



SUBJECT: Federation of Canadian Municipalities conference report 2021
TO: Corporate Services, Strategy, Risk & Accountability Cttee.
FROM: Office of the Mayor

Report Number: MO-04-21

Wards Affected: Not applicable

File Numbers: 120-01

Date to Committee: July 5, 2021

Date to Council: July 13, 2021

Recommendation:

Receive and file office of the mayor report MO-04-21 providing highlights from the 2021 virtual Federation of Canadian Municipalities annual conference.

PURPOSE:

Vision to Focus Alignment:

- Increase economic prosperity and community responsive city growth
- Improve integrated city mobility
- Support sustainable infrastructure and a resilient environment
- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture
- Deliver customer centric services with a focus on efficiency and technology transformation

Background and Discussion:

From June 1st-4th, 2021, the Mayor, City Councillors and select staff members from the City of Burlington attended the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) annual conference and trade show. This year's event was held virtually and, as always, was the largest gathering of municipal elected officials in Canada.

Being present and engaging in this event provides our leadership team with opportunities to network and partner with peers on shared issues and ideas, to attend targeted workshops on a variety of relevant municipal issues, and to elect FCM

leadership positions to help advocate for the issues that matter to Burlington. With the possibility of an upcoming election this fall, we also had a very timely opportunity to hear from each federal party leader on the way they intend to work with municipalities if elected.

Key highlights of the sessions attended by the Mayor and team include the following:

Tuesday June 1st

Opening Plenary

Opening remarks including acknowledgement of Kamloops Residential School finding by Master of Ceremonies, Catherine Clark.

We then heard remarks from Indigenous speaker Verna McGregor, an elder from the Algonquin community in Quebec who offered an opening prayer and lit a smudge given the devastating news we had been faced with the past few days. She acknowledged we are all on this journey of reconciliation and we are all moving forward together. She asked us to learn the word “Miigwech”, meaning thank you. She noted the medicine wheel and how it shows that regardless of our differences and colour of our skin, we are all connected. Elder Verna McGregor is from the Algonquin Community of Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, which is approximately 120 kilometres north of Ottawa. Ottawa is part of the Algonquin Nation’s traditional lands. Verna works at Minwaashin Lodge, the Aboriginal Women’s Support Centre located in Ottawa. Services and resources provided by Minwaashin Lodge assist in the empowerment of Aboriginal Women leaving violence. Verna has remained firmly grounded in her community and nation by also being part of the group of traditional Grandmothers (Kokomisag) and Elders. This includes promoting the retention of the Algonquin language and culture, which is so important when addressing issues and connection to the land.

Singing of O Canada - Karimah Marshall - Karimah is a French/English speaking Pop/R&B singer/songwriter with grand prizes at Western Canadian competitions Polyfonik, Chant'Ouest, and the Memphis Bound Blues Challenge. Karimah reached the top 24 on "The Voice Canada" season 5. "Reveal to Heal" is her motto; her stories of trials and triumph will leave a tear in your eye as she turns pain into beauty.

Garth Frizzell, FCM President, then welcomed everyone and provided a land acknowledgement, noted that today is the first day of National Indigenous History Month, and spoke movingly about the grief we feel about the Kamloops discovery, the devastating loss of lives, and called for a commitment to the 94 actions from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. He spoke about COVID-19 and the response across the country despite unimaginable challenges, and how municipalities rose to those challenges, particularly by working together and finding solutions.

Valerie Plante - the Mayor of Montreal - the virtual host city - also welcomed everyone.

FCM CEO Carole Saab spoke, welcoming the crowd from Ottawa and offered her own land acknowledgement before acknowledging the residential school finding and committed to doing the action and work to foster anti-racism and embrace diversity. She spoke at length about what has taken place this past year through the pandemic and the signs we saw of persistent inequality as a result. Her commitment to inclusivity was evident. She also reiterated the need for a new status for cities in the Canadian federation, calling for a “modernization” of the relationship between municipalities and other orders of government: "We are in a new era and it demands a new approach".

