



WESTERN CANADIAN MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATIONS MEET IN EDMONTON

August 28, 2026 – EDMONTON – Leaders of the Western Canadian Municipal Associations (WCMA) met in Edmonton on August 25 and 26 to discuss areas of common concern and co-operative actions that will help stabilize municipal autonomy and investment. Through WCMA, western municipal leaders share information, develop practical solutions and strengthen their collective voice with the federal government.

Alberta Municipalities (ABmunis) and the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) hosted the annual meeting comprised of elected officials and staff from ABmunis and RMA, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM), the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA), the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM), and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM).

Western Canadian municipalities are concerned about the cost of construction projects which will be felt in every community when the tariffs take effect driving up the costs of goods essential to municipal service deliver, such as graders and steel for culverts. These additional costs will ultimately be borne by local taxpayers and could delay projects that communities need. A request will be sent to the Government of Canada seeking a tariff exemption for municipal governments.

Discussions were also held on the need for greater investment in trade corridors to enable better access to markets for local products. The associations agreed that rail, road and pipeline networks need to be improved so that mining, agricultural, and energy products can be more readily shipped across Western Canada and on to international markets.

WCMA members agreed that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' (FCM) Western Economic Solutions Taskforce report should be revisited to assess progress and identify priorities requiring renewed federal attention. FCM's report advanced recommendations related to national utility and trade corridors, federal impact assessments, rail safety and support for energy communities. Many of these issues remain central to Western Canada's economic resilience, access to markets and long-term prosperity.

Another economic development opportunity that received attention during the summit was the rapid increase in AI data centre construction and the intense public interest in these projects. The group acknowledged that the federal government is creating a guide on responsible AI development. The associations believe it is essential for a local government "voice" to be incorporated into the review process to ensure community input is received and considered.

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WCMA is also calling for a renewed partnership with the Government of Canada on emergency preparedness and response. Municipal fire departments are often the first to respond to wildfires, floods, severe weather and other emergencies, but many communities struggle to fund the equipment, training, and planning needed to meet increasingly complex demands.

WCMA members will jointly advocate for a modernized Joint Emergency Preparedness Program that provides predictable federal funding for municipal emergency equipment, planning, and exercises; restores joint training to improve coordination across jurisdictions; and recognizes municipal fire services as essential partners in Canada's emergency management system.

Finally, WCMA calls on the Government Canada to advance work on the future of RCMP contract policing well in advance of policing agreements expiring in 2032. Given the cost burden of policing on municipalities, and the expectations of the public for local governments to have a strong role in public safety, municipalities must have a role in contract negotiations. There are existing mechanisms such as the Contract Management Committee, which includes municipal representation and could be leveraged to proceed in a timely manner. The time for meaningful collaboration on the future of the RCMP is now.

QUOTES

"This meeting has shown that municipalities across western Canada continue to be squeezed by international upheaval and budget constraints. The effects are being felt at the community level every day. As the order of government closest to the people, municipalities are taking action to address these issues and seeking supports from the Government of Canada and their provincial counterparts."

~ Dylan Bressey, President, Alberta Municipalities (ABmunis)

"The RMA appreciates the opportunity to connect with our municipal counterparts from across Western Canada to share insights on issues of mutual importance. Rural Alberta contributes to provincial and national economic vitality through strong agriculture, energy, and resource sectors. Discussions this week emphasized that now, more than ever, sustained investment in key areas including infrastructure and public safety is needed to ensure municipalities can continue to safely enable access resource-rich rural areas of Alberta, support interprovincial and international trade, and ensure rural producers access global markets efficiently."

~ Kara Westerlund, President, Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA)

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“Municipal leaders from across Western Canada agree that essential infrastructure cannot be overlooked. Federal investments like the Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund are important, but municipalities also need predictable funding for critical infrastructure that falls outside housing priorities such as roads, water, wastewater, and community facilities. Without long-term investment from all orders of government, the municipal infrastructure gap will continue to grow. Municipalities are ready to work with all orders of government to ensure our communities remain resilient.”

~ Randy Goulden, President, Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA)

“The economic strength of Western Canada begins in its rural communities, but rural municipalities cannot carry these growing responsibilities alone. We are asking federal and provincial governments to partner with our municipalities on the infrastructure, trade corridors, and emergency preparedness investments needed to keep communities safe, move Saskatchewan products to market, and help build a stronger, more resilient Canadian economy in these uncertain times.”

~ Bill Huber, President, Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM)

“WCMA is an important opportunity to connect with our local government associations from Western Canada to work and make progress on federal advocacy that impacts all our communities. Western Canada contains an abundance of opportunity for Canada as a nation, and we need to ensure that our collective voices are heard.”

~ Cori Ramsay, President, Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM)

“Municipalities need clarity and certainty about the future of RCMP contract policing. With the current agreements set to expire in 2032, the federal government needs to provide direction now so meaningful negotiations can begin and communities can plan for their policing needs, costs and public safety. The AMM supports the premiers’ call for greater clarity from Ottawa and urges the federal government to engage provinces, territories and municipalities early. Municipalities need to be at the table as decisions are made about the future of RCMP contract policing.”

~ Kathy Valentino, President, Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM)

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