

**Speaking Notes for
FCM President Berry Vrbanovic
Councillor, City of Kitchener
for The Cities Summit
Vancouver 2012**

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Vancouver, British Columbia**

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Thank you so much for that kind introduction.

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to join you here in Vancouver. I am sure you will agree with me that this is turning out to be a fantastic summit, that we are experiencing some incredibly productive dialogue, and ideas are being shared amongst dynamic city builders that represent all sectors of our communities, from all corners of our planet.

For those of you who don't know, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has been the single, unified voice of Canada's cities and communities in our nation's capital, Ottawa, since 1901.

Bringing together over 70 elected leaders from coast to coast to coast, we have worked collaboratively with our members and the other orders of government, making the argument that the road to a strong Canada tomorrow must come from building strong cities and communities today.

Over the years, and in particular over the past decade, we have made significant steps forward in our relationship with the federal government on issues of both national and international importance to municipalities.

I am pleased to be joined by a number of our FCM board and committee members at this conference, including Chair Susan Gimse from the Regional District of

Squamish and in particular by Councillor Karen Leibovici of Edmonton, who is our 1st Vice-President and slated to fill the shoes of President beginning at our AGM in Saskatoon in June.

However, I would be remiss, if I didn't in particular acknowledge two other BC board members hailing from right here in this great Olympic City of Vancouver - your Mayor, Gregor Robertson, Chair of our Big Cities Mayor's Caucus, and Councillor Raymond Louie, who I recently announced has also become the Chair of our Green Municipal Fund Council or GMF. More on the GMF later.

Gregor's collaborative style, dynamic leadership, and passion for city-building is much of the reason why his 21 other colleagues from across the country elected him as their new Chair last June. Leading a team of like-minded elected leaders here in Vancouver, he not only walks the talk but has demonstrated the importance of bringing vision into action. His passion for city-building has not only helped bring about the goal of making Vancouver the greenest city in the world, but he is working on building one of the most sustainable cities in the world.

From building safe, livable neighbourhoods to addressing issues of housing and homelessness; from encouraging creativity to facilitating strong economic development and job growth, Vancouver has become not only a model of

city-building within Canada but indeed the world. The hosting of Cities Summit 2012 is yet another step in this journey, and, like so many others here Gregor, we are pleased that you, and the conference team, have brought us along for the journey. It is our hope that this will be the beginning of an ongoing dialogue that will not only help us build a strong nation but also exchange ideas with like-minded colleagues from around the world on building strong cities globally.

Ladies and gentlemen, your presence here underscores a global commitment among civic leaders, hailing from all sectors of our community (economic, social, environmental and cultural), to build great cities that provide a world-class living experience for all their

residents – from the socially or financially disadvantaged to the successful entrepreneur from whom the next gamechanging idea will hail. You recognize that our cities and communities are only as strong as the strength of our weakest links, and that our collective role as City builders must be to champion the cause and collectively remove barriers when others say it can't be done.

As we have heard over the last day, and no doubt will continue to hear today, city building is a complex issue. It takes risk, it takes collaboration, and it takes a will to consider new paradigms and recognize that **we can** and **we must** do things differently in today's new world, if we will succeed in seeing the kinds of cities we want to see tomorrow.

It was this willingness to do things differently and out of the box thinking that FCM engaged in with the federal government over 10 years ago when the Green Municipal Fund or GMF was created. This \$550-million fund provides grants and loans to support municipal initiatives that benefit the environment, local economies and the quality of life of our citizens.

Since its inception, 875 projects have received GMF funding, enabling 434 cities and communities across this country to become more sustainable and generating \$3 billion in economic activity.

And the GMF is also the kind of mechanism that we need to look at for future opportunities of sustainable city building and benefitting from the new, green economy.

When the recent global economic crisis hit, it was this kind of progressive thinking, that also saw municipalities work collaboratively with the federal, provincial and territorial governments in making the federal Economic Action Plan happen. A plan which committed \$10 billion in municipally focused infrastructure funding from 2009 to 2011.

Cities and communities worked closely with federal departments to ensure this funding addressed priority infrastructure needs while maximizing economic impact. The result: 220,000 jobs were created as municipalities undertook much-needed programs to update crumbling roads, bridges, water systems and much more.

And today, it is also the kind of out of the box thinking FCM is engaging in right now with the federal government,

as we begin to discuss the development of a new long-term infrastructure plan for Canada's cities and communities.

Acting on the federal government's pledge in Budget 2011, and announced last November, today, we are in the process of beginning discussions on both, what the needs of Canada's cities and communities going forward are, and what the role that the other orders of government must play in helping make those a reality.

In that regard, next Tuesday we will be having our first meeting of FCM's Municipal Infrastructure Forum – a broad-based group of municipal leaders and national partners who recognize that investments in current and new infrastructure are essential on building the kinds of

cities and communities we have been talking about here over these two days.

Whether we are focused on clean drinking water or better waste-water treatment infrastructure; whether we discuss the need for affordable, quality housing alternatives, or efficient urban transportation systems of all types; whether we talk about the creation of collaboration centres for start-ups or the construction of LEED-gold or better facilities – building the cities of our future will require quality information, collaboration amongst all partners (both government and private), and a commitment to investing in the initiatives that will bring about the kind of economic prosperity we need to see our communities and nation thrive.

But, a long-term infrastructure plan is only one of many urban and community issues we must address together as we go forward. While we all recognize the importance of our cities to the quality of life of the majority and the economic prosperity of our nation overall, we also cannot forget that our country is only as strong as our weakest link. While more and more are moving into our urban centres, we cannot lose sight of our rural, northern and smaller communities that also must thrive, that also need investment and that must be part of the overall picture we paint when we build the cities of tomorrow.

As an example, ensuring a reliable high-speed information highway is as much a necessity for rural Canada as it is rural Canada.

Friends.....we live in a global and rapidly urbanizing environment. For the first time in human history, in 2007, 1 in 2 persons lived in a city. By 2030, that number will be 2 in 3 people. Cities represent 75% of the world's wealth, but sadly, also represent most of humanity's poverty.

Worldwide prosperity relies on the economic performance of cities.

Today's global village is made up of global cities – compact cities, inner cities, diverse cities. The answers to the challenges we collectively face are not likely to be solved by national governments, but rather by the leadership and kinds of actions we take within our cities and communities. Municipal governments are the order of government closest to the daily lives of our citizens, and

thus have the greatest chance of solving the issues which our nations and planet face. Thus, local governments have a critical role both as enablers within our cities and in bringing about collaborations with the other orders of government.

Ladies and gentlemen, each and every one of us in this room have a role and a responsibility to play in this. As we leave this afternoon, we must ask ourselves, will this just be another event that we attended where maybe we learned a few things or met a few new people. Or will we become champions and city builders ourselves. Will we leave this summit asking ourselves, what three things can I do differently to build my community, my city of the

future. Because in the end, building cities of the future really is building our collective future.

Thank you very much. Merci beaucoup