Laurent Duvernay-Tardif spoke to the crowd. Laurent made headlines because he paused his football career with the Kansas City Chiefs to put his medical training at McGill to work on the pandemic's front lines in his hometown of Montreal. When the pandemic hit, Laurent worked as an orderly in a long-term care facility near Montreal. As conditions intensified, he put his stellar NFL career on hold to stay on the front lines. Laurent's dedication to his community helped earn him a spot as a Sports Illustrated Sportsperson of the Year, and as a 2020 co-winner of the Lou Marsh Award, which goes to Canada's top athlete. He shared his unique frontline insights on perseverance, resilience and community service with us. What an amazing story.

Political Speakers

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau gave a keynote speech and began by acknowledging the 215 children's bodies found at the Kamloops Residential School and the shame we must face together and reconcile collectively. He went on to speak about working together as “Team Canada” in the pandemic and hoping to continue to act that way after the pandemic is over. He also addressed housing affordability as a massive issue across the country, and the impact of foreign ownership, stating "a house is a place to live, not to park foreign money."

Workshop: Gender Equity

My team and I then attended a workshop on gender equity. Zahra Ebrahim (she/her), a public interest designer and strategist, focused on shifting power to people who are typically underrepresented in institutions and systems, acted as moderator.

Panelists included Umberto Carolo who is the Executive Director of White Ribbon and Global Co-Chair of the MenEngage Alliance, Paul Lacerte is a member of the Nadleh Whuten Band and belongs to the Carrier First Nation in northern BC. He served as the Provincial CEO for the BC Assn of Aboriginal Friendship Centres for 20 years. In 2011 Paul and his daughter Raven co-founded the Moosehide Campaign, a grass roots

movement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous men working to end violence against women and children, and Suzie Miron, Councillor, City of Montreal.

This workshop acknowledged that local and regional governments can play an instrumental role in eradicating gender-based violence and creating opportunities for women and girls. They can do this by taking a stand on equality, implementing fair employment practices, and ensuring non-discriminatory access to services. To achieve this, men and boys need to be agents of change as well—because equality benefits everyone. In this session, we heard from leaders in Canada and abroad who are moving forward with purpose to address gender-based violence and to build more inclusive communities.

Umberto also passionately commented, raising concerns and calling out the “parental alienation” movement which seeks municipal proclamations around family breakdown and alienation during divorce and custody battles. Burlington has issued these proclamations in the past, along with other mayors across Canada. Umberto said the notion of parental alienation has been used against women in custody battles. Recently, in the Mayor’s Office, we received an impassioned plea from a Burlington mom, and later received a letter from women’s organizations, to stop proclaiming parental alienation day (or its offshoot, Grandparents Alienation day). This letter was sent to mayors across the country. As a result, we will not be proclaiming this day again as our proclamations are meant to uplift our community, not further divide.

Connected Lab: Budgets

I then attended a short session called a "Connected Lab" which FCM has many of throughout the week, each in 15-minute increments. This one focused on learning the fundamentals of the budget lifecycle and how a continuous improvement program will shorten your planning time in the long run and was led by Stefan Burden, Senior Account Executive at Questica.

Political Speakers

The day ended with speeches from colleagues from across the country who are running for the 1st Vice President position in FCM, and then a political keynote from Conservative Party of Canada leader Erin O'Toole where he outlined his priorities and ideas.

Wednesday June 2nd

The day began with the Ontario Regional Caucus meeting where Chair Tim Tierney, who is also a councillor in Ottawa, led a conversation about our collective and collaborative response to the pandemic through FCM. Priorities discussed included increasing rural access to broadband internet and affordable housing. We also heard some speeches from candidates hoping to join/remain on the FCM board, including Burlington councillor Rory Nisan who has been serving us well on the board since 2019.

Political Speakers

The next session was a political keynote with Jagmeet Singh of the New Democratic Party, who reiterated the common issue we had been hearing all week - we have a crisis in housing affordability in Canada and we need to address it with real solutions.

We heard a moving poem by 2011/12 Halifax Poet Laureate Tanya Davis called "Forward".

Workshop: Anti-Racism Initiatives

My team and I later attended a workshop on Anti-Racism and building inclusive communities. The pandemic has laid bare significant inequalities in our communities, and in this country, so as we move forward beyond COVID-19, all orders of government will need to ensure that everyone can take part in the Canada we build. This workshop was moderated by the chair of FCM's Standing Committee on Anti-Racism and Equity, Halifax councillor Lindell Smith. Alongside information about FCM's standing committee on addressing systemic racism and engaging marginalized communities, there were a number of elected officials who spoke about the actions they are taking at their councils and in their communities to address anti-racism. This included information from the cities of Victoria and Laval, and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. All representatives discussed the diverse population of their cities and the different frameworks, strategic plans, trainings and working groups that have been implemented in order for all communities to be engaged with, and to help further guide city decision making.

