

How local leadership
is rebuilding Canada
from the ground up

Study tours showcase
Ottawa's innovation
and leadership

Building a resilient
future: The power
of rural Canada

FCM ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2025 EDITION

—

Stronger, Together

FCM President
Rebecca Bligh's
guiding principle





Building climate resilient communities

Municipalities across Canada are on the frontlines of climate adaptation. Climate resilience is a pillar of Intact's approach to building resilient communities and we are more focused than ever on providing your community with the support and resources needed to address the impacts of climate change.

We are doubling down on our efforts to explore real, concrete solutions to empower your community to thrive and become more resilient.

Resilient communities don't just happen. They're built together.



Protect what you care about.



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Stronger, together

Highlights from FCM's 2025 annual conference

More than 2,500 municipal leaders from across Canada came together in Ottawa from May 29 to June 1 to attend the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' 2025 Annual Conference and Trade Show.

With the theme Stronger, Together: Local Strength, National Prosperity, the event showcased the vital role of municipalities in shaping the country's future. From impactful dialogues with federal leaders to a wide range of workshops, plenaries, study tours, and hub sessions,

this year's annual conference underscored a shared commitment to building a stronger, more resilient Canada.

Take a look at our photo report to relive the energy, collaboration, and inspiration that made this year's conference a resounding success.

Speeches and Keynotes that Shaped the Conversation



FCM CEO Carole Saab discussed the need to work together to build a strong and resilient Canada. In this pivotal moment, she called for a renewed partnership between all orders of government to tackle Canadians' biggest concerns like housing, public safety, and infrastructure.



FCM President Rebecca Bligh shared a deeply personal vision of municipal empowerment – championing their growth toward full potential and highlighting their crucial role in shaping a more prosperous, resilient economy that leaves no one behind.



Prime Minister Mark Carney delivered a keynote address on the main stage, one of his first public appearances since his election.



Prime Minister Mark Carney and FCM President Rebecca Bligh at the fireside chat.



Conservative Party of Canada Deputy Leader Melissa Lantsman discussed the cost of living and affordability crisis in Canada as well as its effects on generations to come.



NDP MP Gord Johns, a former municipal councillor, discussed the importance of municipalities working together with all orders of government to get things done through fiscal reform.



Green Party of Canada Leader Elizabeth May expressed that cities are leading the charge toward a greener, more environmentally conscious future by tackling climate change and building climate resilience in their communities.



FCM CEO Carole Saab.

Dynamic Program Featuring Plenaries, Workshops, Study Tours, and More



Marsha Walden, CEO of Destination Canada, talks about the importance of Canadian tourism for municipalities.



Canadian and American mayors gathered on the main stage to discuss Canada-U.S. relations during the opening plenary.



During a press conference, Gatineau Mayor Maude Marquis-Bissonnette, joined by fellow Big City Mayors' Caucus members and FCM President Rebecca Bligh, called for a mature, pragmatic coordination across all governments to meet Canada's housing goals.



Timmins Mayor Michelle Boileau delivered a speech at the francophone reception on the importance of francophone voices within FCM.



A delegation of local elected women, participants from the Partnerships for Municipal Innovation - Women in Local Leadership (PMI-WILL) project implemented by FCM and funded by Global Affairs Canada, attended the annual conference. From left to right. First row: Elsie Odonkor (FCM), Gaby Senay (FCM), Sokhom Som (National League of the Local Councils of the Kingdom of Cambodia), Ablawa Lucie Sessinou (L'Association nationale des communes du Bénin), Rebecca Bligh (FCM), Sreymom Art (National League of the Local Councils of the Kingdom of Cambodia), Falesi Soko (Local Government Association of Zambia), Annie Kapandula (Local Government Association of Zambia). Back row: Chhorvanchanny Om (National League of the Local Councils of the Kingdom of Cambodia), Arouna Adizatou (L'Association nationale des communes du Bénin), Helena Mensah (National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana), Philomena Opoku Asare (National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana).



Brampton city councillor Rowena Santos speaks at the Resolutions plenary.



Delegates on their way to the Wateridge Village study tour.



David Coletto of Abacus Data presents at the closing plenary.



FCM's new Table Officers: Third Vice-President Marc Doret, Vice-President at Large Amy Coady, President Rebecca Bligh, Second Vice-President Kathy Valentino, and First Vice-President Tim Tierney.



FCM President Rebecca Bligh at the closing gala.

Impactful Rural Stream

Neal Comeau, FCM's Rural Forum chair, speaks at the rural plenary. This year's program highlighted rural realities like never before, with targeted workshops and study tours, rural-specific case studies and dedicated sessions to engage directly with experts on issues specific to your region.



