

Zone Meet Up

January 18, 2026

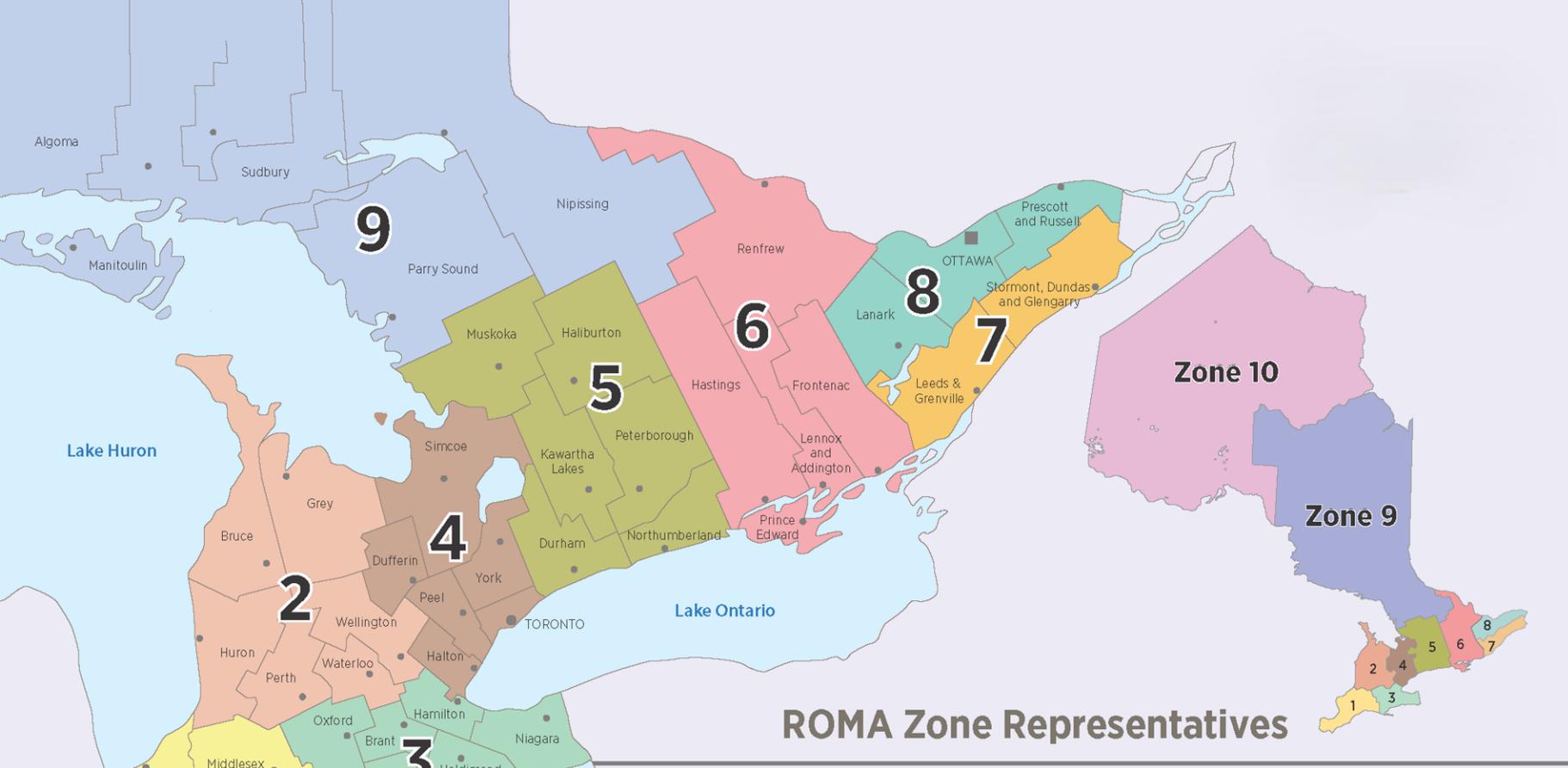


Agenda

- Introducing ROMA Board
- New Minsters Forum Approach
- Review of key advocacy and policy priorities
- Discussion

ROMA Board of Directors

- 10 Zone representatives
 - Elected at ROMA Conference for four-year terms, 2023-2027
- 5 AMO Rural Caucus members
 - Elected at AMO Conference for two-year terms, 2024-2026
- Chair, 1st Vice Chair, 2nd Vice Chair
 - Selected by board
- ROMA has a seat at the table with the province
- Committed to a strong united municipal voice



ROMA Zone Representatives

ZONE 1

- Jamie McGrail**
- Municipality of Chatham-Kent
 - Elgin County
 - Essex County
 - Lambton County
 - Middlesex County

ZONE 2

- Steve McCabe**
(Dane Nielsem, Natasha Salonen)
- Bruce County
 - Grey County
 - Huron County
 - Perth County
 - Wellington County
 - Region of Waterloo

ZONE 3

- Dave Beres**
- County of Brant
 - Haldimand County
 - City of Hamilton
 - Niagara Region
 - Norfolk County
 - Oxford County

ZONE 4

- Christina Early**
(Nicole Martin)
- Dufferin County
 - Halton Region
 - Peel Region
 - Simcoe County
 - York Region

ZONE 5

- Pam Sayne**
- Durham Region
 - Haliburton County
 - City of Kawartha Lakes
 - District of Muskoka
 - Northumberland County
 - Peterborough County

ZONE 6

- Jennifer Murphy**
(Nathan Townend)
- Frontenac County
 - Hastings County
 - Lennox and Addington
 - Prince Edward County
 - Renfrew County

ZONE 7

- Carma Williams**
- Leeds & Grenville
 - Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry

ZONE 8

- Christa Lowry**
- Lanark County
 - City of Ottawa
 - Prescott and Russell, United Counties

ZONE 9

- Mark Wilson**
(Tanya Vrebosch)
- Algoma District
 - Cochrane District
 - City of Greater Sudbury
 - Manitoulin District
 - Nipissing District
 - Parry Sound District
 - Sudbury District
 - Timiskaming District

ZONE 10

- Janet Hager**
- District of Kenora
 - Rainy River District
 - Thunder Bay District



Rural voice

- Regular meeting with key Cabinet Ministers
- Ensure Ontario Government understands rural viewpoints and priorities
- Engage with peer municipal organizations to strengthen rural voice through consensus

New Ministers Forum Approach for 2026

- This year there will be two ministers' forums, structured to focus on specific ministries and issues
- Pilot approach intended to provide more opportunities for delegate questions and minister engagement
- Focus questions on theme of each particular forum
- As usual questions should have broad municipal interest – local issues are addressed on delegation meetings
- New moderator - Norm Gale

New Ministers Forum Approach for 2026

Forum #1 –Building Ontario: Finance, Infrastructure, and Economic Growth

Sunday, January 18 from 4:25 to 5:10 p.m., Plenary Hall

- Ministries responsible for the province's economic framework, physical infrastructure, and the core legislative environment necessary for municipal growth.
- Questions focused on: funding and financing municipal services and infrastructure, grid modernization, streamlining development approvals, and economic competitiveness.

Forum #1

- MMAH
- Rural Affairs
- Finance
- MOI
- Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
- Energy and Mines
- Natural Resources
- Environment, Conservation and Parks
- Labour, Immigration, Training & Skills Development
- Intergovernmental Affairs
- Public & Business Services Delivery & Procurement
- Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness
- Northern Economic Development and Growth

New Ministers Forum Approach for 2026

Forum #2 - Investing in People: Health, Social Housing and Social Services

Monday, January 19 from 4:20 to 5:05 p.m., Plenary Hall

- Questions focused on: homelessness and affordable housing, improving health access, improving public health outcomes, social services needs, and strengthening local resilience and safety through policing, justice, and emergency response.