There are a number of resources available that were shared at the workshop around what various municipalities are doing on indigenous reconciliation, welcoming newcomers, combating racism and more:

- Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, indigenous and rural relations: <https://www.rmwb.ca/en/indigenous-and-rural-relations/truth-and-reconciliation.aspx>

- Victoria, B.C. Reconciliation Dialogues:
<https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/city/witness-reconciliation-program/victoria-reconciliation-dialogues.html>
- Welcoming City Task Force: <https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/city/other-boards-committees/welcoming-city-task-force.html>
- Thunder Bay-Fort William First Nation's Walk a Mile video:
<https://www.thunderbay.ca/en/city-hall/indigenous-resources.aspx>
- For anyone looking to start or further their reconciliation journey, please visit the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) for this learning tool that is free to anyone who wants to take it. <https://www.fin.gov.nt.ca/en/services/diversity-and-inclusion/introduction-living-well-together>
- The Town of Devon, Alberta passed an Indigenous Engagement Framework 2 years ago. <https://www.devon.ca/Community/Indigenous-Engagement/Indigenous-Engagement-Framework>
- The City of Ottawa recently established an Anti-Racism Secretariat to confront systemic racism by applying an anti-racist approach to the way the City develops policies, makes decisions, evaluates programs, and measures outcomes. The work consists of developing an Anti-Racism Strategy that addresses key areas where Indigenous people and racialized communities face disparities and where the City of Ottawa can make a demonstrable impact to address these inequities utilizing an equity lens. <https://engage.ottawa.ca/anti-racism-and-ethnocultural-relations-initiatives>
- The Welcoming and Inclusive Communities (WIC) initiative is a partnership between the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) and the Government of Alberta to support municipalities to implement policies and practices to help overcome issues of racism and discrimination. Resources here: <https://www.auma.ca/advocacy-services/programs-initiatives/welcoming-and-inclusive-communities>
- City of Richmond, BC developed a Cultural Harmony Plan:
https://www.richmond.ca/_shared/assets/Cultural_Harmony_Plan_2019-202955134.pdf
- To learn more about the fight to create Nunavut, a true example of reaching a goal despite the existence of Systemic Racism, please watch this Documentary: Kappiataittut (Fearless):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWDlcccRYq8>

- This is the City of Edmonton's Indigenous Framework created with elders and knowledge keepers and diverse employees:
https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/initiatives_innovation/community-engagement-indigenous-framework.aspx

Connected Lab: Food Security

In the afternoon I attended another Connected Lab, this one focused on Food Security, something that has been a huge focus throughout COVID-19 both here in Burlington as part of our COVID-19 Task Force, and around the world. We heard from a farmer, a food supplier and agricultural expert, as well as a not-for-profit leader, about the vital role of a strong domestic agriculture system and explored what steps we could take to protect and strengthen food security and community resilience.

There was a lot of discussion around allowing backyard chickens in urban areas; municipalities that have implemented that have seen little uptake - it's a lot more work than people realize. People are more interested in community gardens, or backyard food gardens, so municipalities are supporting that.

Resource provided around "food sovereignty" as an important part of the discussion on food security, with this link on 5 big ideas for a better food system.

<https://foodsecurecanada.org/policy-advocacy/five-big-ideas-better-food-system>

Board Elections

The day finished with the 1st Vice President announcement of newly-elected Taneen Rudyk, and the selection of candidates for the FCM Board of Directors where we proudly saw Burlington Councillor Rory Nisan re-elected for his third consecutive year on the board.

Thursday June 3rd

The day began with a plenary session on overcoming online harassment of women and elected officials. Panelists, including the Hon. Maryam Monsef, Minister for Women and General Equality and Rural Economic Development, covered how challenging the social media vitriol has been toward politicians and how women and racialized groups deal with increasingly bigoted and misogynistic comments. As we know, the internet and social media are powerful tools for elected officials to reach out and connect with their constituents, but they can also be incredibly harmful. Online attacks and harassment continue to grow in frequency and intensity, even reaching levels of violence such as death threats. We heard from the speakers about their personal experiences with online harassment and talked about new research and strategies about how to overcome cyberviolence.

