

**AMO Update by:
Jamie McGarvey, AMO President and Mayor, Town of Parry Sound**

Monday, January 20, 2020

8:30 – 8:45

2020 ROMA Conference

Sheraton Centre Toronto – Grand Ballroom Centre/West

Good morning. Thank you for the warm welcome.

Aanii Boozhoo.

It is a pleasure to provide this update from AMO.

For many of us, this is the first chance to reconnect since AMO's annual conference in August.

We work hard to support ROMA – and rural Ontario.

AMO supports your communities – by creating a meeting place – where governments can come together, and work together, to move Ontario forward.

We support you as elected officials – by providing advocacy, research, insightful analysis, and training.

We support your municipality by providing all of that, and more.

Our business services arm – *named LAS* – helps communities work better with a range of programs.

You are all valued participants in this larger, shared project.

We rely on the feedback and insights of ROMA members to inform our work.

ROMA has a seat at the table in provincial-municipal discussions through AMO's Memorandum of Understanding with the Province.

The MOU is a valued – even envied – platform.

It allows us, a municipal community to sit down with the province.

You have a strong rural voice at that table. ROMA Chair Allan Thompson is an active participant in every meeting.

When it works well, we have fruitful discussions.

The MOU process does not guarantee the government will always make the right decision.

But it does mean that their decisions are fully informed about the implications for municipal government.

It means the government understands your priorities and the consequences of their decisions.

And, it's just one way AMO brings the sector together.

To move rural Ontario forward, you need to have momentum.

And we gain momentum, when we all pull together in the same direction.

AMO and ROMA work together, pulling together along with our municipal peers, to achieve this forward energy.

Ontario's municipal leaders have a long history of working well with others, to achieve great things.

So where are we, right now?

2019 was another busy year.

You are all a full year into your Council mandate.

If you were new to office last year, you are now more comfortable in your role.

Councils are also going through the local budget process.

You are looking at what parts of the budget you can control, and what is beyond your authority.

Municipal governments provide key front-line services that people depend on – but you have the weakest authority and taxing powers.

As you know, the Province holds much of that authority.

That is why they are such an important partner.

The Ontario Government is entering its mid-term period. This is when provincial governments are focused on delivering on *their* promises.

We have seen some useful “resets” as the Ontario Government proceeds into this period.

The federal election also provided us with insight on Ontario voters and their priorities – including that climate change ranks high on their list of concerns.

In light of all of these factors, the AMO Board recently approved its 2020 Strategic Plan.

It is focused on facing the challenges of today and being ready for tomorrow.

That includes working to strengthen our relationship within the municipal sector, with other broader public sector partners, and beyond.

As I said before, we gain momentum when many people pull together in the same direction.

Building your skills and capacity is another priority.

We will review and revamp our training programs to leverage new ways of learning and new technologies.

AMO will work with FCM on gender equity and inclusiveness, so that citizens see themselves reflected in their local government.

The strategic plan continues to build on our collaborative approach to advocacy.

We place a high priority on safeguarding the gains of the previous decade and advancing fiscal sustainability.

We will focus on collaborative, positive engagement on the many consultations and reviews launched in the fall.

For example, consultation on greater producer responsibility for waste management is

underway.

If you want to reduce waste, improve packaging, and assign costs fairly – transfer the cost and responsibility to those who make the packaging in the first place.

It creates a financial incentive to produce less waste.

Move it from taxpayers, over to waste producers and consumers.

The Ontario Government will do just that over the next 6 years.

Doing the right thing on waste will also reduce municipal costs by about \$130 million annually, when fully implemented.

AMO has been working hard on this file and we are grateful to the government for agreeing to this path forward.

At last year's conference, we were pleased that the Premier announced a review on liability reform.

AMO has made our submission.

Our insurance burden needs to be more balanced, practical and fair.

Other provinces have found more reasonable liability regimes and Ontario should too.

There are other consultations as well:

- Aggregates and animal welfare
- Policing
- Social assistance reform
- And of course, public health and emergency health services.

Back in August, Minister Elliott told us the government was looking at a renewed consultation with municipalities.

This past fall, they appointed a special advisor to lead that effort.

We were pleased to see it was Jim Pine.

Jim is the CAO of Hastings County and brings extensive municipal experience to the table.

He is a well-known, and well respected, municipal public administrator.

He is also a former AMO Board member

AMO looks forward to working with Jim, along with the government, to get this right.

