

Thank you very much for that kind introduction. Merci beaucoup pour votre chaleureuse présentation. Et merci également de me faire l'honneur de devenir le prochain président de notre Fédération, la Fédération canadienne des municipalités.

I am humbled and honoured by the faith that you have put in me to lead this great organization. I give you my commitment that together, with my fellow Table officers elected this morning and the remainder of the new Board of Directors yet to be elected after this meeting, we will work tirelessly on your behalf and on behalf of the over 1950 cities and communities from coast to coast to coast that we represent.

Nous tous, ici, sommes conscients que le gouvernement local est l'ordre de gouvernement qui touche le plus les Canadiens dans leur quotidien. Et nous sommes tous conscients, aussi, que les villes et les collectivités fortes que nous travaillons à bâtir sont les catalyseurs de la force du Canada.

It was that vision of a Strong Canada that led my family on a trans-Atlantic journey over 40 years ago, long before I could say municipality or knew the meaning of the word "infrastructure".

As a first generation immigrant who arrived to this great country on a not so balmy Winnipeg winter day in 1969, at the ripe age of two and a half, I can tell you I sure as heck never imagined that I would grow up and enter a life of public service. You see, I come from simple roots; my father was a car mechanic, and my Mother, a stay-at-home Mom – as so many women of her generation were.

My story is not an uncommon one in our Canadian mosaic. After the Russians entered Czechoslovakia in 1968, my parents packed their bags, and their only child and had us leave what was then Communist Yugoslavia (present-day Croatia), in search of democracy and a better opportunity. While Australia, Canada and the United States were all choices, Canada was chosen partially because we weren't too far away, partially because my Mother wasn't a fan of American foreign policy and mostly because of what Canada stood for as a nation. It is the knowledge of what that Canada is and can be that drives me each and every day to do my small part to build our cities and communities, to build our country into what I know it can represent for future Canadian-born and immigrant generations.

I would be remiss if at this point I did not acknowledge my mother who is in the audience this morning together with my godparents. I also remember my late Father who grabbed his head the day his son became a politician and said “how did this happen” and yet acknowledged that achievement before he passed away a few short months into my first mandate.

My commitment to community, social change and leadership comes from the foundations they laid for me. For the love, encouragement and support of these four people, I am eternally grateful.

I’d also like to acknowledge the friends who have supported me during my 16 year journey in public life, represented here today by Deputy Police Chief Bryan Larkin, who made it out to Halifax for today’s event. It is that small circle of family and friends who provide me inspiration, who keep me focused and who continue to be there for me.

I also need to acknowledge the support of my community, constituents, political colleagues and City staff in Kitchener who have supported my involvement in FCM over the past 11 years. Whether it meant being flexible in setting meeting dates or covering for me at a community event, I owe them a deep degree of gratitude and thanks. My Mayor, Carl Zehr, who is also the outgoing Chair of the FCM Big City Mayor's Caucus has always been a mentor and supporter. He is joined by current and past colleagues from Kitchener Council including those here this weekend (Kelly, Bil, Dan, Geoff, Paul, Scott and Zyg), as well as a number of other the elected officials from across Waterloo Region. Thank you to each of you for your ongoing encouragement and support and on behalf of all the delegates here, thanks as well for all your help in our Waterloo region hospitality suite each year.

Finally, I also want to recognize the many friends and colleagues around the FCM board table who have been supportive from when I was first appointed to the FCM board in 2000, and first elected in 2001. For those of us involved, FCM becomes your municipal family, and the dedication and commitment of each of these individuals is tireless and remarkable.

And one man who was tireless and committed in his resolve to strongly represent each of you to ensure we move forward in our objectives, was this year's President Hans Cunningham. Hans' endless energy, integrity and passion for the cities and communities of Canada was a source of inspiration for many of us. Hans – on behalf of the largest FCM gathering ever, a heartfelt thank you for all you accomplished and achieved over the past year, on our behalf.