A report from the University of British Columbia ([Trolled on the Campaign Trail](#)) was shared which examined online incivility and abuse in Canadian politics and provided excellent recommendations for handling online harassment. The recommendations included providing appropriate training and resources so candidates and campaign teams can safely and effectively manage online abuse, to establishing guidelines for the online conduct of candidates and staff, to having social media platforms themselves develop clearer and more reliable enforcement of terms of service.

Plenary Session

There was then a resolution plenary session where four individual resolutions were voted on, all of which passed:

1. Prevention of Accidental 911 Calls on Personal Devices
2. Strengthening Canada's Hate Speech Laws
3. Expand the Rural and Remote Stream of the Reaching Home Program
4. Emergency Federal Support for Inter-Community Passenger Bus Service

Political Speakers

The morning finished with Annamie Paul, Leader of the Green Party of Canada who spoke about her priorities and ideas for the party.

Rural Plenary Session

There was a rural plenary session that focused mainly on rural broadband and connectivity.

Workshop: Ending Homelessness

The afternoon included a workshop on ending homelessness with speakers including Cheryl Whiskeyjack of Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, Aras Jizan of Built for Zero Initiative, Kristen Cainey of Wyndham House and Tim Richter of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. Exciting [news was shared this week](#) that Medicine Hat, Alberta has become the first city in Canada to achieve "functional zero chronic homelessness," which means there were 3 or less individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in the community for three consecutive months. Reaching functional zero is a national achievement confirmed by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness's [Built for Zero Canada](#).

Friday June 4th

The final day of FCM included the Annual General Meeting and closing remarks with a lot of gratitude for the hard work the organizing team put in, as well as for all the great speeches and presentations.

Councillor Insights from the Event:

Ward 1 Councillor Kelvin Galbraith:

“It’s always great to join with our fellow Canadian municipalities in sharing information, ideas and best practices when it comes to municipal government. Although we see our Federal leaders often in the media, having them speak to us directly about how they will work with municipalities is very inspiring. There were several themes this year with COVID-19 being an obvious number one. The ongoing housing crisis was mentioned by all leaders with various ideas being mentioned to combat the issue. I was not able to attend as many seminars as I had hoped but those that I did attend were excellent. I really do miss the FCM event in person and hope that it may return next year in such form.”

Ward 3 Councillor Rory Nisan:

“This year’s FCM offered helpful workshops and important resolutions on issues such as regional bus service. I was pleased to be re-elected to represent Halton on the FCM board. A strong board has been given the direction to advocate on behalf of municipalities as the next federal election looms large in the months ahead. Thank you to all my Burlington colleagues who participated in the conference and supported my re-election.”

Ward 6 Councillor Angelo Bentivegna:

“I found that a number of FCM speakers referenced the lack of physical socialization and its effects on our daily lives in their presentations. The common option to communicate was virtual and it became the primary means to connect with business, friends and family. Personally, I have new admiration for family, friends and businesses, appreciating the power of connection. I look forward to a post-pandemic future, with new opportunities to improve our city, citizen engagement and a growing economy.”

Financial Matters:

The registration fee for FCM is \$678 per person.

The fee for all members of council who attended, including the mayor, was paid for via the Halton Region budget as per precedent in past years. The other members of council who attended this year include Councillors Galbraith, Kearns, Nisan, and Bentivegna.

The cost of one staff member attending alongside the mayor to provide administrative support and for their own professional development was also \$678, paid for via the Mayor’s Office budget.

Since the conference was held virtually due to COVID-19, there were no costs related to travel.

Other Resource Impacts

Not applicable.

Climate Implications

One of the advantages to a virtual conference is the lack of need to travel. By attending from home, we were able to avoid the climate implications of flying to the originally-scheduled host city of Montreal.

Engagement Matters:

N/A

Conclusion:

Overall, those who attended gained valuable insights, relationships, and learnings to bring back to their roles and to our city. It was a worthy use of time to attend and we look forward to participating in future years as well.

Respectfully submitted,

Mayor Marianne Meed Ward

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.