

ROMA Board Meeting

**Friday, February 14, 2025
8:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

HYBRID Meeting

PRESENT:

Chair Christa Lowry, Municipality of Mississippi Mills (Zone 8)

Zone and AMO Rural Caucus Representatives:

Jamie McGrail, Councillor, Municipality of Chatham-Kent (Zone 1)

Steve McCabe, Councillor, Township of Wellington North (Zone 2)

Dave Beres, Deputy Mayor, Township of Tillsonburg (Zone 3)

Christina Early, Councillor, Town of Caledon (Zone 4)

Pam Sayne, Councillor, Township of Minden Hills (Zone 5)

Jennifer Murphy, Councillor, County of Renfrew (Zone 6)

Carma Williams, Deputy Mayor, Township of North Glengarry (Zone 7)

Mark Wilson, Councillor, City of Temiskaming Shores (Zone 9)

Janet Hager, Councillor, Municipality of Red Lake (Zone 10)

Dane Nielsen, Deputy Mayor, Municipality of Grey Highlands (AMO Rural Caucus)

Nathan Townend, Deputy Warden, County of Lennox & Addington (AMO Rural Caucus)

Natasha Salonen, Mayor, Township of Wilmot (AMO Rural Caucus)

Nicole Martin, CAO, Township of Amaranth (AMO Rural Caucus)

Tanya Vrebosch, Councillor, City of North Bay (AMO Rural Caucus)

Staff:

Petra Wolfbeiss, Director, Membership Centre, AMO

Lindsay Jones, Director, Policy and Governmental Relations, AMO

Afshin Majidi, ROMA Executive Treasurer

Alicia Neufeld, Senior Manager, Policy, AMO

Bridget Cherry, Senior Advisor, Policy, AMO

Farah Tayabali, Vice-President, Redbrick

Megan Abraham, Consultant, Redbrick

Stewart McDonough, Municipal Engagement Advisor, AMO

Nathan Bean, AMO Youth Fellow

Ida Mensah, AMO Youth Fellow

Kerry Yang, AMO Youth Fellow
Henry Khamonde, Healthy Democracy Project Intern, AMO
Lora Tigno, Administrative Assistant, Membership Centre, AMO

Early Departures:

None Identified

Regrets:

None Identified

1. Chair’s Welcome and Introductions – Christa Lowry

Chair Lowry welcomed members and staff to the board meeting.

Land Acknowledgment:

“We recognize that our work at ROMA, and the work of our members, takes place on traditional Indigenous territories across Ontario.

Today, while this meeting includes people who have joined from across the province, we are currently assembled in Toronto, which was founded on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

We recognize and respect the history, languages, knowledge, and cultures of the First Nations, Metis, Inuit and all Indigenous peoples whose presence continues to enrich our communities”.

2. Declaration

- Pecuniary interest – none declared
- Early departure – none identified

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

3. Approval of Friday, February 14, 2025 Meeting Agenda (*Pages1-2*)

The agenda was approved as amended including the addition of LAS Water Wastewater resolution under item # 18.

Motion: *“That the Board approve the agenda for Friday, February 14, 2025.”*

Moved: Dave Beres

Seconded: Carma Williams

4. Approval of Friday, December 20, 2024, ROMA Meeting Minutes (Pages 3-12)

Motion: *"That the Board approve the minutes from the December 20, 2024, meeting".*

Moved: Janet Hager

Seconded: Tanya Vrebosch

5. ROMA Executive Committee Election- Petra Wolfbeiss/Afshin Majidi

Petra Wolfbeiss and Afshin Majidi conducted the ROMA Executive Committee Election.

ROMA Chair

Petra called for nominations for the chair position, with Christa Lowry being the only nominee and unopposed.

Motion:

"That Christa Lowry be appointed as ROMA Chair through term to 2027."

Moved: Carma Williams

Seconded: Pam Sayne

ROMA 1st Vice Chair

Petra called for nominations for First Vice Chair, with Carma Williams being nominated and accepted.

Motion:

"That Carma Williams be appointed as ROMA 1st Vice Chair for the ROMA Board through to 2027."

Moved: Nathan Townend

Seconded: Pam Sayne

ROMA 2nd Vice Chair

Petra called for nominations for Second Vice Chair, with Janet Hager being nominated and accepted.