Comme je l'ai dit plus tôt, l'une des raisons pour lesquelles mes parents ont choisi le Canada, c'est qu'ils savaient qu'ils allaient trouver dans cette terre d'accueil la démocratie en laquelle ils croyaient. Nous, Canadiens, avons le devoir de maintenir les droits que nous assure notre démocratie en élisant le gouvernement qui sait le mieux traduire le pays, les espoirs, les rêves et les ambitions auxquels nous aspirons. Lors des dernières élections fédérales, les Canadiens ont fait leur devoir et choisi d'élire un premier gouvernement majoritaire depuis 2001. Ils ont, du même coup, transformé leur Parlement et établi la direction en vue de relever le plus important défi à se présenter à nous en ce début du 21<sup>e</sup> (vingt-et-unième) siècle.

Nous nous apprêtons maintenant à vivre un premier chapitre sous un nouveau gouvernement majoritaire. Le moment me semble bien choisi pour passer brièvement en revue ce que nous avons accompli ensemble.

When the global economic crisis hit, the federal government called on municipalities to turn its stimulus plan into action. Together, federal and municipal governments created tens of thousands of jobs, began repairing Canada's aging roads, water systems, public transit and affordable housing.

We've come a long way from the \$125-million in federal investments in 2003 versus the \$4.75 Billion in 2010. We were one of only a few organizations in the country to be mentioned in Budget 2011, version 1.0, and we were referred to twice during the nationally televised debates.

Today, all parties in the House of Commons recognize the economic importance of cities and communities, and the value of working more closely with us.

But the job started during the recent recession is not finished. Canada's tax system continues to take too much from our communities and puts too little back. Without access to revenues that grow with the economy, and without sufficient long-term investments by other governments, municipalities continue to face a structural gap between their growing responsibilities and the resources they have to meet them.

The era where Canadian municipalities collect only 8 cents out of every tax dollar paid in Canada is not sustainable. It is not realistic in a global environment where other nations are investing in their municipalities as the economic engines that drive their economies. This fiscal imbalance places a growing burden on property taxpayers, strains local services and forces municipalities to defer essential infrastructure repairs.

Dans ce nouveau contexte d'un gouvernement majoritaire, nous devons restés centrés sur nos priorités et garder le cap sur les objectifs à atteindre. Il y aura sans doute beaucoup de discussions et de débats autour de la façon d'y parvenir. Mais une chose est certaine : l'avenir de notre pays sera lié directement à la nouvelle relation que nous développerons, en tant que villes et collectivités, avec le nouveau gouvernement fédéral.

Durant la dernière campagne électorale, la FCM a élaboré un programme qui a suscité un grand intérêt, et qui était axé sur cinq grandes priorités.

The first is infrastructure. Joint infrastructure investments have opened the door to a new era of federal-municipal cooperation, and the federal government has committed to extend its collaboration with municipalities by developing a new long-term infrastructure plan. Together, we must take stock of recent investments and future challenges, build on the government's recent infrastructure-program reforms, and establish future infrastructure priorities when the current Building Canada Fund programs come to an end in 2014. That was the commitment made in the last budget prior to the election. It was the commitment made during the recent election campaign, and it is the commitment we will be looking for in tomorrow's budget.

And beginning the morning after the budget is passed later this month, .... (I'm told we don't need to worry about it passing this time)..., I will invite Minister Lebel and his provincial and territorial counterparts to roll up their sleeves with me and other key municipal and industry representatives to begin working on this plan immediately.

To support this process, last week our outgoing President, my friend Hans, created a new National Infrastructure Forum, which will bring together infrastructure stakeholders from government, industry and academia to inform these discussions, and hopefully build consensus around a new, long-term infrastructure plan.

Hans asked me to chair this group, which I gratefully agreed to do – this work will be my top priority as president. I have asked Pat Fiacco, the Mayor of Regina and a long-time champion of improved infrastructure planning and financing, to support this Forum as Vice Chair as well as Madame Pauline Quinlan, Mairesse de la ville Bromont who will help ensure the voices of Canada's smaller communities are at the table as well. In the coming weeks, consulting with Minister Lebel, Pat, Pauline and others, I will announce the rest of the appointments to this Infrastructure Forum and begin to put together a work plan and identify key objectives not just for this Forum but for the broader planning process. So stay tuned!

