



Committee of the Whole

Meeting Date: February 10, 2026

Submitted by: Councillor Cathy Burghardt-Jesson
Rebecca Glavin, Deputy Clerk

Subject: FCM Partnerships for Municipal Innovation – Women in Local Leadership (PMI-WILL) Project Update – February 2026 Exchange

BACKGROUND:

The [Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Partnerships for Municipal Innovation – Women in Local Leadership \(PMI-WILL\) Project](#) is a six-year project (2021-2027) that is part of FCM's portfolio of gender equality and women in local government initiatives. By pairing Canadian municipalities with local governments in Benin, Cambodia, Ghana, Sri Lanka and Zambia, PMI-WILL aims to improve the quality of life for women and girls by empowering women to participate in leadership and decision-making in local governance and by increasing local governments' ability to deliver inclusive municipal services that meet the needs of women and girls, especially those from marginalized groups.

Middlesex County and the Town of Truro have been partnered for exchange visits in Cambodia that support capacity building on various topics (e.g. gender mainstreaming, public engagement, project management, gender responsive budgeting) for local government staff and women leaders in local councils.

Participation requires elected officials and staff to take part in virtual workshops and seminars, as well as in-person international technical missions.

Most recently, Councillor Cathy Burghardt-Jesson and Rebecca Glavin, Deputy Clerk, joined by two team members representing the Town of Truro, Nova Scotia, travelled to Mesang, Rolea B'ier and Kampong Chhnang in Cambodia from February 20-28, 2026.

ANALYSIS:

The February 2026 technical exchange to Cambodia provided an opportunity to further strengthen relationships with municipal partners and to observe the on-the-ground

implementation of PMI-WILL service initiatives. The exchange included two (2) visits to the municipalities of Mesang and Rolea B'ier, monitoring of two (2) targeted service initiatives, and participation in the annual Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting, which brought together representatives from all five (5) participating municipalities.

During the municipal visits, the delegation met with elected officials and senior administration to receive updates on project implementation and outcomes. Mesang's targeted service initiative focused on improving child nutrition through education and promoting positive parenting practices, while Rolea B'ier's initiative centered on improving hygiene education and expanding access to clean water. Interviews were conducted with municipal leaders in both municipalities to better understand implementation approaches, including opportunities, challenges, lessons learned, and plans for sustainability and future expansion. The delegation also met with and interviewed community members who have directly benefited from the service initiatives, providing valuable insight into the local impact of the projects. These discussions reinforced the importance of the education and capacity-building components delivered through earlier phases of the PMI-WILL project. All interviews conducted during the visit were recorded and will be utilized by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) team to support formal reporting to Global Affairs Canada.

The PAC meeting provided valuable insight into how all partner municipalities implemented their initiatives and how these projects are being incorporated into longer-term municipal planning frameworks, including three-year plans. As the PMI-WILL project is scheduled to conclude in October 2026, the meeting also served as a forum to reflect on overall progress and outcomes to date.

Additional site visits included a field visit to a local commune in Rolea B'ier, where participants observed clean water initiatives being implemented both through PMI-WILL and by other non-governmental organizations. The delegation also participated in a visit to a newly constructed Buddhist pagoda and temple in Kampong Chhnang, which is anticipated to become a significant cultural and tourism destination within the region.

This visit marked Middlesex County's sixth participation in an international exchange through PMI-WILL. While it is anticipated that no further international exchanges will occur prior to the project's conclusion, FCM is considering a final session for Canadian participants to reflect on outcomes and lessons learned.


Overall, the PMI-WILL project has been a success for the municipalities in Cambodia and participation has been beneficial to Middlesex County. This is the first time that Middlesex County has been involved with a project like this with FCM. Should future partnership opportunities arise with FCM, continued involvement would be advantageous.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The FCM PMI-WILL project is funded by the Canadian federal government through Global Affairs Canada. Each Canadian municipality is expected to participate in 1 to 2 missions of 7-15 days yearly between 2022 and 2026. Each mission team consists of 1-3 individuals from the County. FCM pays for all travel expenses and Canadian municipalities donate the time of their employees/elected officials as an in-kind contribution to the project.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC FOCUS:

This report aligns with the following Strategic Focus, Goals, or Objectives:

Strategic Priority	Goal	Objectives
<p>Collaboration & Partnerships</p> 	<p>Strengthen collaboration with local municipalities and regional partners to improve economic efficiency, enhance service delivery, and support regional development in alignment with community priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Optimize service delivery through inter-municipal collaboration and shared services to improve efficiency and seamless operations.• Build and enhance relationships with municipal, regional, First Nations, community, and private sector partners to align priorities, share resources, and implement joint initiatives that improve community well-being and economic growth.• Improve communication and transparency through open engagement, accessible information, and informed decision-making.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Partnerships for Municipal Innovation - Women in Local Leadership (PMI WILL) Project Update – February 2026 Exchange report be received for information.