Motion:

"That Janet Hager be appointed as ROMA 2nd Vice Chair for the ROMA Board through to 2027."

Moved: Tanya Vrebosch

Seconded: Jennifer Murphy

6. Executive Treasurer Report – Afshin Majidi, Executive Treasurer

i. ROMA Conference Interim Results (*Verbal*)

The Executive Treasurer's report highlighted an increase in total revenue over the previous year, with growth in sponsorship and exhibitor revenue as well as delegate conference attendance.

Motion: *"That the Board receive the interim 2025 ROMA Conference results as information."*

Moved: Steve McCabe

Seconded: Nathan Townend

DISCUSSION ITEMS

7. AMO Board of Directors Meeting Report Back - Christa Lowry/All (*Verbal*)

The AMO Board of Directors Meeting Report Back covered a number of key matters including:

1. Positive feedback on the ROMA conference
2. Toronto's rejoining of AMO with AMO representing all 444 municipalities on Ontario
3. Discussions on the AMO election strategy and messaging on municipal challenges
4. Presentation on wastewater utility model as a potential infrastructure solution
5. Confirmation that the AMO conference will move to Ottawa in 2027 due to venue changes in the City of London and reduced capacity.

Motion: *"That the Board receive the January 31, 2025, AMO Board of Directors meeting report back as information."*

Moved: Pam Sayne

Seconded: Mark Wilson

8. Policy Briefing

i. ROMA Multi-Ministerial Debrief - Lindsay Jones, Director, Policy Centre, AMO (*Verbal*)

Lindsay debriefed with Board members on the meeting with Ministers Calandra, Jones and Thompson. Members felt it was a successful engagement presenting opportunity to further engage on key issues raised. This of course will depend on cabinet assignments post provincial election.

ii. Update on AMO Election Campaign – Lindsay Jones, Director, Policy Centre, AMO (*Supplemental Package*)

The campaign had a strong impact, generating over 3.5 million impressions and nearly 4,500 website visits. It tracked party commitments on three key issues: homelessness, housing and economic infrastructure, and reducing reliance on property taxes. The campaign materials were useful for

explaining provincial promises in budget discussions and community meetings. Overall, the campaign aimed to educate voters and policymakers on real challenges facing rural and municipal communities beyond national trade debates.

iii. Municipal Codes of Conduct – Bridget Cherry, Senior Advisor, Policy, AMO (*Supplemental Package*)

The board reviewed Bill 241 and discussed mechanisms for removing council members from office. The discussion emphasized the need for progressive penalties and the importance of Integrity Commissioner recommendations in addressing council misconduct. Board members shared experiences highlighting the challenges of maintaining ethical standards within municipal councils and stressed the importance of creating a fair, flexible system for addressing unethical behavior.

iv. \$1.8 Billion Healthcare Funding Announcement-Access to Family Doctor and Primary Care Teams – Alicia Neufeld, Senior Manager, Policy Centre, AMO (*Supplemental Package*)

Alicia Neufeld introduced the topic of the announced \$1.8 billion in healthcare funding. Discussion included the potential impact of this funding on healthcare services and the need for effective allocation.

Ontario's commitment to connect 100% of Ontarians to primary care by 2029, addressing the issue of 2 million people without access, particularly in rural areas was also highlighted. Dr. Jane Philpott's Periwinkle model, focusing on patient experience, population health, cost efficiencies, care team well-being, and health equity, was highlighted. The plan includes expanding interdisciplinary care teams over four years and improving digital records and referral processes. The need for a sustainable long-term plan and the role of municipalities in supporting primary care were also emphasized.

Motion: *"That the Board receive the policy updates as information."*

Moved: Carma Williams

Seconded: Nathan Townend

9. Redbrick Communications Update – Farah Tayabali, Vice President, and Megan Abraham, Consultant, Redbrick (*Pages 13-20*)

Redbrick continues to manage ROMA's social media accounts. As the social media platform environment evolves, Redbrick will have an eye to the best platforms for engagement.

Looking Ahead to ROMA 2026, Redbrick proposes to:

- Update the ROMA logo and media backdrop.
- Explore creating a social media-friendly photo backdrop or prop for events.
- Update ROMA conference videos.
- Start planning for ROMA 2026 right after AMO 2025 to allow more time for prep.
- Decide early on any multimedia needs for 2026.