We are focused on offering practical solutions. We want to fix what needs fixing and preserve what works well.

AMO's Health Task Force will inform our input.

On ambulance services, we will keep pressing for improved dispatch services first, before any restructuring takes place.

We are looking forward to hearing from Minister Elliott shortly.

AMO and ROMA work together – with one strong voice – on all of these critical files and others.

Together we make sure that the Province understands the impact of their decisions on communities of all shapes and sizes.

We remind them, often, that one-size does not fit all.

The province has made modernizing services one of its priorities.

AMO welcomes the funding for modernization of municipal government.

The government will provide an additional \$125 million over four years to 405 small and rural municipalities.

Municipalities can apply to use the funds to do service delivery reviews and improve processes.

This was in addition to \$200 million announced in the spring. Those funds are already in action in many places.

Oxford County municipalities have pooled their resources to conduct a joint service delivery review.

East Gwillimbury is providing residents with access to online services, funding mobile libraries, and making important IT improvements, to name just a few.

Municipal governments provide most of the front-line public services people rely on. And we provide them on tight budgets.

Municipalities have very little flexibility in their budgets.

We stretch every property tax dollar and welcome opportunities to improve efficiency.

AMO does its part on this front.

Our Municipal Employers Pension Centre of Ontario or MEPCO, supports the municipal voice on OMERS.

MEPCO ensures that OMERS understands your priorities. OMERS is vitally important to municipal employers *and* municipal employees.

Ensuring it is sustainable, affordable and meaningful is a priority for MEPCO and for AMO.

AMO's business services arm, LAS, helps stretch dollars further through group purchasing programs and a range of other solutions, like managing big costs such as energy, more effectively.

For smaller, rural communities, LAS helps address capacity challenges.

More than 380 municipalities participate in at least one LAS service. Nearly 70% of them have fewer than 100 municipal employees.

The ONE Investment program, delivered in partnership with MFOA, offers investment advice and turnkey products tailored to municipal needs.

Through the new prudent investor standard, municipal governments have the chance to improve investment returns.

Imagine paying for important capital projects with less dependence on debt, taxpayers

or the Province.

It's one piece of the bigger challenge of fiscal sustainability.

Later today you will hear an overview of AMO's pre-budget submission from our Executive Director, Brian Rosborough

It's framed around the story of the municipal-provincial relationship.

Municipal governments are constantly striving to do more and do better, with less.

And municipal governments deliver results.

When the province invests in municipal governments, it is investing in Ontario's prosperity.

Local governments invested \$7.5 billion into roads, bridges, and other infrastructure in 2017 – up from \$3.4 billion in 2009.

We were able to do that because – over 10 years - the Province uploaded some of the costs that were downloaded in the 90s.

Our track record is strong.

Prosperity flourishes with stable and predictable provincial funding.

Minister Clark has been accessible and committed, and our discussions are meaningful.

AMO is committed to maintaining strong channels between our two orders of government.

Our association exists, in large part, to make sure that we always have quality conversations.

We will always approach our relationship that way.

As I have said before, AMO is not an organization that fights Queen's Park from the lawn of the Legislature.

AMO sits at a shared table, and speaks respectfully, face-to-face.

That's the spirit of this conference – whether it is discussions in hallways, the Minister's forum, or in hundreds of delegation meetings.

We both face challenges, and AMO believes we should face them openly and work together.

Because we serve the same taxpayers, the same constituents, and the same communities.

It is fair to say that solutions to these challenges will have a common set of ingredients.

Those ingredients are time, money, innovation, and cooperation.

Successful changes always have these ingredients.

We understand the province has some fundamental goals:

- More efficient government services.
- Greater respect for Ontario's tax payers.
- And fiscal sustainability.

We know these goals.

Same taxpayer.

Same constituents.

Same communities.

Working together, we can make progress, and we can invest in Ontario's prosperity. We can all move forward.

But it will take investments in time – money – innovation – and cooperation.

It always does.

You are all important to that time and effort.

You help inform and amplify AMO's work.

I am looking forward to touring the province in a few short months to meet with you at the NOMA Conference FONOM and OSUM and more.

And of course, I hope that we will see you all in August – in Ottawa – for our annual AMO Conference.

Enjoy the conference. It's a great line up of sessions.

Thank you.

Merci.

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(ROMA Chair Allan Thompson will come to the podium, give his thanks to you and then you can proceed back to your seat)