Mayor Brittany Merrifield, from the Town of Grand Bay-Westfield in New Brunswick, at the press conference where FCM launched *The Future of Rural Canada* – a bold roadmap to unlock the full potential of rural communities as essential partners in national prosperity. She was accompanied by FCM Second Vice-President Kathy Valentino and FCM President Rebecca Bligh.



Delegates gathered at the Rural, Northern and Remote reception, presented by CN.

Advancing Reconciliation through Municipal-Indigenous Partnerships



Keynote address from the Assembly of First Nations' National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak. She spoke to delegates about the importance of the ongoing Reconciliation work and ensuring resilience and prosperity for all Indigenous communities.



Kara Meldrum, National Director Business Development at Starbucks; Dennis Meeches, Business Advisor for Manitoba USKE; Tanya Tourangeau, FCM's Reconciliation Lead; and Jesse Donovan, Acting Director of the Lands Sector at the Assembly of First Nations during the session Navigating the Complexities and Opportunities of Urban Reserves.



FCM's Reconciliation Lead, Tanya Tourangeau, at the Sacred Fire Space.



A glimpse of the Indigenous artisan market.



Neal Comeau, Chair of FCM's Rural Forum and Councillor, Sturgeon County; Ron Morin Jr., Enoch First Nation; Ken MacKay, Councillor, City of St. Albert; Kate Polkovsky, ARROW Utilities; Troy McDonald, Senior Manager of Infrastructure, Enoch First Nation; Tanya Tourangeau, FCM's Reconciliation Lead at a workshop on municipal and Indigenous collaboration.

Innovative Solutions Showcased at Trade Show

The sold-out trade show brought together 150 partners, experts, and suppliers from the municipal sector to showcase innovative solutions and

technologies. Delegates who attended were able to explore different ways to address their communities' most pressing challenges.



Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe at the mayor's welcome reception and trade show opening presented by Canadian Telecommunications Association.



Canada Post booth.



Canadian Addiction Treatment Centres (CATC) booth.



Egg Farmers of Canada, Chicken Farmers of Canada, Turkey Farmers of Canada, Canadian Hatching Egg Producers and Dairy Farmers of Canada booth.



Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution booth.

How local leadership is rebuilding Canada from the ground up



FCM CEO Carole Saab.

Since the election at the end of April and the swearing in of cabinet on May 13, a substantial “to-do” list for the new federal government has taken shape.

Carole Saab, FCM’s CEO, in a keynote speech advocated for a new era of unity, resilience, and cooperation between municipal, provincial/territorial, and federal leaders. She urged all orders of government to “fix the roof” rather than keep patching it.

Local governments consistently find themselves at the forefront of crises and conflicts as they strive to continue providing their residents with the quality of life they deserve. From housing to climate resilience, municipalities are on

the front lines of Canada’s most pressing challenges. Saab emphasized that municipalities are more than service providers – they are economic engines of prosperity and nation builders, full of innovative ideas and solutions.

Difficult Times in 2025

Municipalities have faced a turbulent start to 2025.

“The first few months of 2025 have us firmly operating in uncharted territory,” Saab said. “The world as we know it is being reconfigured

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“We need a united Canadian voice and approach to build our country stronger.”

FCM CEO Carole Saab

before our eyes – global economies, revered institutions, and the sovereignty of nations are under threat.”

From a sudden trade war with the U.S. to a federal election, 2025 has been anything but stable. Yet local leaders have risen to the occasion while continuing to serve their residents. As part of missions organized by FCM, many Canadian mayors have travelled to the U.S. to advocate for their communities, working to ensure tariffs would not deepen local economic vulnerabilities. Canada's rural, remote, northern, and urban communities came together at this time, working with their American counterparts to show the true strength of municipalities.

During the federal election, local governments came together to ensure federal parties knew that they needed financial reform and a new partnership to address the vulnerabilities in Canada's economy. As Saab noted, “[This trade war was] the spark, but [it] landed on dry tinder. And now, we see just how exposed our economy truly is.”

Recognizing Municipalities as Partners

Amid these challenges, one message rang clear: Canada needs structural change, and that starts with recognizing municipalities as equal partners.

“We need a united Canadian voice and approach to build our country stronger,” Saab said. “That means unity across regions, across industries, and across orders of government. So, to our federal and provincial and territorial partners: it's time to meet the moment and join us in this conversation.”

She concluded with a heartfelt reflection on Canada's true strength: its people. Despite political and regional differences, Saab argued that unity is already alive in communities – it just needs to be reflected in national policy.

“While we may have our disagreements, I believe this country is already deeply united – in determination, in values, and in belief in a better future,” Saab said. “Unity isn't abstract. It's lived and led – in your communities, every single day. That's the Canada I know.”