Motion: *"That the Board receive the Redbrick Communications update as information." and;*

"That the Board direct Redbrick to develop a proposal for the 5 items in the report for Board consideration."

Moved: Pam Sayne

Seconded: Tanya Vrebosch

The ROMA Board also discussed temporarily pausing engagement on Twitter/X and redirecting followers to other social media platforms.

Motion: *"That the Board pause its engagement on the social platform X."*

Moved: Tanya Vrebosch

Seconded: Jennifer Murphy

10. Recognition of past ROMA Board Members – Tanya Vrebosch/All (Verbal)

The matter of recognizing contributions of past ROMA Board members was raised. Staff was directed to review approaches to acknowledging past board members.

Motion: *"That the Board recommend the ROMA Chair work with staff to develop a transition plan for new ROMA Board Chairs."*

Moved: Nathan Townend

Seconded: Tanya Vrebosch

11. Report back on discussion with West Elgin Community Health Centre - Christa Lowry/All (Verbal)

Chair Lowry updated the Board on her discussion with the Executive Director of the West Elgin Community Health Centre. An opportunity to utilize CHC's in consideration of rural health care interventions was recognized. AMO policy was asked to look into this in alignment with ROMA's health care advocacy.

Motion: *"That the Board, building on its key priority of improving access to healthcare in rural communities, direct staff to examine the development of a ROMA strategy to support healthcare in rural communities."*

and;

"That the Board support the development of this strategy through engagement with appropriate stakeholders".

Moved: Nathan Townend

Seconded: Pam Sayne

12. Location for ROMA Board Spring Meeting and Rural HDP Forum - Christa Lowry/All (Verbal)

The Board approved the spring meeting be held in the Chair's municipality of Mississippi Mills adjacent to a one-day AMO Rural Healthy Democracy Forum.

Motion: *"That the Board approve the Rural Healthy Democracy Forum and the ROMA Offsite Spring Meeting be held in Mississippi Mills" and;*

"That the Board direct staff to begin organizing and planning for both events".

Moved: Carma Williams

Seconded: Tanya Vrebosch

13. Sponsorships and Memberships - Christa Lowry/all (Pages 21-22)

13a. AAC Membership renewal

The board approved the \$150 membership renewal for the Agricultural Adaptation Council.

Motion: *"That the Board approve the 2025 membership payment of \$150.00 for the Agricultural Adaptation Council" and;*

"That the Board review current membership subscriptions at a future meeting to ensure alignment with the mandate and objectives of the Board and determine future membership".

Moved: Pam Sayne

Seconded: Nathan Townend

13b. OSUM sponsorship

The Board reviewed its longstanding practice of providing financial support to NOMA and FONOM for their annual conferences. In 2024, sponsorship was also extended to support the OSUM Annual conference. At this time, NOMA and OSUM had submitted a formal request for a 2025 sponsorship.

The board approved \$10,000 sponsorships for both the NOMA and OSUM annual conferences for 2025.

The board viewed these sponsorships as valuable for maintaining relationships and aligning the municipal sector.

Motion: *"That the Board approve \$10,000 in financial support to the Ontario Small Urban Municipalities (OSUM), for its 2025 annual conference".*

Moved: Tanya Vrebosch

Seconded: Jennifer Murphy

13c. NOMA

Motion: *"That the Board approve \$10,000 in financial support to the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) for its 2025 annual conference".*

Moved: Steve McCabe

Seconded: Nathan Townend

14. ROMA Exhibit Booth at AMO 2025 Conference- August 17-20 City of Ottawa - Christa Lowry/all (*Verbal*)

Over the past number of AMO Conferences, ROMA has operated an exhibit booth. Given challenges in staffing the booth, the Board is interested in exploring alternative participation including sponsorship through a breakfast, lunch, or static display. Staff was directed to provide options and costs to the Board for the April meeting.

Motion: *"That the Board direct staff to bring back information on hosting a breakfast or lunch."*

Moved: Nathan Townend

Seconded: Natasha Salonen

15. Conference Debrief and Evaluations – Petra Wolfbeiss/all (*Supplemental Package*)

The 2025 ROMA Conference Evaluations Overview highlights a significant increase in responses from 2024 (58 to 194) and overall high satisfaction ratings. Key evaluation areas include registration, logistics, programming, delegations, sponsored meals, and the exhibit hall.

