



Calgary

Jyoti Gondek, Mayor

July 10, 2024

Mayor Josh Morgan
Chair, Big City Mayors' Caucus
London, Ontario

Mayor Valérie Plante
Vice-Chair, Big City Mayors' Caucus
Montreal, Quebec

Mayor Scott Gillingham
Vice-Chair, Big City Mayors' Caucus
Winnipeg Manitoba

Delivered via email

Dear Mayors Morgan, Plante, and Gillingham,

During the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' conference in Calgary at the beginning of June, you were part of the population that was impacted by an emergency triggered by the catastrophic failure of the most significant water feedermain in our system. Calgarians, businesses, and visitors alike were asked to reduce their water consumption for four weeks while we repaired the initial break, managed five hot spots, and slowly returned the flow of water to the feedermain.

Overnight on June 5th, we recognized that Calgarians would need to work together to reduce water use by at least 25 per cent to align with our now-reduced water treatment and distribution capacity, and to ensure we had water available for life-saving fire suppression and medical needs. Additionally, nearly 12,000 households and businesses in one neighbourhood were impacted by a boil water order which lasted for five days, and many others were disrupted by road closures and underground works.

This feedermain break, as well as subsequent weaknesses discovered in other sections of the same pipe, affected water usage city-wide and also to three surrounding municipalities and the Tsuut'ina Nation. Fortunately, Calgary is served by two water treatment plants and we were able to rely on our secondary facility to keep water flowing to taps. However, this pipe break halted our ability to move water from the largest of the two plants, requiring rerouting of water service to 65 per cent of homes.

During the past weeks, I committed to bringing twice-daily updates to Calgarians about the criticality of water conservation and the status of the repair efforts. I convened leaders from many national pipeline, heavy construction and engineering firms – many of whom are headquartered in Calgary – and I connected these industry partners to our infrastructure leadership team.

Further, I have called for an independent third-party incident review of the water infrastructure conditions that led to this incident as well as the response undertaken by the City of Calgary. City Council and Calgarians deserve clarity on what happened, and other cities would benefit from understanding this situation that could easily happen anywhere else. City Council also unanimously directed City of Calgary administration to prepare the Water Services budget necessary to: 1) upgrade technology, monitoring and modelling systems for treated water security and safety, and 2) perform identified maintenance work and to identify the alternate funding sources necessary to do this work.

Colleagues, I am gravely concerned that the experiences in Calgary are a harbinger of similar circumstances in other cities across our nation. Like many cities across Canada, Calgarians are reliant on water and waste water infrastructure that is many decades old. Also last month, our colleagues in Quebec City were coping with water system issues requiring urgent repairs, outdoor water-use restrictions and dramatic water conservation efforts.

The experiences of Calgary in June are testament to the importance of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' efforts with respect to the Municipal Growth Framework focused on delivering the quality of life and services that Canadians need and deserve. We must strengthen our efforts as a Big City Mayors' Caucus to learn from one another and collectively advocate for the security of safe, clean drinking water in Canada's largest centres.

Sincerely,



Mayor Jyoti Gondek

cc: Carole Saab, CEO, Federation of Canadian Municipalities