“Stronger Together” was more than just a theme for this conference – it was a call to action. Through its programming, workshops, and keynote addresses, the 2025 FCM annual conference laid out a blueprint for the future. As Canada faces economic uncertainty and shifting global dynamics, one thing is clear: the future will be built locally, or not at all. Because we are stronger, together.

FCM President Rebecca Bligh delivering her vision speech.



“Stronger together”

FCM president’s guiding principle

by Municipal World Staff

The theme of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)’s 2025 annual general meeting was “Stronger, Together.” For FCM President Rebecca Bligh, that is more than a slogan. It has been her guiding principle.

Bligh, who took over as FCM president last October, is now in the midst of her second term as a Vancouver councillor.

“I have had a pretty big life leading up to becoming a councillor,” says Bligh. “I was a

"It's no easy feat putting your hand up in the U.S. right now as a mayor and pushing back against the Trump administration. That takes a lot of courage."

FCM President Rebecca Bligh

young, single mom and then launched my small business, but always focusing on hyperlocal economic development. Being an elected councillor is an amazing chance to give back to a city that's given me so much. It's been an interesting journey over the last seven and a half years."

Bligh's said her role with FCM, first as a board member and now as president, is an opportunity to continue focusing on local issues while threading them with national advocacy. "It's a huge honour and a big responsibility."

Bligh said she appreciated a delegation of mayors from the United States who attended the FCM conference in Ottawa. They were there to address shared priorities and with Canadian mayors. They also addressed issues such as trade and economic disruptions caused by tariffs.

"It's no easy feat putting your hand up in the U.S. right now as a mayor and pushing back against the Trump administration," says Bligh. "That takes a lot of courage."

Rural Voices Key to Canada's Future

FCM also released its "Future of Rural Canada" report and addressed other key issues like health care access in rural areas and the future of Canada Post.

Bligh said 60 per cent of Canada's infrastructure is managed by municipalities in the rural parts of Canada. Meanwhile these rural municipalities have very small tax bases based on the size of the populations.

"It's just so important that we recognize that rural Canada is a critical piece of national prosperity, and this report shares in great detail the data and the information that we need in order to build programs that are responsive to rural priorities as well."

Bligh said FCM is taking action to "lift up" the voices of its rural members. "We've always known it is important internally, but it is about what is projected out as well. It is a real focus at this time when economic development across the country is critical and that just can't happen in our urban centres.

"We need to recognize that agricultural land, energy, moving goods and services, and warehousing has to happen where we have lots of land mass. What happens in our rural communities absolutely contributes to our national prosperity picture."

Aligning Municipal Vision with Federal Action

The election of the new federal government, headed by Prime Minister Mark Carney, is an opportunity for FCM to highlight its priorities such as supporting local economic growth, investing in infrastructure renewal, achieving housing affordability, ending homelessness, building climate-resilient communities, and fostering thriving rural, northern, and remote communities.

Bligh and other FCM officers, as well as the Big City Mayors' Caucus, met with several federal cabinet ministers whose responsibilities are "particularly impactful" with FCM's priorities. These included Dominic LeBlanc, minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade; François-Philippe Champagne, minister of finance; and Gregor Robertson, the federal housing and infrastructure minister.

Robertson is well-acquainted with FCM as a former Vancouver mayor and chair of FCM's Big Cities Mayors' Caucus.

"That's kind of handy," says Bligh. "That is an opportunity in that he knows exactly what it means to be a mayor of a big city with big challenges related to housing.

"The fact that he's now in the federal government and has a ministry that's so important to those issues of housing, homelessness and infrastructure, means he's going to take all of those learnings from being there, and what worked, and what didn't work, and start to navigate some of those future programs and policies that could really knit all of those learnings together to have an impact."

Carney addressed the delegates and took part in a fireside chat afterwards with Bligh.

"It was a very excellent start to a new relationship with the Prime Minister and his government and very grateful he spent a good amount of time with us," Bligh said. "Municipalities are ready to work and we're ready to work quickly. As we know, that also is a priority of the Prime Minister."

Bligh's impression is that Carney is a pragmatic thinker.

"He just wants to get to the meat of the conversation, which is, what are we needing to do? What are we needing to achieve? That's actually something we're very excited about. It is certainly how I approach my role as an elected official in any capacity, both at FCM and also in my city. It's time for that pragmatism because we have a lot of work to do and we need action, and not a lot of words." **MW**

Councillor for Rivière-du-Nord (N.B.) Yvon Godin, Timmins (Ont.) Mayor Michelle Boileau, and Neuville (Que.) Mayor Bernard Gaudreau during the session Uniting Francophone Voices.



