



# MINUTES

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## **ROMA Board Meeting**

**Friday, April 11, 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)

### **Guest:**

Sabine Matheson, Principal, Strategy Corp

### **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

Karen Nesbitt, Senior Manager, AMO

Farah Tayabali, Vice-President, Redbrick

Megan Abraham, Consultant, Redbrick

Stewart McDonough, Municipal Engagement Advisor, AMO

Ida Mensah, AMO Youth Fellow

Jennifer Barclay, Training and Events Coordinator, AMO

Lora Tigno, Administrative Assistant, Membership Centre, AMO

**Early Departures:**

Christa Lowry

Nathan Townend

Mark Wilson

Jennifer Murphy

**Regrets:**

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

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1. Chair's Welcome and Introductions – Christa Lowry

Chair Lowry welcomed members and staff to the board meeting.

Land Acknowledgement was delivered:

"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 Anishnabeg, 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. Declarations

- Pecuniary interest – Chair Christa Lowry has declared pecuniary interest on item #8, ROMA Chair's reception's costing and potential reimbursements, and did not participate in the discussion.
- Early departure – Identified above

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

3. Approval of Friday, April 11, 2025, Meeting Agenda (*Pages 1-2*)

**Motion:** *"That the Board approve the agenda for Friday, April 11, 2025."*

*Moved: Dave Beres*

*Seconded: Carma Williams*

4. Approval of Friday, February 14, 2025, ROMA Meeting Minutes (*Pages 3-13*)

**Motion:** *"That the Board approve the minutes of Friday, February 14, 2025."*

*Moved: Jennifer Murphy*

*Seconded: Steve McCabe*

5. Executive Treasurer Report – Afshin Majidi, Executive Treasurer

i. ROMA conference statement of operations (*Pages 14-15*)

Afshin advised the Board that the 2025 conference was a success with revenue increases over 2024. Afshin noted that costs related to the venue including food and beverage continue to increase year over year. Additionally, the cost of the Sunday lunch-a new offering to delegates, added to the expenses over 2024.

**Motion:** *"That the Board approve the statement of operations for the 2025 ROMA Conference as presented."*

*Moved: Nathan Townend*

*Seconded: Janet Hager*

ii. ROMA Comprehensive Rebranding Proposal by Redbrick

The Board agreed to undertake a rebrand exercise. Redbrick was directed to develop options for discussion and review at the next meeting of the Board.

**Motion:** *"That the Board direct Redbrick to proceed with a comprehensive rebrand for \$13,000-16,000, and the banner design for \$7,000, with funds drawn from district reserves."*

*Moved: Jennifer Murphy*

*Seconded: Christina Early*

## DISCUSSION ITEMS

6. Policy Briefing

i. Update on Policy Centre Priorities - Lindsay Jones, Director, Policy Centre, AMO (*Supplemental Package*)

Lindsay Jones provided an update on current policy priorities and activities:

1. Post-Election Engagement:

- Letters sent to key provincial Cabinet Ministers.
- Preparations underway for the Legislature's return and a renewed 2025 pre-budget submission.

2. Trade and Tariffs:

- Actions to support municipalities amid changing trade dynamics.
- A Trade and Tariff Symposium is planned for June 6 in Toronto. (*Note: this event has now been moved to October 24*)
- Completed analysis on capital cost escalations in infrastructure projects.

- Ongoing macroeconomic risk assessment and member survey on potential impacts of “Buy Canadian” or “Prohibit US Access” procurement strategies.
- A new tool is being developed to help municipalities estimate infrastructure cost exposure.

### 3. Codes of Conduct:

- Advocacy for reintroduction of municipal code of conduct legislation.
- Recommendations include:
  - Changing removal from office vote from unanimous to a two-thirds majority.
  - Expanding discipline options for integrity commissioners, modeled on the Education Act framework.

### 4. Encampment Legislation:

- The upcoming Safer Municipalities Act is expected to enhance police and judicial powers.
- AMO cautions that enforcement alone will not address homelessness and warns of additional strain on municipal courts due to new Provincial Offences Act charges.

### 5. Infrastructure Research:

- Potential major research initiative is being explored to assess the state of municipal infrastructure, projected needs over the next decade, and the impact on local taxation and user fees.

**Motion:** *“That the Board receive the update on AMO policy priorities and activities as presented by Policy Director Lindsay Jones.”*

*Moved: Steve McCabe*

*Seconded: Dane Nielsen*

### ii. Trades and Tariffs - Lindsay Jones, Director, Policy Centre, AMO (*Supplemental Package*)

Lindsay Jones provided an update on AMO’s trade and tariff strategy, emphasizing support for federal/provincial efforts, risk analysis, stimulus advocacy, and member education.

Key highlights:

- Analysis with Oxford Economics estimates \$1B in municipal capital cost escalation (2025–27) and an estimated \$1.8B municipal fiscal impact.
- AMO continues advocating for coordinated “Buy Canadian” procurement strategies and reduced U.S. vendor reliance.
- A proposed \$3.45B annual infrastructure stimulus over five years could significantly reduce GDP contraction and job losses.
- A cost estimation tool and detailed report will be released in spring 2025.
- A Trade and Tariff Symposium is scheduled for June 6 in Toronto.

