

2010 National Association of Counties Conference Wrap-up

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On July 16-20, 2010, the National Association of Counties (NACo) held its annual conference in Reno, Nevada. NACo is currently the only national organization representing county government. It maintains a strong membership and is very well represented throughout the country, with more than 2,300 counties comprising more than 80 percent of the nation's population. This is the organization's 75th year in existence and it was well celebrated at this convention. There were many topics discussed at this conference, with budget issues and broadband as the primary themes. The conference was spread out over a five day period, four of which I attended. It should also be noted that elections for NACo officers were held on Tuesday, July 20, 2010, and there was campaigning throughout the conference.

The first day was comprised of the Technology Summit portion of the Conference. The keynote speaker for the first portion of the summit was Bill Hutchison of Toronto. He discussed the city's new Blue Edge initiative, a project aimed at revitalizing the waterfront area of downtown Toronto. It is the biggest of its kind in North America and is meant to heavily emphasize broadband in the area.

At this point, the summit was broken up into different breakout sessions. I attended three of the breakout sessions, the first focusing on lowering government cost of doing business. It was pointed out that currently state governments are under attack and being challenged with budget issues. Different avenues of response were explored from a government point-of-view. The next session was on enhancing quality of life for citizens. This session addressed current concerns from the counties' perspective. In addressing public safety, the message was simple: optimize the use of assets and make the most of what you have. It was also reiterated from the session before that quality of life would be enhanced by beginning with a balanced budget. The final breakout session was cut short because it was getting late in the day, but it focused on sustaining economic development. Along with Mr. Hutchison presenting his presentation from before, Economic Development Director for the Province of Nova Scotia Nancy Flam discussed the Broadband for Rural Nova Scotia initiative and how it will deliver high speed internet access to 100 percent of the residents.

In conclusion, this conference was a delight to attend and I found it to be an amazing learning experience. There was a nice mix of large and small counties nationwide. Additionally, I believe having vendors in attendance added to the experience and allowed attendees to discuss topics facing their respective county in a more intimate manner than by phone or email.

For a full recap of the conference please visit the following [site](#).