Informal exchanges between municipal leaders a key part of FCM

by Municipal World Staff

As good as the formal sessions are at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) annual conference, informal hallway or coffee break meetings are crucial for municipal leaders for networking, ideas exchange, and relationship building.

These interactions can spark innovation and strengthen connections, leading to more effective problem solving and decision making.



Lauren Hanchar

Lauren Hanchar, Mayor of Watson Lake, Yukon, and President of the Association of Yukon Communities, says she is eager to compare notes with other municipal

leaders, particularly those from other northern communities.

"A big part of it for me is networking," says Hanchar. "I've always gotten great value out of just having the opportunity to chat with other mayors and councillors from across the country."

Updating aging infrastructure is top of mind for many northern communities, she says.

"We have such a small tax base, so it makes it really hard when we're talking about infrastructure maintenance or replacement," says Hanchar. "We're very reliant on transfers from the Yukon government and from Ottawa."



Neal Comeau
Neal Comeau, a councillor in Sturgeon County, Alta., says infrastructure

challenges are being spoken about by many municipal leaders particularly in rural areas.

"The wastewater infrastructure that we have that was supposed to be good for 75 to 80 years is only actually good for 35 to 40 years," says Comeau. "We don't have the budget for that right now."

Comeau said his municipality cooperates as part of a group of 13 municipalities to deliver wastewater services. "We're just now doing expansion of our plant, and it was \$195 million. Well, that's on the backs of those 13 member municipalities. That's a lot of money for those municipalities to dish out for that to support growth, which we need."



Josh Morgan
Josh Morgan, Mayor of London, Ont., and Chair of FCM's Big City Mayor's

Caucus, said the issue of homelessness is being talked about by most mayors.

"One of the things I always say is homelessness is a big spectrum."

Major of London, Ontario and Chair of FCM's Big City Mayor's Caucus Josh Morgan

London is taking a multi-pronged approach to address homelessness, focusing on prevention, supportive housing, and community collaboration. This includes initiatives like its Community Encampment Plan, which prioritizes a human rights-based approach and pathways out of homelessness.

The city is also working toward increasing affordable and supportive housing options and developing a "whole of community" system response to homelessness.

"One of the things I always say is homelessness is a big spectrum," says Morgan. "You have to recognize that it is a combination of people who have an affordability need and simply cannot access the options in the market. Even that ranges right from a little bit below market rate rents to deeply affordable housing."

Like every major city, there are people with high and complex needs for healthcare or addiction issues, says Morgan. "We've taken a very unique approach to that population. The reason why is because that population actually consumes a huge amount of services within healthcare, emergency room visits, land ambulance transports, and contacts with police."

Investing in finding pathways to housing for that population takes a large amount of pressure off of other vital systems in the city, says Morgan. "That's why we focused in on highly supportive housing with the proper medical supports wrapped around them to make people successful in their housing

journey with pathways through hubs and transitional housing."



Rowena Santos
Rowena Santos, a councillor in Brampton, Ont., is chair

of FCM's Finance, Infrastructure, and Transportation (FIT) Committee, which focuses on securing federal funding, promoting efficient infrastructure investment, and advocating for improved public transit and transportation systems across Canada.

Santos says she uses this forum to check in with other municipal leaders across the country. "When we're talking about transit, transportation, moving people, a growing population, the need for more community centers, wastewater issues, housing development – it's all happening in Brampton," says Santos. "That perspective is something that I can talk about quite freely as the chair."

Santos launched a local initiative against U.S. tariffs, the "From City to City" campaign, together with a colleague from Durham Region in Ontario, Chris Leahy, who represents the Town of Whitby. The idea is to create cross-border connections with municipal leaders in the US and work together to oppose tariffs.

"We have found common ground with our colleagues from across the border who are wanting to strengthen the relationship with us," says Santos. "They agree we have a common set of values. Even if the trade war ends, we should continue this relationship." [MW](#)



AC2025 by the numbers

This year, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) 2025 Annual Conference and Trade Show was a resounding success thanks to its diverse programming aimed at seizing this moment in time and finding local solutions for a stronger Canada.

Here are
some of the
highlights:

2,500 participants from
across the country

20 workshops and ask-
the-expert sessions

Over **30** study tour
options showcasing
Ottawa's innovations

72 athletes participated
in the Allons-y wellness
challenge

4 resolutions adopted by
members

4 main-stage plenaries on
critical topics

5 political keynotes
speakers, including
the newly elected
Prime Minister

1 essential advocacy paper
launched to support rural
municipalities: *The Future
of Rural Canada*

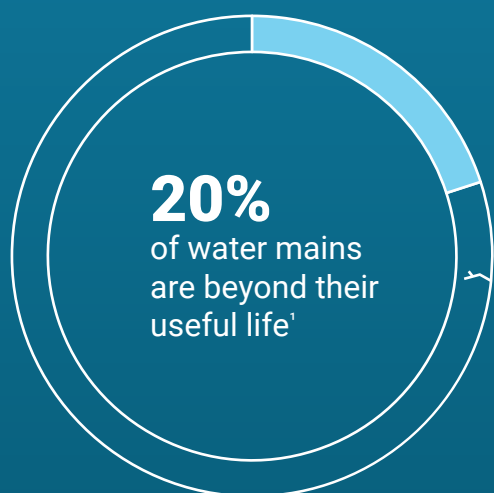
168 booths and
155 exhibitors at the
Trade Show

836 uses of #FCM2025AC
and #FCM2025CA on social
media during the week of
Annual Conference

60 per cent voter
turnout for FCM's Board
of Directors elections

The reality

Aging infrastructure is costing communities, but pipeline failures are preventable.



11%
of water lost
to leakage¹



\$2.6B+
spent on pipeline
failures per year¹

\$270B
infrastructure
deficit in Canada²

260,000
pipe failures
annually¹



What's at stake?

A resilient water system is the backbone of a vibrant, thriving, and sustainable community.



Essential services

Leaks and breaks can leave homes, hospitals, and businesses without safe, reliable water.



Public safety

Water contamination, road collapses, and flooded neighbourhoods endanger lives and destroy public confidence.



Economic stability

Failures waste public funds, erode property values, and raise legal risks.

¹ Utah State University (2023) "Water Main Break Rates in the USA and Canada: A Comprehensive Study"

² BCG Centre for Canada's Future (2020) "15 Things to Know About Canadian Infrastructure"



No room for complacency:

A zero-failure strategy



Target the real risks

Quickly pinpoint your most vulnerable pipes to maximize the impact of your limited budget.



Monitor what matters

Advanced inspection and real-time monitoring mean fewer surprises and smarter decisions.



Act before a break

Cut emergency spending by stopping leaks and predicting failures before they happen.



Plan for the future

Anticipate maintenance needs to extend pipe life and budget proactively.



Earn public trust

Build confidence with residents and regulators by delivering measurable wins.

Planned repairs cost

3-5x

less than a failure

Managing pipelines costs

10-20%

of full replacement



A photograph of Prime Minister Mark Carney in profile, facing left, wearing a dark blue suit and a red tie. He is gesturing with his hands as if speaking. In the background, several Canadian flags are visible on poles, and the stage has a red and yellow backdrop.

New government, new opportunities to ensure national prosperity

Since the election at the end of April and the swearing in of cabinet on May 13, a substantial “to-do” list for the new federal government has taken shape.

The government’s ambitious goals include securing a new economic relationship with the U.S., delivering significant numbers of new housing builds, improving internal trade within Canada, and investing in new infrastructure and nation-building projects, all while realizing a stronger economy.

What is striking is that these are the same priorities FCM has advanced on behalf of municipalities during the last election campaign. They are the

same issues that municipalities have already been striving tirelessly to deliver progress on.

Shared Focus Between Governments

Every day, municipalities work hard to realize new housing and the related infrastructure, to fund and deliver crucial local services, and to boost local economies, while also strengthening cross-border ties with our municipal counterparts in the U.S.

Given these shared priorities, it's clear the new federal government's road to success runs through municipalities – who are deeply invested in seeing progress on the above issues.

It is municipalities that are leading on the frontlines, and who have the experience of tackling the big issues.

Municipalities' unique role recognized

The prime minister agreed with Bligh on the stage at FCM's annual conference – municipalities are vitally important in the current context.

He noted the unique role that local government plays in modern Canada.

"Collaboration, between the federal government and all municipalities, is more important than ever. We are at a hinge moment in Canada's history ... the response to global challenges begins right here at home in our municipalities."

The Prime Minister expressed his intention for "Canada's new government (to be) a reliable partner to our municipalities on a wide range of issues".

Municipalities know that this relationship must be based on mutual understanding, respect and a desire to jointly deliver for Canadians.

FCM's Next Steps

The argument for a lasting, productive partnership between orders of government that would get ahead of the next crisis – rather than just reacting to it – is clear.

FCM's efforts over the months ahead will embody that spirit of partnership and span the full spectrum of the political landscape.

This includes further efforts to strengthen ties with all parties and MPs in the House of Commons. The relationship with the Conservative Party of Canada, the main opposition party, is a crucial one that FCM will continue to focus on, while working with provincial and territorial associations is more key than ever – helping to empower local government advocacy across the country.