Forum #2

- MMAH
- Rural Affairs
- Health
- Long-term Care
- Seniors and Accessibility
- Children, Community and Social Services
- Attorney General
- Solicitor General
- Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security
- Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Sport
- Tourism, Culture & Gaming

A Win on 'Trains and Drains'

- Recent litigation determined Ontario's *Drainage Act* applies to all - including national railways in Chatham-Kent case.
- As intervener, ROMA spearheaded collective action on national railways' flouting of century-old law.
- ROMA worked with rural municipalities to gather evidence and take on multi-billion-dollar railways.
- Successfully argued that railways are not above provincial law.
- Current decision provides basis for municipalities to collect outstanding costs.

Policy and Advocacy Priorities

- Rural infrastructure strategy
- Updated homelessness data
- Conservation Authorities
- Energy
- Broadband
- Rural health strategy update
- OMERS pension
- Continued advocacy to improve the provincial-municipal fiscal relationship

Rural Ontario:

- **\$153 billion** in public infrastructure
- **17%** of people but **31%** of roads and bridges
- Construction costs **↑ 70%** in 10 years

Rural Infrastructure Strategy

- ROMA seeks long-term, predictable and substantial transfers to support housing and economic growth.
- ROMA endorses upload of major assets downloaded in the 1990s.

Rural homelessness

- **New AMO Data** – homelessness across Ontario increased nearly 8% last year to 85,000. It increased by almost 30% in rural communities.
- Rural communities lack shelters and/or lack capacity or resources to manage the crisis.
- ROMA continues to call for a new approach focused on long-term housing solutions.
- Need coordinated approach to affordable, deeply affordable, and supportive housing designed for rural delivery.

Conservation Authorities

- Consolidating 36 CAs into seven plus a new provincial agency.
- ROMA concerned about no new, ongoing provincial funding at the same time municipal leaders have less say in conversation and environmental protections.
- Rural municipalities want to support housing and economic development, but we need to effectively balance watershed management with growth.
- Advocacy will focus on successful implementation, including calling for increased provincial funding to align with new provincial agency and the creation of an implementation working group with rural representation to manage design and rollout.

Broadband

- ROMA's advocacy secured a historic \$4 billion investment in high-speed broadband across Ontario.
- As a result of ongoing trade and tariff negotiations, the provincial goal of delivering broadband to all Ontario residents by 2025 has been delayed to 2028.
- Municipalities will need to continue to play a key role in successful rollout of broadband by working with providers to support timely approvals.

Energy Projects

- Provincial government investing in new energy generation to meet growing demand.
- Rural municipalities are critical partners, and have a say in deciding whether to host local energy projects.
- Advocacy is focused on ensuring municipal concerns are addressed and that benefits are shared.
- Check out the Municipal Energy Procurement Toolkit for guidance on how to ensure energy projects address community priorities like public health, land protection, and benefit sharing.

Rural Health Strategy Update

- Since ROMA released our *Fill the Gaps Closer to Home* report in 2024, the province has taken significant action through the Primary Care Action Plan.
- ROMA is optimistic about this work being led by Dr. Jane Philpott, but challenges remain in rural communities.
- In 2026, ROMA will prioritize the development of a new rural health strategy that builds upon the 2024 report and ensures rural communities benefit from provincial strategies.

OMERS Pension

- Bill 68 reduces municipal voice on the pension plan that we pay for - and gives Province authority to make benefits and contributions decisions that could lead to higher costs for municipalities
- Legislation was result of governance review requested by police, fire unions and Metrolinx
- Includes changes that many plan sponsors did not request
- ROMA supports AMO's advocacy, encouraging members to raise this issue in delegation meetings with Ministers Flack and Bethlenfalvy.

***Pension
governance
matters***

***Municipalities
and employees
should have
control over
their own plan.***

A new fiscal framework is overdue

Mounting pressures

- Rising costs
- Growth
- Social challenges

Revenue barriers

- Property taxes don't grow with the economy
- Affordability is a challenge
- Constraints on revenue tools

Connect with ROMA

- ROMA Conference
- Email updates and board highlights
- Website
- AMO Conference
- Social media



