

**Canadian Urban Transit Association
2015 Annual Conference – Councillor Stephen Blais**

I was very pleased to attend the 2015 Annual Conference of the Canadian Urban Transit Association earlier this year in Winnipeg.

The conference was an excellent opportunity to meet transit leaders from across the country, discuss best practices, future endeavors, technological innovation and other important topics relevant to OC Transpo.

I was very honoured to be voted onto the CUTA Transit Board. This group of elected officials from across the country regularly meets to discuss the political environment relating to investments in public transit from coast to coast. The group is involved in various lobbying activities to secure upper level funding for transit projects and ensure that public transit funding remains top of mind for decisions makers at all levels of government.

The opening receptions was an excellent opportunity to be introduced to and begin a relationship with transit leaders from across the country including the leadership of the American Public Transport Association and was pleased to discuss the future of Transit in Quebec City with the General Manager of their transit operations.

I participated in a session regarding the update to CUTA's Transit Vision 2040 plan; the industry blueprint for the next generation of public transit in Canada.

Transit Vision 2040 communicates transit's contribution to quality of life, the nature of change likely to take place in our communities by 2040, the implications these changes will have for transit, and strategic directions for actions that can maximize transit's contribution to our quality of life. This Vision is based on current trends and the wisdom of stakeholders both inside and outside the transit industry. The Vision was developed by first considering the nature of change likely to occur in Canadian communities, and then identifying the contribution transit could make to support the development of strong, liveable and environmentally responsible communities.

At the session we also discussed the critical role public transit can play after a major weather event. A presentation from Halifax Transit highlighted the importance of careful planning and flexible execution to enhance transit system resilience during severe weather and to ensure rapid recovery post storm. Severe weather from hurricanes to heavy snow events were discussed.

Representatives from GO Transit and Metrolinx presented a session on accessible transit particularly from the point of view of the importance of mobility

experts in public transportation and on encouraging the shift to accessible conventional transit. Given the changes Para Transpo is considering and in the process of public consultation this sessions was particularly interesting and important.

During the conference I also had the opportunity to tour the New Flyer Industries production facility. This was a fascinating opportunity to see first hand the complex nature of production and exactly what goes into building a modern public transit vehicle.

Sessions relating to safety and security were also very insightful especially as we were approaching the release of our Safe Travels program and public awareness campaign.

Over the course of the conference I was very pleased to have the opportunity to meet and discuss at length an array of issues with the leadership of Calgary Transit – an agency often held up as an example to be emulated. They are an intelligent group of executives who clearly know their business. With that said, I was very pleased to learn through these discussions the high regard in which OC Transpo is held and I learned myself that many of the policies and practices employed by OC Transpo are in fact industry leading, and considered best practices. Every transit agency, no matter how highly regarded, has their challenges that need to be overcome and Calgary was no different.

I am very much looking forward to continuing to participate in CUTA and look forward to the progress that will be made on public transit here in Ottawa and across the country.