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FCM Update

October 7, 2013

Letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper from FCM President Claude Dauphin

Dear Members,

The federal government is preparing the speech from the throne that will open the next session of Parliament. Please see this [letter to the prime minister](#), in which I outline our priorities for the government to consider.

Given that the high cost of housing in Canada is the most urgent financial issue facing Canadians, I ask the prime minister to work with FCM on ways to address housing affordability. I suggest we have an opportunity to build on the partnership that has proven constructive on infrastructure financing and, more recently, in addressing rail safety in the aftermath of the tragic events in Lac-Mégantic.

Help up share the news. Tweet: [.@FCMonline](#) outlines priorities for the government to consider for speech from the throne.
<http://bit.ly/GzR2UC> #CDNmuni

Should you have any questions, please contact me directly or contact [Carole Saab](#), manager, government and media relations.

Sincerely,

Claude Dauphin
President

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October 1, 2013

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Langevin Block
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

As you prepare your Speech from the Throne, I would like to share with you the perspective of FCM's 2,000 member municipalities, home to 90 per cent of Canadians. We are grateful for the constructive partnership we have built with your government on many national issues, and we support your commitment to jobs, growth, and Canadians' financial security. For that reason, we believe it is time for us to focus on the high-cost of housing in Canada, the most urgent financial issue facing Canadians.

Your government has rightly taken many steps to manage risks in the housing market. However, one in four Canadians is paying more than they can afford for housing, and mortgage debt held by Canadians now stands at just over \$1.1 trillion. Housing costs and, as the Bank of Canada notes, household debt, are undermining Canadians' personal financial security, while putting our national economy at risk.

Canadians need a stable and secure housing market that creates and maintains jobs and allows for a range of living options. Cities and communities need better housing options to attract new workers, meet the needs of young families and to support seniors and our most vulnerable citizens. As it stands, for those who cannot afford to purchase a home, the short supply of rental units is driving up rental costs and making it hard to house workers in regions experiencing strong economic activity. And an inadequate supply of subsidized housing for those in need is pushing some of the most vulnerable Canadians on to the street.

The federal government has a limited but critical role to play, in partnership with other orders of government, in restoring balance to our housing system. Federal actions, aligned with provincial, territorial, and local initiatives, can be a catalyst for a stronger and more balanced housing system, which will attract investment and create jobs, support new growth, and increase labour mobility.

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Président

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Working together on public safety

Working together on housing will build on our recent collaboration and progress on several national issues that impact families and communities. The recent tragic and destructive events such as the train derailment in Lac-Mégantic and flooding in Calgary and Toronto have underscored the central role of governments in ensuring public safety and responding to disasters.

FCM has been working closely with Minister Raitt to address rail safety issues and we are encouraged that the Minister shares our view that the local first responders need to know what dangerous goods are going through their communities and need timely information from rail carriers in the event of an emergency. Minister Raitt's leadership has been essential to making meaningful progress and we look forward to working with the Minister and Transport Canada officials to swiftly deliver concrete reforms that will make Canada's railways as safe as possible.

Working together on infrastructure program design

Your government's commitment to a new ten-year infrastructure plan in the 2013 Economic Action Plan, including the unprecedented index of the Gas Tax Fund at two per cent per year, was an essential and welcome investment in Canadian cities and communities. These investments will help fix aging roads and fight traffic gridlock, and improve safety and productivity while creating new jobs.

However, as we enter the critical program design phase, the right decisions must be taken to ensure a fair and predictable share of the new Building Canada Fund is allocated to local roads, bridges, water systems and public transit. We are ready to work with your government to produce clear national objectives and mechanisms for reporting back to Canadians, so we can make sure every dollar we invest delivers the very best value for taxpayers.

Canadians are looking for progress on these issues and they need your leadership, combined with collaborative efforts by all orders of government to get there. We believe this will lead to stronger, safer communities and a stronger, more prosperous Canada.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Claude'.

Claude Dauphin
FCM President

CD/CS:sd