Next steps include ministerial engagement, member mobilization, and federal coordination through FCM.

**Motion:** *“That the Board receive the update on AMO’s work undertaken on impacts and priorities arising from the current Trade and Tariffs scenarios.”*

*Moved: Dane Nielsen*

*Seconded: Pam Sayne*

iii. AMO Health Survey – Daniela Spagnuolo, Policy Advisor, AMO (Pages 16-24)

Daniela Spagnuolo presented the AMO Health Survey Update as AMO is launching a province-wide survey of all 444 municipalities to gather data on financial and in-kind contributions to health services. The purpose is to strengthen AMO's advocacy to the provincial government by highlighting the scope of municipal involvement in health beyond mandated responsibilities.

Key components of the survey:

- Part 1: Net municipal spending on health services (e.g., public health, ambulance, long-term care, hospital contributions).
- Part 2: Contributions not captured in Financial Information Returns (e.g., mental health supports, physician recruitment, housing-based health services).
- Part 3: In-kind contributions (e.g., space, staff support).
- Part 4: Data on the Heads and Beds Levy.

Survey rollout began in April 2025, with data collection, interviews, and analysis continuing into June. Results will be presented to the AMO Board to inform future policy and advocacy efforts.

**Motion:** *"That the Board support the AMO Health Survey including the considerations and recommendations received from the Board members."*

*Moved: Nicole Martin*

*Seconded: Dane Nielsen*

7. ROMA Chair's reception's costing and potential reimbursements – 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair/All (Verbal)

At the Annual ROMA Conference, tradition has held that the Chair Reception be hosted and paid for by the sitting Chair of the Board. The Board reviewed this standing tradition. Elements of this tradition including escalating costs both food, beverage and venues as well as the number of delegates participating the event were considered.

The motion was introduced to include the reception as a permanent budget item. The Board also reviewed the cost impact of the 2025 Chair reception and agreed to reimburse the cost of up to \$1,500.00 to the Chair.

**Motion:** *"That the Board approve the cost of the ROMA Chair's Reception be included in the annual budget" and;*

*Moved: Christina Early*

*Seconded: Jennifer Murphy*

**Motion:** *"That the Board approve the reimbursement of the cost of the 2025 Chair Reception for up to the amount of \$1,500.00 to Chair Christa Lowry"*

*Moved: Janet Hager*

*Seconded: Tanya Vrebosch*

8. ROMA Participation at AMO Conference: Exhibit Booth Alternatives and Sponsorship Options - Christa Lowry/All (*Verbal*)

The Board agreed that staffing a ROMA booth in the Exhibit Hall at the AMO 2025 Conference will not be feasible given delegation meetings, programming and overall Board member responsibilities during the conference.

Staff were directed to table potential options for engagement at the next meeting of the Board.

**Motion:** *"That the Board do not continue the ROMA Booth for 2025" and; "That the board give directions to staff for providing options in making presence at the AMO Conference."*

*Moved: Dane Nielsen*

*Seconded: Christina Early*

## **TIMED ITEMS**

9. 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM: ROMA Board Advocacy and Strategy Session: Sabine Matheson, Principal, Strategy Corp and Lindsay Jones, Director, Policy Centre, AMO (*To be delivered*)

Sabine Matheson and Lindsay Jones engaged the Board in discussion on strategic consideration and strategies for ROMA advocacy.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

10. Resolutions Summary (*Pages 25-29*)

**Motion:** *"That the Board receive the Information Items."*

*Moved: Dane Nielsen*

*Seconded: Steve McCabe*

11. Correspondence

- i. ROMA Chair Letter to MMAH Minister Rob Flack (*Pages 30-35*)
- ii. ROMA Chair Letter to MMAH Associate Minister Graydon Smith (*Pages 36-37*)
- iii. ROMA Chair Letter to MRA Minister Lisa Thompson (*Pages 38-39*)

iv. Advocacy for Rural Fire Departments and Addressing Key Issues (Pages 40-41)

**Motion:** *"That the Board receive the correspondence materials."*

*Moved: Dane Nielsen*

*Seconded: Mark Wilson*

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

12. Other business brought forward by members

- Advocacy for Rural Fire Departments and Addressing Key Issues

13. Agenda items for future ROMA Board meetings

- Infrastructure funding pressures
- Discussion with Dr. Philpott (TBC)
- Community safety and wellbeing plan in Lanark County
- Auditors Report
- Explore alternative options for ROMA's presence at the AMO Conference and bring a recommendation to the board in the June meeting
- Rural fire department issue

## **ADJOURNMENT**

14. Next meeting:      June 11 – Rural Healthy Democracy Forum, Mississippi  
                                 June 12 – Tour of Mississippi Mills (Itinerary to follow)  
                                 June 13 – ROMA Board Meeting (Agenda to follow)

15. Adjournment

**Motion:** *"That the Board adjourn and to meet again in Mississippi Mills June 11-13, 2025"*

*Moved: Dane Nielsen*

*Seconded: Steve McCabe*