Key Findings:

- Registration: High rating, some concerns about access to session information, accessibility, and the official conference start day.
- Program & App: Mixed reliance on printed programs (46% still use them); Wi-Fi issues impacted app usability.
- Workshops: Highly rated, many requested sessions be repeated due to demanding onsite schedules and ability to attend sessions.
- Ministerial Delegations: Highly rated many respondents asking for more than allotted 15 minutes and indicating disappointment with ministers not participating.
- Plenary Sessions: 98% positive feedback; keynote speaker Chantal Hébert was well received.
- Exhibit Hall: Highly rated, requests for longer hours, some indication of congestion.

Motion: *"That the Board receive the conference evaluations debrief as information".*

Moved: Tanya Vrebosch

Seconded: Pam Sayne

During the discussion, Board members were advised on concerning behaviour in one of the Zone Meet-ups. Staff advised that in the past a notice was included in conference apps and the program at a glance reminding participants that the conference is a work environment, and that disruptive or abusive behaviour will not be tolerated. The Board suggested looking into this for the 2026 conference.

Motion: *"That the board direct staff to develop conference messaging regarding disruptive and abusive behaviour for the 2026 conference."*

Moved: Jamie McGrail

Seconded: Steve McCabe

INFORMATION ITEMS

16. Resolutions Summary (Pages 23-25)

Motion: *"That the Board receive the resolutions summary as information".*

Moved: Janet Hager

Seconded: Carma Williams

17. Correspondence

- i. Minister of Children, Community and Social Services - Letter regarding FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY IN CHILD WELFARE (FONOM) (Pages 26-27)
- ii. Letter From Minister Parsa (Pages 28-29)

Motion: *"That the Board receive the correspondence as information".*

Moved: Tanya Vrebosch

Seconded: Steve McCabe

OTHER BUSINESS

18. Other business brought forward by members

18a. Wastewater Utility Resolution

Following a presentation by Judy Dezell from Local Authority Services (LAS), the ROMA Board approved a resolution supporting the efforts undertaken by LAS on the feasibility of a municipal water and wastewater utility. The resolution will be shared with the LAS Board Chair, Gary McNamara. The resolution includes support for the next steps in this work including engagement with the provincial government.

Resolution:

WHEREAS Local Authority Services (LAS) convened an expert panel to examine the feasibility of a municipal water and wastewater utility.

AND WHEREAS many municipalities are concerned about the financial sustainability of their water and wastewater systems;

AND WHEREAS the financial challenges are significant and range from the problems with aging infrastructure, system capacity, climate change adaptation costs, development charge changes, increasing regulatory compliance costs, new asset management regulations and the deficit this cause;

AND WHEREAS a joint municipal services corporation would yield benefits, especially for smaller and more remote communities including as example; more reliable operations, full price costing, coordinated debt and reserve management, ability to remove water and wastewater debt from municipalities as only some benefits;

AND WHEREAS the Expert Panel recommended a joint municipal services corporation;

AND WHEREAS the LAS Board unanimously accepted the Expert Panel's 20 recommendations;

AND WHEREAS LAS will now undertake developing a business case jointly with interested municipalities;

AND FURTHER THAT LAS will work with the provincial government as the business case develops;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED; that the ROMA Board support LAS in the development of the business case.

Moved: Nathan Townend

Seconded: Tanya Vrebosch

19. Agenda items for future ROMA Board meetings

- Report back on OGRA Road Safety
- Budget discussion in the future: cost of ROMA Chair Reception discussion in April
- Having Sabine Matheson from Strategy Corp to provide government relations post-election advice
- Possible delegation with Dr. Philpott, Min. Thompson and Min. Calandra

ADJOURNMENT

20. Next meeting:

- a. April 10, 2025** (5:00 – 7:00PM) – *Committee of the Whole (Hybrid)*
- b. April 11, 2025** (8:30AM – 1:30PM) – *ROMA Board Meeting (Hybrid)*

21. Adjournment

Motion: *"That the Board approve the motion to adjourn".*

Moved: Natasha Salonen
Seconded: Tanya Vrebosch