This is only the beginning, and may I suggest that this model of working together can also allow for partnerships to meet other national challenges including traffic congestion, struggling rural communities, rising crime costs, and a broken housing system that leaves too many Canadians out in the cold.

Second, it has become increasingly clear that to compete globally, Canada needs fast, efficient transportation networks that connect companies to customers, workers to jobs, and cities to international markets. While reports such as that recently released by the Toronto Board of Trade suggest we have some of the worst gridlock in the world, I believe that together we can fight gridlock and bridge strategic gaps in Canada's transportation systems. Greater coordination among all governments, coupled with sustained, predictable funding, will enable us to set the right priorities and make the most of every dollar we invest in our air, rail, road and marine linkages.

Troisièmement, même si nous savons que le gouvernement prendra des mesures énergiques pour contrer la criminalité, nous devons veiller à ce qu'il garde aussi à l'esprit les autres grands enjeux de sécurité publique. Par exemple, les municipalités financent et assurent la très grande partie des services policiers de première ligne au Canada.

Toutefois, nous avons besoin de la collaboration du gouvernement pour assurer une présence policière solide et soutenir les initiatives de lutte à la criminalité sur le terrain. De plus, un grand nombre de policiers et d'autres intervenants prendront leur retraite dans les années à venir. Nous devons nous assurer que nous continuerons d'être en mesure d'attirer les meilleurs et les plus talentueux dans ces professions essentielles. Le gouvernement fédéral, provinciaux et municipaux assument des rôles importants en matière de services policiers et de sécurité publique, et leurs rôles se chevauchent souvent.

Par conséquent, tous les ordres de gouvernement doivent travailler ensemble pour tirer le maximum de chaque dollar investi pour garder nos collectivités sûres, sans alourdir encore davantage le fardeau de nos contribuables municipaux.

Fourth, rising housing prices and rental shortages are making it difficult for cities to attract the workers they need to support the economy. At the same time, aging social housing units are leaving hundreds of thousands of Canadians, including low-income seniors and new immigrants, struggling to find adequate shelter. Over the years, short-term funding and a lack of co-ordination amongst governments has led to band-aid solutions. Today, thousands of Canadians are living one night to the next in emergency shelters, with many more yet living on the streets. This places an unsustainable burden on taxpayer-funded medical and social services.

We must get federal housing dollars to front-line housing providers as quickly as possible, supporting new strategies that fill the cracks in our housing system for good. We must ensure that the upcoming program review does not increase the vulnerability of some of our most fragile Canadian populations.

Finally, we must continue to advocate for a rural champion in Cabinet. Someone who will ensure rural policies and programs across federal departments are co-ordinated. Someone who will ensure that the substantial investments in rural communities are being used in the most effective way possible. And someone who can work together with the new Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to ensure that Canada's First Nations and northern communities continue to thrive for the Canadians who live there.

Mais tout en consacrant nos efforts à toutes ces initiatives, nous ne devons pas oublier l'importance du développement durable et de l'économie verte. En réalisant ces cinq priorités en harmonie avec ces deux orientations, nous allons nous assurer au Canada les fondements essentiels d'une économie porteuse de croissance, de bons emplois et d'une excellente qualité de vie, et ce, tout en réduisant notre impact sur l'environnement.

Municipalities are on the front line of building a green economy in Canada. They make a significant contribution to protecting the environment. Municipalities think globally and act locally to fight climate change. Municipalities provide sustainable transportation options, treat wastewater, safely dispose of waste, and limit nuisance-causing air pollution. Our cities and towns also play a crucial economic role in areas that include innovation, building human capital and supporting business through the design and maintenance of core infrastructure. The federal government must work with provinces, territories and municipalities on these initiatives. And the government must ensure that local governments are part of any national or international plan. We are confident that cost-effective, community-based projects offer the very best opportunities for taking action on climate change.