As his mandate begins in earnest, FCM is urging Carney to move with purpose on his election promises, particularly regarding the vital priorities of housing, homelessness, infrastructure and public safety. With high-profile bills being lined up in parliament, FCM's call is for effective legislation, but with meaningful engagement with municipalities being at the heart of these efforts.

Doing so will ensure an effective partnership going forward, and ensure a more resilient, affordable, and safer country – where no-one is left behind.



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in your community

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COMMISSIONAIRES **100** COMMISSIONNAIRES
1925 – 2025

UN SIÈCLE DE SERVICE AU CANADA





Study tours showcase Ottawa's innovation and leadership

by Municipal World Staff

From net-zero neighbourhoods to digital twin technology, the City of Ottawa took centre stage at this year's Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) annual conference by opening its doors – and streets – to more than 2,000 delegates through an expansive series of study tours.

Hosted in the nation's capital, FCM's annual conference brought municipal leaders from across the country to share best practices, explore innovative ideas, and build partnerships. Among the most impactful learning experiences offered were the dozens of guided study tours that showcased Ottawa's leadership in sustainability, technology, housing, infrastructure, and public engagement.

"It was an honour to welcome municipal leaders from across Canada to Ottawa for the FCM conference," said Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe. "I'm proud they got to experience the best of our city – our people, our innovation, and our leadership on the big issues that matter to all of us."

While the main sessions and keynote panels offered policy insight and political networking, the tours gave participants a hands-on look at how Ottawa is navigating some of the most pressing challenges facing Canadian municipalities.

Technology, Innovation, and Smart Planning

One of the highlights was Area X.O, a cutting-edge research and testing facility designed to advance robotics, autonomous vehicles, and drone technology. Participants saw firsthand how the city collaborates with academia and industry to foster sustainable innovation with over \$50 million in investment.

“There's no place like Ottawa in late May”

Ottawa mayor Mark Sutcliffe

Another standout was Ottawa's Digital Twin initiative – a 3D, data-rich model of the city used for planning, zoning, and flood mitigation. City officials walked attendees through the platform's capabilities, including AI-powered simulations and emergency response scenarios tied to riverine flooding and seasonal risks.

At Bayview Yards, Invest Ottawa's flagship innovation hub, municipal leaders explored how a dedicated incubator is fuelling tech entrepreneurship and economic growth, while also contributing to Ottawa's reputation as a future-ready city.

Sustainability and Climate Adaptation

Many study tours focused on sustainability and environmental stewardship. Attendees toured Zibi, a master-planned net-zero community on the Ottawa River that includes a zero-carbon district energy plant and restored heritage buildings. Participants also visited Wateridge Village, a Canada Lands development turning former military property into a vibrant, diverse residential area with both affordable and market housing.

Nature-based solutions were explored on a walking tour led by Ducks Unlimited Canada, which highlighted wetland restoration as a cost-effective way to manage flood risks and promote biodiversity. Meanwhile, the Rideau River District tour spotlighted shoreline preservation and heritage revitalization in the historic village of Manotick.

Ottawa's Stormwater Retrofit tour demonstrated how the city is tackling runoff in older neighbourhoods through permeable pavement, bioretention cells, and community incentive programs like Rain Ready Ottawa.

Urban Development and Accessibility

The city's new zoning bylaw, a comprehensive rewrite shaped by the city's Official Plan, was another key focus. Tours explored how zoning reform can increase housing availability, promote healthy communities, and drive smart urban growth.

In the ByWard Market, the "Step By(Ward) Step" walking tour showed how the city is revitalizing one of its oldest and most vibrant districts. Public realm upgrades, accessibility improvements, and heritage preservation are all part of a strategy to transform the area by its 200th anniversary in 2027.

Participants also took a walk with the city's Accessibility Office and CNIB, exploring tactile sidewalk upgrades, smart navigation tools, and transit access that enhance mobility for people with disabilities.

Social Well-Being and Community Safety

Study tours didn't shy away from complex social challenges. The ANCHOR initiative (Alternative Neighbourhood Crisis Response) presented an equity-focused, community-led mobile service that provides non-police crisis response for mental health and substance use incidents. Similarly, the ByWard Market Integrated Service Response highlighted Ottawa's co-location model pairing police with mental health professionals.

Safety and collaboration were on display at the Canada Day Command Centre tour, where officials from multiple agencies showcased their coordinated planning efforts for the country's largest annual celebration.

Transit, Nightlife, and Recreation

Transportation was another area where Ottawa shone. Attendees rode the new O-Train Lines 2 and 4, visited the zero-emission bus facility, and saw how the city is electrifying its transit system.

