

Mayor's Report – June 11, 2024

I arrived back yesterday from the annual convention of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), held this year in Calgary. It was attended by 3,200 mayors and councillors from across Canada -- the largest FCM convention ever.

With such a large gathering of elected local officials, FCM presents an opportunity unlike any other to meet with fellow mayors, exchange ideas, and learn best practices from other municipalities large and small.

As an example, I went on a study tour of three City of Calgary solar facilities, including one built to the same scale as our own solar array. Seeing these facilities was informative in itself but just as useful was speaking with all the other mayors and councillors on the tour whose municipalities are at various stages of developing solar facilities. I think we all learnt from each other, and I have to say everyone was impressed with the way we had integrated battery storage.

A highlight of the Convention was the launch of a proposed Municipal Growth Framework to move local government beyond its outdated fiscal arrangement based on property taxes and application-based grants. The Framework calls on federal and provincial governments to commit to municipal finance reform by linking transfers to economic growth, setting direct federal transfers to half a percent of GST, allocating a portion of provincial sales taxes to municipalities, broadening transfers to allow for operating costs as well as capital costs, and granting municipalities new powers over taxes and user fees.

Prime Minister Trudeau gave a keynote speech at the convention and he was asked about reforming municipalities' funding structures. He replied he was supportive but said the challenge was getting agreement from the provinces, some of which do agree on constitutional grounds with the federal government providing direct funding to municipalities.

It was a bit of a crazy week with the major water main break that severely impacted Calgary's water supply happening on the first day of the convention. (You may have heard about it in the news.) Knowing that such an emergency could happen in any of our communities, all 3,200 of us joined in the water conservation efforts, and Calgary Mayor Jyoti Gondek said that if there had to be a large convention in town that week, she was glad it was FCM.

Anyway, it's good to be home in Summerland, not least for the fact I can now take a proper shower.

I'd like to thank Deputy Mayor Trainer for taking on some of my duties while I was away, including helping with the official opening of Action Fest, kicking off Senior's Week at the Summerland Senior's Village, and attending the "Summerland Stories" event organized by the South Okanagan Pride Society and Summerland Museum.

- Mayor Doug Holmes