As you can see, we have a lot of work ahead of us in the year ahead. But in doing so, we cannot lose sight of the fact that as a Board of Directors, we don't only have advocacy responsibility for these important policy and financial issues affecting our cities and communities. We also have oversight responsibility of an incredible organization led by our CEO, Brock Carlton and over 130 staff who support our over 1950 member municipalities.

Cette année, notre Conseil entreprendra un processus de planification stratégique qui sera achevé en 2012. Il établira les priorités et les directions que vous déterminez pour la prochaine étape de nos initiatives dans ce pays.

As we enter the 25<sup>th</sup> year of our International programs, we will continue to make a difference in the world, together with our federal funding partner CIDA, by contributing the expertise of Canadian municipal professionals and elected officials to support municipal development in Ukraine, Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Whether it is helping in planning the reconstruction of earthquake stricken parts of Haiti, working with the municipal association in Vietnam or looking at new initiatives such as a funding mechanism that can allow us to respond quickly in disaster-stricken areas with Canadian expertise, Canadian municipalities have demonstrated the big hearts that Canadians have and that the way to global peace and stability comes through the kind of personal relationships that are ultimately developed in the work that we do.

And of course our National Programs section, best known for its management of the Green Municipal Fund, will continue to pursue new areas where we can support our members through initiatives that may be important to them and in the ongoing support of the grants and loans that help our members be leaders in green initiatives in Canada.

Mesdames, messieurs, rien de tout cela ne serait possible sans le soutien de notre personnel dont j'ai parlé plus tôt. Pour avoir travaillé étroitement avec plusieurs d'entre eux, de toutes les parties de l'organisation, je peux vous affirmer que ce sont tous des gens talentueux et dévoués qui croient sincèrement dans les villes et les collectivités du Canada et dans l'apport inestimable des gouvernements municipaux. Je vous invite à leur montrer notre grande appréciation pour le travail qu'ils accomplissent en notre nom et au nom de la population que nous représentons.

I look forward to the coming year. I look forward to travelling across this country, meeting many of you on your home turf or at least in your home provinces.

During the upcoming year, I plan to share this journey with you. Online through Twitter, through pictures and through an online blog. I believe that we must do a better job of telling our municipal story, engaging our citizens not only during elections but each and every day. We must articulate the vision we collectively have for all of Canada's cities and communities if we expect Canadians to come on the journey with us.

While on this journey, I plan to follow in the footsteps of one of my predecessors, my good friend and mentor, Past-President and retired Mayor of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, Ann MacLean who during her year focused on increased involvement of women in local government.

In a similar way, I plan to focus some of my outreach while in your communities on youth and new Canadians. These are two communities of our citizens who I believe are presently disengaged and must be better represented within the communities we lead. We started our focus on this with our under 30 event during this conference because we must encourage people that a life of public service is noble, is exciting and most of all, is rewarding. I encourage you to chat with me about this over the remainder of the conference as your thoughts and ideas in this regard will be very helpful in shaping the outreach I do.

In closing, a little more than a week ago, I met an incredible young leader from Winnipeg who at age 8 started the Ladybug Foundation, an organization dedicated to raising awareness on homelessness and funding homelessness organizations. In her speech Hannah Taylor, who is now 15, said, “There are politicians and there are leaders. Some politicians are leaders but I believe many politicians wait to first hear where the majority want them to go while leaders lead us to where we need them to go.”

Why do I share this with you?

Because as municipal leaders, I know we have learned two things.

First, as occurs when there is only one Canadian team left in the Stanley Cup, by uniting behind that team or municipal issue, regardless of individual circumstances or team preferences, we will achieve great things that are only possible when we unite and coming together with one strong voice.

And finally, we have learned that we can lead Canada's cities and communities to building the kind of true, north, strong and free Canada that will be the envy of the world for generations to come.

Thank you! Merci beaucoup!