

## **Regional Councillor Report**

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**Date:** June 25, 2015

### **Federation Canadian Municipalities Conference – June 4 – 8, 2015, Edmonton, Alberta**

Keynote speakers were The Honourable Joe Oliver, Minister of Finance, Justin Trudeau, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, Tom Muclair, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada and Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada. Bruce Anderson, Chairman of Abacus Research spoke to delegates regarding their polling that suggests the upcoming federal election is very unpredictable, as the instinct for change is higher. Parties will be tested and retested in the upcoming months as only 25% of voters are decided and more people are indicating they want change. Interestingly their polling suggests that older voters are moving from Conservatives to the New Democrats. FCM delegates called for a federal leader's debate on municipal issues before the next federal election.

### **FCM Workshops and Study Tours**

#### ***Fighting Urban Flooding – Partnerships, Prevention and Preparedness (Insurance Board of Canada)***

The cost of water damage from sewer backups continues to rise. The aging infrastructure deficit is estimated at \$55 billion while insured losses as a result of water damage averaged about \$1 billion annually for the last five years and hit a staggering \$3 billion in 2013. The flood risk is increasing due to the growth in population, increased urbanization and climate change. Laurie McDonald, Canadian Public Safety, Assistant Deputy Minister stated that overland flooding costs Canada more than any other natural disaster. There is no insurance coverage for homeowners to cover damages for overland flooding (pluvial or surface flooding). In Canada only 65% of the Canadian Population has been flood mapped and 50% prior to 1996 which indicates the need for mapping and remapping based on best practices.

The Public Safety Department in consultation with the insurance industry is reviewing the merits of a National Insurance Program to deal with the damage costs of flooding. Currently the damage costs are paid by the Canadian taxpayer through Disaster Relief as Canada does not have a national insurance program. Countries with programs such as France, Germany and the United States, are being analyzed as to the pros and cons.

In consultation with the insurance industry the following pre conditions need to be in place for an effective national insurance program;

- Accurate flood mapping
- Targeted investment to build infrastructure
- Widespread risk awareness of the physical and financial risks of flooding
- A program needs government involvement focused on pre planning not after the fact
- Program needs to be fair, risk based and affordable and there needs to be risk mitigation incentives.

### ***City on the Move***

A visit to Edmonton's Office of Traffic Safety was an excellent opportunity to see the initiatives that Edmonton has implemented by examining data and implementing infrastructure changes and measures to improve public safety. Edmonton works closely with the Centre for Smart Transportation within the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Alberta to advance research and technology development in traffic operation, traffic safety and transportation planning.

Changes to right and left turn angles at intersections, red light cameras, photo radar and peace officers conducting photo radar in key places has resulted in collision reductions. Analysis of intersections is done by looking at collision data as well as data provided by videotaping which provides near collision data. With this data infrastructure improvements can be prioritized as to where there is most benefit. Funding for the Office of Traffic Safety is provided from the revenue received by automated enforcement for traffic offence tickets issued as a result of photo radar and red light camera offences. The many measures put in place have resulted in a significant reduction in collisions.

### ***Dollars and Sense - Neighborhood & Downtown Revitalization Programs***

This study tour examined Edmonton's programs to maintain infrastructure in mature neighborhoods, fund transformation projects and revitalize their downtown. Edmonton conducted a risk analysis of their infrastructure with the objective to provide long term funding to address the ageing infrastructure. A Neighborhood Revitalization Program 2% percent tax levy increase per year was approved which is cumulative. This levy provides funding for neighborhood renewal, drainage renewal and capital renewal resulting in improved neighborhoods and increasing the value of the homes in the area.

In the downtown a Community Revitalization Levy has been implemented whereby increased taxes, including the education portion (Province allow this), resulting from the increased assessment are utilized to pay off the debt for infrastructure improvements which are paid for by the municipality. This program has been very successful in that the developer knows up front the costs which are going to be borne by the municipality.

## ***Talking Trash***

A study tour that toured Edmonton's state of the art facilities of waste management and the technologies and processes that will assist the City in diverting 90% of its waste by 2016. They have the largest composting building in North America and compost bio solids from their sewage treatment plant by mixing them with their compost. Enerkem is a private business located on the site which uses a chemical process to convert waste to ethanol and methanol.

## ***Investing in the Future - Financing Municipal Infrastructure***

This workshop explored financing options for municipal infrastructure including the viability of public-private partnerships. Bonnie Lysyk, Auditor General of Ontario provided information on results of her analysis of public private partnerships and what municipalities should be considering. In her assessment large projects done by the public sector may constitute five times the risk whereas P3's may have higher financing costs. It is important that an analysis determine if the municipality's staff has the expertise to manage a project so that it is on time and budget. If so the risks can be reduced. Therefore a robust risk assessment should be conducted. P3s may not be the "be all and end all."

Presenters spoke of the regressive nature of property taxes and that land transfer taxes and user fees can be made less regressive. In Manitoba a portion of income tax is shared with municipalities.

## ***Youth Leaders of Today and Tomorrow***

Edmonton has a classroom in their municipal offices (City Hall School) which provides an opportunity for grade one to six students to learn about Council and services offered by the City. The teacher is seconded from the Board of Education and paid for by the city. Staff representing departments visit the classroom and students have opportunities to interview staff from various departments. The curriculum addresses many issues tailored to the grade level such as homelessness, poverty, public safety and the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations. Calgary has a similar class and Kingston has embarked on a similar pilot project this year.

Next Gen is an initiative which brings community representatives including city employees together to focus on planning community events geared to the 18 to 40 year age group. An example was an event styled on "speed dating" so that people could meet their Councilors. Their Youth Council is an advocacy group while NEXT Gen is focused on community events.

## ***Resolutions***

In addition to calling for a federal leader's debate on municipal issues other resolutions called on the federal government to take action on; infrastructure program design, climate change, social housing and housing affordability, emergency response planning for marine spills and missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls.