas Tax Fund to public transit to rural Canada. These “sprints” helped us engage the parties through the summer—while generating 900 media hits and getting FCM members using our new digital tools to engage federal candidates.
- **Platform launch:** On September 12, we launched our full platform of recommendations—*Building Better Lives*—calling on all parties to empower the governments closest to Canadians. It’s a roadmap to results people care about: better core infrastructure, modern transit, affordable housing, new protection from climate extremes, and new tools for rural, northern and remote communities.
- **[BuildingBetterLives.ca](https://www.buildingbetterlives.ca):** FCM’s Election 2019 microsite features our platform, our Policy Tracker recording parties’ municipal commitments, and digital advocacy tools to help members and other Canadians get our message out far and wide.

From here to election day, we’ll progressively ramp up our **digital footprint**, especially through social media—with more high-value “shareables” and video-based storytelling, plus a targeted paid advertising campaign. We’re continuing **direct outreach** to political parties and key stakeholders. And we’ll continue growing our presence in the **national media**. (Our platform launch alone earned 440 hits with a potential reach of 190 million.)

But our most powerful tool in this election is FCM members. Engaged local leaders are best placed to take our message directly to federal candidates—and this helps us shape the national election narrative. New digital tools at [BuildingBetterLives.ca](https://www.buildingbetterlives.ca) are designed to help. FCM will continue to reach members multiple times weekly with emailed calls to action. And members of this Board will have a major impact by continuing to lead the way.



Download FCM's Election 2019 platform
[BuildingBetterLives.ca](https://www.buildingbetterlives.ca)

Resolutions

FCM member municipalities submit resolutions for the board’s consideration on subjects of national municipal interest. Our resolutions process recognizes diverse voices while providing a focus for building a united municipal voice to drive concrete action. Resolutions adopted in Kitchener-Waterloo include the following:

- **Increasing Access to Safe Supply Programs to Treat Substance Use Disorder:** FCM will call on the federal government to support doctors, health authorities, provinces and professional colleges to safely provide regulated opioids and other substances through a free pharmacare program—and to declare a national public health emergency, permitting municipalities to implement innovative pilot programs that prioritize diversion to safe supply. (*City of Vancouver, BC.*)
- **Eligibility for Municipal Complexes:** FCM will call on the federal government to include new, expanded or renewed municipal complexes / buildings as eligible projects in the Investing in Canada Plan’s “community, culture and recreation infrastructure” stream. (*Municipality of Shelburne, NS.*)
- **Supporting Municipalities in Addressing Homelessness:** FCM will lobby the federal government to support municipalities with the management of tent cities or similar encampments to ensure safe spaces for people experiencing homelessness and for the community at large. (*City of Courtenay, BC.*)
- **Money Laundering Counter-Measures in Casinos:** FCM will urge the federal government to take steps to address money laundering in casinos, and to undertake an evaluation of cashless gaming systems, where account-based card technologies are used to verify player identity and track gambling transactions on all gaming devices. (*City of Delta, BC.*)
- **Production of Cannabis for Medical Purposes:** FCM will urge Health Canada to improve the process and requirements for obtaining registration certificates for the production of medical cannabis for personal use. (*Ville de Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines, QC.*)
- **Bill C-68: Section 2.2 of the Fisheries Act:** FCM will call on the federal government to re-consider changes to the Act that broaden the definition of protected fish habitat. (*Bonnechere, South-West Oxford, Horton, Hornepayne, O’Connor, Madawaska Valley, and West Nipissing, ON.*)
- **Assessment of Mortgage Guideline B-20:** FCM will call on the federal government to review the regional impacts of this new federal guideline on local real estate markets—and if warranted by the assessment, implement changes to allow regional-based mortgage financing stress tests, to mitigate unintended impacts on jobs, economic activity and first-time homebuyers. (*City of Calgary, AB.*)

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. Many discussions in Kitchener-Waterloo focused on FCM’s election campaign and an approach to targeted engagement with the new government on committee priorities. Other highlights include:

- **Election Readiness Working Group:** Discussed FCM’s national polling, ongoing party outreach, and new engagement tools and tactics. Explored the tremendous value of members engaging directly with local candidates and media—and ERWG will continue leading by example. Guided FCM staff to develop tools to support local councils in adopting resolutions supporting FCM’s platform.
- **Environmental Issues and Sustainable Development:** Approved a new policy position on a labelling standard for “flushable” consumer products. Received updates on the F/P/T plastic waste reduction strategy and the implementation of federal environmental legislation. Received an update on the Green Municipal Fund including new GMF funding announced in Budget 2019.
- **Increasing Women’s Participation in Municipal Government:** Reviewed the main outcomes in the draft action plan developed by FCM’s Toward Parity in Municipal Politics initiative. Discussed actions to promote our Women in Local Government scholarship-and-award programs. Reviewed how FCM’s international programs are promoting women’s participation in government.
- **International Relations:** With guests, discussed initiatives in Canada to localize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Urged staff to develop recommendations on further supporting members’ involvement in the SDGs. Received updates on FCM’s international programs, initiatives and engagement in global networks.
- **Municipal Finance and Intergovernmental Arrangements:** Discussed current activities of the Legal Defense Fund including FCM’s intervention in the Bill 5 case between the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario; emerging issues including ransomware and cybersecurity.
- **Municipal Infrastructure and Transportation Policy:** Discussed improving federal infrastructure programs, including eligibility for municipal administrative buildings, higher stacking limits, and flexibility to fund transit rehabilitation projects. Directed staff to explore options for targeted federal support for transit operating costs. Received an update on the Municipal Asset Management Program, including new funding in Budget 2019. Also discussed the upcoming *Telecommunications Act* review.
- **Northern and Remote Forum:** Developed a strategy for engaging in the implementation of the recently-announced Arctic and Northern Policy Framework. Received updates on northern housing, broadband and the Nutrition North Canada program.
- **Rural Forum:** Received a briefing on the federal connectivity strategy, including upcoming consultations on the new Universal Broadband Fund, and FCM’s continued advocacy on rural broadband. Discussed how best to apply a rural lens to the design of federal programs, and FCM’s strategy for advancing the rural lens with the next government.
- **Social-Economic Development:** Continued discussion on housing affordability, homelessness, and reconciliation. Received updates on the design of the new GMF Sustainable Affordable Housing Innovation program, and recent highlights from the Community Economic Development Initiative (CEDI) program.
- **Community Safety and Crime Prevention:** Discussed disaster mitigation, adaptation and recovery (including the role of property buyouts), crime prevention in rural communities, and FCM advocacy on cannabis legalization.

Strengthening FCM's financial foundation

FCM continues to secure historic progress for local governments—from a \$180-billion federal infrastructure plan, to Canada's first-ever national housing strategy, to a doubling of the Gas Tax Fund for 2019, to a nearly \$1-billion expansion of the Green Municipal Fund's support for local energy-efficiency initiatives. Like our members, and on their behalf, FCM makes the most of every tool available to deliver results that matter.

To ensure that we continue to build on these gains for municipalities, it's time to ensure FCM has the sustainable foundation and tools it needs to get the job done. With direction from this Board beginning March 2017, FCM has engaged in a **Resource Development Project (RDP)** designed to set the organization on a sustainable, better-resourced path that aligns with current responsibilities, future needs and member expectations.

The RDP has focused on reducing expenditures and increasing revenues, including through a realignment of member fees. **And in Kitchener-Waterloo, the Board unanimously adopted a revised FCM fee structure—the first revision in ten years. When municipalities renew their memberships this winter, their invoices will show a one-time increase—up from \$0.15 to \$0.19 per capita for the year—with a 3.5 percent annual escalator going forward to keep pace.** This fee structure will ensure that key FCM functions have the robust foundation they need to continue driving historic results. Those include our exceptional government relations and policy analysis—along with critical tools such as the Legal Defense Fund and Special Advocacy Fund, which will no longer require separate contributions.

From economic growth to climate change, Canada now looks to FCM members to deliver local solutions to some of our biggest national challenges. Together, we have achieved unprecedented influence among decision-makers—from policymakers to cabinet ministers, from opposition leaders to the Prime Minister.

As our wins have grown, so too has the need for resources to *deliver* on those wins, and to *build* on them. A strong municipal-federal partnership demands a strong municipal voice in Ottawa. And this Board is setting its sights high. With a strong financial foundation, FCM will seize every opportunity to elevate the local order of government—the governments closest to Canadians' real hopes and challenges.

Key points for local councils

- **FCM's Board of Directors met September 10-13 in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario.** FCM unites nearly 2,000 municipalities at the national level, representing more than 90% of all Canadians. FCM's elected Board and its various committee provide strong direction to the organization.
- **We met as Federal Election 2019 got officially underway.** Within 24 hours, we launched our FCM platform of recommendations for all parties—earning 400+ hits in print and broadcast media outlets across the country.
- **FCM's election platform calls on parties to build better lives for Canadians,** by empowering the governments closest to their daily lives. It's a roadmap to results people want to see—from better roads, bridges and transit to new protection from climate extremes.
- **We reviewed the momentum FCM is building around this election.** Direct outreach to all parties continues. Members are using FCM's new digital tools to reach local candidates. A series of summer "sprints" brought major national profile to election priorities. FCM's BuildingBetterLives.ca microsite presents our platform and tracks the commitments parties are making to municipalities.
- **Member action remains our key to success in Election 2019.** When many FCM members take our united message to their own local candidates—from all parties—that shapes the broader election narrative. The Board will continue to lead the way in engaging members to act.
- **We took steps at this meeting to strengthen FCM's financial foundation.** By realigning member dues for the first time in 10 years, the Board is ensuring that FCM can continue delivering historic progress for members and our local order of government.
- **We passed several resolutions to press the federal government on key issues.** This ranges from action that would boost access to pharmaceuticals to safely treat substance use disorder...to making municipal administrative building projects eligible for funding under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program.
- **FCM's committees and forums** focused on the election campaign and an approach to targeted engagement with the new government on committee priorities. But they also made progress and guided FCM staff on a wide range of policy, advocacy and programming priorities.