A tour of Lansdowne Park revealed ambitious plans for its 2.0 redevelopment, including a new event centre, stadium seating, and high-rise mixed-use towers.

Meanwhile, Ottawa's nightlife came into focus with a tour led by Canada's first Nightlife Commissioner, Mathieu Grondin. The city is developing its inaugural Nightlife Economy Action Plan, designed to boost tourism, create jobs, and improve cultural vibrancy while managing safety and inclusivity.

Takeaways from the Capital

Whether exploring Reuse Ottawa's collaborative effort to eliminate single-use plastics, hiking adaptive trails in the South March Highlands, or touring VIA Rail's most accessible station, conference attendees saw Ottawa in action as a city striving to be more sustainable, inclusive, and innovative.

“These study tours provide a unique opportunity to move beyond presentations and experience what other cities are doing on the ground,” said one participant. “They give us ideas we can take home and adapt to our own communities.”

As Sutcliffe put it, “There's no place like Ottawa in late May.”

For the municipal leaders who toured the city's cutting-edge initiatives, the sentiment rang true – not just for its scenic views, but for its bold approach to city-building. [MW](#)



FCM President Rebecca Bligh, Second Vice-President Kathy Valentino, and Rural Forum Chair Neil Comeau at the rural report press conference.

Building a resilient future

The power of rural Canada

Among the many important discussions and initiatives showcased at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Annual Conference and Trade Show in Ottawa, the rural stream stood out as a clear affirmation of FCM's commitment to rural, northern, and remote communities.

The conference provided a vital space for local leaders to share their unique experiences and access resources tailored to their specific challenges and opportunities.

Rural communities make up 95 per cent of Canada's landmass and are home to over 6.3

In every session, rural municipal leaders made one thing clear: their communities are not waiting on the sidelines – they are ready to lead.

million people who are central to the country's prosperity and future. Through targeted events – including the rural, northern and remote reception; the unveiling of the new report, *The Future of Rural Canada*; and a compelling rural plenary – the rural stream highlighted the vitality and innovation emerging from these regions. Various workshops explored key themes through the lens of rural communities, including economic revitalization, inclusive policymaking, narrative empowerment, housing and homelessness solutions, infrastructure advocacy and climate-resilient community building.

This year's rural programming was more than a conversation – it was a call to action. Every component of the rural stream converged to deliver a bold, unified vision for rural Canada. These moments highlighted how rural leaders are taking ownership of their communities' future and how municipalities, supported by strong federal partnerships, are leading the charge in building thriving local economies, sustainable infrastructure and better lives for their residents.

A Vision with Real Solutions

Launched during a press conference at FCM 2025, the new report, *The Future of Rural Canada*, offers a blueprint for meaningful and long-term change. Drawing on dozens of interviews with rural municipal elected officials and contributions from FCM's rural forum, the report emphasizes the perspectives of those who live in and lead rural communities every day. These leaders understand not just the challenges, but also the potential in their communities, whether it's attracting new businesses, expanding affordable housing, or enhancing digital connectivity.

Their message is clear: now is the time to invest in rural Canada. The report sets out a roadmap to unlock that potential by building a stronger federal-municipal partnership. From guaranteeing reliable high-speed broadband access and modernizing infrastructure, to ensuring seniors can age with dignity and youth can build futures close to home: this vision is grounded in the lived experience of rural Canadians.

Rural Realities at the Forefront

Building on the rural report launch, the rural plenary – hosted in partnership with Rogers Communications – brought national attention

to the complex challenges and opportunities rural communities are facing. Municipal leaders engaged in a wide-ranging discussion that addressed pressing federal priorities in the post-election landscape, like the infrastructure deficits that hinder the movement of goods to market.

Participants also explored how to build stronger partnerships with Indigenous communities, emphasizing that investments in rural infrastructure and services must support both municipalities and Reconciliation goals. The plenary also gave visibility to the urgent need for reliable digital connectivity across rural municipalities. Connectivity is no longer a luxury – it is a necessity for working, learning, conducting business, and ensuring public safety.

In addition, the rural, northern and remote reception gave delegates a platform to network, share stories, and forge new alliances with like-minded communities across the country. This forum allowed rural leaders to stand in solidarity, amplifying their collective voice at the national level.

A Stronger Canada Starts in Communities

This year's conference theme – Stronger, Together: Local Strength, National Prosperity – reminded delegates that when local governments work together, national progress follows. Whether it's about creating local economic resilience or navigating the effects of climate change, rural communities are already delivering results, and with the right tools, they can do even more.

