

February 2017

President's Corner



This week, FCM took an important new step in ensuring that the voice of rural Canadians is front-and-centre in the federal government's budget deliberations. Yesterday we released [Seizing the Moment for Rural Canada](#), a companion budget submission focused on the priorities of rural communities across the country. It's a document I'm proud of.

Rural communities are essential to Canada's prosperity, and to the way of life we've built up over many generations. I grew up on a farm in rural Ontario — near a town called Acton — so I know first-hand the incredible role these communities play. Yet with limited fiscal capacity, municipal governments often struggle to provide the infrastructure necessary to sustain local economies and ways of life.

Seizing the Moment for Rural Canada outlines the bold decisions Federal Budget 2017 must make to meet these challenges. Our recommendations include ensuring that the Rural and Northern Communities Fund supports local priorities, from roads and bridges to septic system upgrades. They include applying a rural lens to federal infrastructure programs so that rural communities can access funding to meet their unique needs. And they include closing the broadband gap to ensure that rural and small communities are both connected and competitive.

With the right decisions, Budget 2017 can build a better Canada by strengthening communities of all sizes.

Any nation-building plan needs to recognize that there are no one-sized-fits-all solutions. That's why, later this week, FCM will also release *Seizing the Moment for Northern and Remote Communities* — our northern and remote budget submission. Northern and remote communities are essential to Canada's economic, social and environmental well-being, yet are also confronted with unique challenges that require sustained federal investment.

In addition to ensuring the Rural and Northern Communities Fund is flexible enough to respond to local needs, FCM is also recommending that Budget 2017 address the transportation needs of northern and remote communities through stronger air, marine and road infrastructure. And we're recommending that it includes distinct support for northern housing needs to help tackle Canada's housing affordability crisis.

If the federal budget does these things — and if it includes the predictable allocations and modernized cost-sharing laid out in FCM's main budget submission [Seizing the Moment](#) — it will unlock the incredible potential that exists in each and every one of our communities. With the right decisions, Budget 2017 can build a better Canada by strengthening communities of all sizes.

FCM's ongoing advocacy on behalf of rural, northern and remote communities has already produced important results. In December, for example, the CRTC [declared broadband internet a basic service](#) and mandated universal access in communities across the country. This was a huge win for rural, northern and remote communities — for small business owners trying to sell their goods, for young people who want to connect with the world without having to leave their hometown.

FCM had long urged the CRTC to make this decision. After all, broadband is fundamental to modern life. It has the potential to transform rural and northern communities. Our [submission](#) to the CRTC's review of basic telecommunication services raised the alarm over Canada's broadband gap and urged them to act. I'm pleased they did.

What this shows is that, together, municipalities have the ability to shape national decisions. That's the approach we're taking with Budget 2017 as well. We're weeks away from the most important budget in years — a historic opportunity to invest in Canada's future. You can help by sharing our budget submissions and getting the word out that community-building is nation-building.

Together, we can build a better Canada.



Clark Somerville is a Local/Regional Councillor for the Town of Halton Hills and Halton Region, ON. He was elected president of FCM in June 2016.

Send me your thoughts

Please send me your comments. I would love to hear from you.

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PRESIDENT'S CALENDAR

February 9, 2017

**INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT WEEK
EVENT – BUILDING
INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES**

Ottawa

February 22, 2017

**CANADIAN FEDERATION
OF AGRICULTURE AGM**

Ottawa

February 26, 2017

**ONTARIO GOOD ROADS
2017 CONFERENCE**

Toronto

@clarksomerville Tweets



Heartbroken by QC Islamic Cultural Centre horror. [#cdnmuni](#) are united in our resolve to keep communities safe and welcoming for all.

Thrilled to have Connie, Laurant and Alex as our [#canada150](#) community leaders for @FCM_online <http://www.haltonhills.ca>

A great morning of meetings with Ministers at #ROMA on behalf of Halton. Great discussion on rural

[/media/2017/14836
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broadband and other topics
[#cdnmuni](#)

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