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Municipal Empowerment Tops FCM Board of Directors Agenda Attended by Saskatchewan Leaders

Municipal representatives from Saskatchewan joined fellow leaders from across the country in the County of Annapolis, Nova Scotia, to discuss the goals and objectives of Canada's municipalities for the year ahead.

Representing Saskatchewan at the fall board meeting of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) were Gordon Barnhart, President of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) and Councillor for the Town of Saltcoats, Saskatoon City Councillor and SUMA Executive Member Darren Hill, Yorkton City Councillor and SUMA Director Randy Goulden, Warman Mayor Sheryl Spence, and Ray Orb, President of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) and Reeve of the RM of Cupar.

Topics of cannabis legalization, rural broadband, and infrastructure dominated the conversation at the fall meeting.

A discussion of municipal autonomy took place against the backdrop of an important national discussion about the role of municipalities and their relationship with the provincial and federal orders of government. Members agreed that now is the time to focus on local decision-making, greater empowerment for cities and communities, and the fiscal tools necessary to make that happen.

The FCM Board sent a unanimous message that municipalities will oppose any use of Section 33 (the notwithstanding clause) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that would have the effect of overriding local decision-making and democratic rights at the local level. The FCM Board also reaffirmed its support for the ability of municipalities to govern their own affairs and represent the interests of their residents.

"As federal political parties prepare for next year's election, it is time for a mature and modern conversation about how to empower municipal autonomy," said FCM President Vicki-May Hamm. "We need political will from every order of government to have a conversation about how we work together within the Constitution. With engaged federal partners, we know it can be done."

With legalization fast approaching, cannabis was key on the agenda during this year's meeting. Municipalities have been working hard to get ready for October 17, but success requires ongoing collaboration and cooperation across all orders of government, most critically at the municipal level.



“Local governments are on the front lines of legalizing cannabis across Canada. Our priority is to keep our citizens safe and well-served,” said Barnhart. “As October 17 draws near, municipalities need more details on implementation, including assurances that municipal costs will be covered through financial tools like excise revenue sharing.”

Reliable broadband is an essential service for Canadians, yet remains elusive for two million living in rural, remote, and northern communities. FCM board members discussed the urgent need for an ambitious, long-term national broadband strategy lead by the federal government to ensure rural communities maintain their vital role in Canada’s economy.

“We have a situation where Canadian households are struggling to connect and businesses are unable to unlock their full potential. This is unacceptable,” said Orb. “We need the federal government to lead this strategy through long-term, predictable solutions and major investments.”

Board members were also updated on developments in the federal infrastructure plan. This plan was designed to empower municipalities to deliver transformational transit, green, and rural infrastructure projects across the country.

In communities large and small, urban and rural, municipalities are the order of government closest to people’s lives. Their local solutions are helping tackle national challenges—from growth and productivity to climate change—and are building a more livable, competitive Canada.

FCM is the national voice of municipal government in Canada. Its [Board of Directors](#) represents communities of all sizes from coast to coast to coast. Representing Saskatchewan on the Board of Directors are SARM President Ray Orb, SUMA President Gordon Barnhart, Saskatoon Councillor Darren Hill, Warman Mayor Sheryl Spence, and Yorkton Councillor Randy Goulden.

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