Municipal leaders emphasized how rural communities are central to this vision – the farmers who grow our food, the industries that bring natural resources to market, and the small-town businesses that power sectors from manufacturing to tourism are indispensable to the country's future.

Rural Canada is Ready to Lead

In every session, rural municipal leaders made one thing clear: their communities are not waiting on the sidelines – they are ready to lead. They envision a future where their children and grandchildren can live, work, and thrive in the places they call home. A future where small towns grow stronger through innovation and opportunity. A future where housing and infrastructure reflect the needs of their residents, rather than conform to urban models.

FCM's 2025 annual conference reaffirmed what rural leaders have always known: strong rural communities make for a strong country. By working in partnership with all orders of government and investing in local solutions, we can build a more prosperous, inclusive, and resilient country, starting from the ground up.

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Ana Bailão, head of Affordable Housing & Public Affairs, Dream Asset Management, and Mylène Vincent, founder and CEO, Pivot Housing Solutions at the Municipal Den.

Driving local innovation

FCM's Municipal Den showcases bold new ideas

by Municipal World Staff

Innovation took centre stage at the 2025 Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Annual Conference in Ottawa, where the “Municipal Den” emerged as one of the most talked-about forums for showcasing breakthrough initiatives in towns and cities across Canada.

Designed as a platform for municipalities to pitch transformative ideas, the Municipal Den highlighted how local governments are leading on inclusion, sustainability, food security, and public health – often with limited resources but limitless creativity.

From 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in Newfoundland and Labrador to food system reform in Ontario,

the presentations shared a common message: municipalities are innovating on the frontlines of Canada’s biggest challenges.

Here are some highlights of the presentations:

Torbay: A Small Town Making Big Strides on Inclusion

Mayor Craig Scott of Torbay, N.L., kicked things off with a heartfelt presentation on his town’s Rainbow Registered accreditation – the first in the province and one of only a few in Atlantic Canada.

“This isn’t just a title for us,” said Scott. “It’s about making our town safe, welcoming, and inclusive – for residents, visitors, and businesses alike.”



The Rainbow Registered program is a national accreditation that identifies 2SLGBTQIA+ friendly businesses and organizations. For Torbay, a modern rural town with 8,000 residents and a robust home-based business community, this step aligns closely with its economic development strategy.

"It's another tool in our toolbox," said Scott. "It tells people across Canada that if you're looking for a safe and inclusive place to live or work, we're ready for you."

Scott linked the initiative directly to demographic and economic concerns. With an aging population and a shifting demographic profile, attracting younger, diverse residents is key to Torbay's long-term growth. He emphasized that inclusivity isn't just about values – it's a smart strategy for community resilience.

Kingston: Building Food Security from the Ground Up

Conny Glenn, councillor for Kingston, Ont., detailed how her city is tackling food insecurity through an ambitious five-pillar food strategy.

"Food is something that touches every one of us," Glenn said. "But we're facing a crisis. Use of

"This is about rethinking how cities fund the social infrastructure that keeps people fed and communities strong."

Kingston, Ontario deputy mayor Conny Glenn

food banks is soaring, and the environmental impact of our food systems is growing."

Kingston's strategy spans the full food cycle – from local production and processing to distribution, consumption, and waste management. It's an ecosystem approach, supported by detailed mapping and community engagement.

Among the standout innovations is Kingston's investment in Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) – high-tech indoor farming that helps insulate the city from climate shocks.

"We partnered with Grocer, a startup out of Ottawa, to explore hydroponic and aeroponic food production," Glenn said, noting that climate-resilient food solutions are no longer optional – they're essential.

Kingston also repurposed parking fine revenues – about \$180,000 monthly – to fund local food initiatives through a program called "Fines for Food."

"This is about rethinking how cities fund the social infrastructure that keeps people fed and communities strong," Glenn added.

Timmins: Leading on the Substance Use Crisis in Small Cities

Mayor Michelle Boileau of Timmins, Ont., brought the discussion into the realm of public health with a stark reminder: Canada's substance use crisis isn't confined to big cities.

"Small and mid-sized communities like Timmins are experiencing overdose rates and encampments at levels never seen before," Boileau said. "But we often lack the resources and visibility that larger cities receive."

Boileau helped lead the Small Cities Initiative, a national effort developed in partnership with the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA). The initiative convened mayors, public health experts, service providers, and people with lived experience to develop a "playbook" – a menu of municipally focused interventions covering prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and enforcement.

Launched at the Timmins Summit in 2024 and refined through subsequent meetings in Ottawa and Lethbridge, the playbook is a growing resource designed to be adapted to local needs.

"There's no one-size-fits-all answer," Boileau said. "But there is power in collaboration, in learning from each other, and in acknowledging that municipalities are central to the solution." **MW**

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