
ROMA Board Meeting

Friday, June 13, 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)

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:

Brian Rosborough, Executive Director, AMO

Petra Wolfbeiss, Director, Membership Centre, AMO

Afshin Majidi, ROMA Executive Treasurer

Karen Nesbitt, Senior Manager, Policy, AMO

Adam Garcia, Manager, Executive Office, AMO

Daniela Spagnuolo, Policy Advisor, AMO

Maria Rodriguez, Policy Advisor, AMO

Lora Tigno, Administrative Assistant, Membership Centre, AMO

Megan Abraham, Consultant, Redbrick

Kaitlyn Mun, Digital Content Specialist, Redbrick

Early Departures:

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)

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

Regrets:

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

Guests:

Hon. Lisa Thomspson, Minister of Rural Affairs (MRA)

Matthew Novakovic, Director of Issues Management, Legislative Affairs & Stakeholder Relations, MRA

Darby Wheeler, Deputy Director of Policy, MRA

Stephanie Gray, Coordinator, Lanark County Situation Table, Community Safety and Well-being Plan

Supt. Derek Needham, Director of Operations, East Region Headquarters, Ontario Provincial Police

Alex Herbert, Partner, BDO Canada LLP

1. Chair's Welcome and Introductions – Christa Lowry

"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 joining from various parts of the province, we are currently gathered in Kanata, which is situated on the territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation.

We acknowledge the enduring presence of all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples on this land, and we recognize and respect their history, languages, traditional knowledge, and cultures, which continue to enrich our communities today."

2. Declaration

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

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

3. Approval of Friday, June 13, 2025, Meeting Agenda (*Pages 1-4*)

Motion: *"That the Board approve the agenda for Friday, June 13, 2025."*

Moved: Dane Nielsen

Seconded: Tanya Vrebosch

4. Approval of Friday, April 11, 2025, ROMA Meeting Minutes (*Pages 5-11*)

Motion: *"That the Board approve the minutes of Friday, April 11, 2025."*

Moved: Dave Beres

Seconded: Carma Williams

5. Executive Treasurer Report – Afshin Majidi, Executive Treasurer

- i. Audit Communication to ROMA Board of Directors – Alex Herbert, Partner, BDO Canada LLP (*Pages 12-54*)
- ii. ROMA Draft audited financial statements – Afshin Majidi, Executive Treasurer (*Pages 55-66*)

Alex Herbert, Partner, BDO Canada LLP, tabled and reviewed the final auditor's report.

Afshin Majidi presented the 2024 Draft Audited Financial Statements, indicating the favorable revenue position and continued positive growth of the annual conference.

Motion:

"That the Audit report be accepted as presented." and;

"That the 2024 draft audited financial statements be accepted as presented."

Moved: Steve McCabe

Seconded: Nicole Martin

DISCUSSION ITEMS

6. Policy Briefing – Karen Nesbitt, Senior Manager, Policy, AMO

- i. Update on Policy Centre Priorities (*Supplemental package*)

Karen Nesbitt provided an overview of current policy priorities and recent developments impacting municipalities. Highlights included:

- **Provincial Budget:** AMO supports recent provincial investments, including \$400M through the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund and \$40M for trade-impacted communities. Concerns remain regarding the lack of new investments in social housing and homelessness services.
- **Tariffs and Trade:** Economic deliverables have been finalized and shared with members. Webinars were held with CAOs and Treasurers on a new modelling tool. A forum is scheduled for October 24 in Toronto. Engagement continues with provincial and political staff on procurement and economic development.
- **Legislation:** The spring session was notably active, with several bills carrying significant municipal implications, including:
 - Bill 5 (Special Economic Zones)
 - Bill 6 (Encampments)
 - Bill 9 (Codes of Conduct)
 - Bill 10 (Municipal Housing Providers)
 - Bill 17 (Development Charges)
 - Bill 214 (Affordable Energy Act)
 - Bill 30 (Training Facility Planning Exceptions)
 - Bill 46 (Red Tape Reduction, Strong Mayor Framework)

- **Other Updates:** Ongoing work on OPP billing reform, OMPF consultations, and broadband deployment.

Motion: *"That the Board receive the update on AMO policy priorities and activities as presented by Policy Senior Manager, Karen Nesbitt."*

Moved: Jamie McGrail

Seconded: Mark Wilson

ii. Provincial Legislation – Bill 17 and Bill 5 (*Pages 67-83*)

Karen Nesbitt provided a summary of **Bill 5** (Special Economic Zones) and **Bill 17** (Development and Infrastructure Streamlining), along with AMO's response.

- **Bill 5** allows the creation of SEZs that may override municipal by-laws and environmental regulations. AMO raised concerns about transparency, municipal impacts, and the need for local involvement in implementation.
- **Bill 17** proposes changes to streamline development approvals and modernize development charges. AMO supports the more collaborative approach and is working with partners to shape upcoming regulations.

AMO continues to engage with the province to ensure municipal perspectives are reflected in both frameworks.

Motion: *"That the Board receive as information the overview of Bills 5 and 17 and AMO's advocacy response."*

Moved: Jennifer Murphy

Seconded: Janet Hager

iii. Rural Infrastructure Strategy (*Supplemental package*)

Karen Nesbitt presented on the development of a rural municipal infrastructure advocacy strategy that AMO is undertaking. Karen provided context on existing municipal infrastructure programs and highlighted the unique infrastructure needs of rural communities.

An initial discussion was held on the key elements of a potential rural strategy. The Board agreed to revisit the item for further discussion at the July meeting.

Motion: *"That the Board receive the presentation on the development of a rural municipal infrastructure advocacy strategy, and that a full discussion and review of potential strategy elements be scheduled for the July Board meeting."*

Moved: Mark Wilson

Seconded: Carma Williams

7. Infrastructure Funding Pressures: Correspondence and Materials Tweed Mayor Don DeGenova – Christa Lowry/All (*Pages 84-104*)

The Board reviewed materials provided by Don DeGenova, Mayor of Tweed, outlining the current infrastructure pressures and the impact to the Town's financial planning. Recognizing AMO's proposed work on infrastructure, the Board looks forward to strategies and mitigations arising from this undertaking.

Motion: *"That the Board receive the correspondence and materials regarding infrastructure funding pressures, as submitted by Mayor Don DeGenova."*

Moved: Natasha Salonen

Seconded: Dane Nielsen

8. Discussion re: ROMA Advocacy on Rural Fire Department Concerns- Christa Lowry/All (*Verbal*)

The Board discussed ongoing concerns related to rural fire departments. AMO policy staff will prepare for a future discussion on the matter at an upcoming meeting.

Motion: *"That the Board receive the discussion as consideration for future action."*

Moved: Steve McCabe

Seconded: Natasha Salonen

9. ROMA Participation at AMO Conference: Exhibit Booth Alternatives and Sponsorship Options – Petra Wolfbeiss/All (*Verbal*)

Petra Wolfbeiss provided a verbal update following the Board's previous direction to explore potential ROMA sponsorship and engagement opportunities at the 2025 AMO Conference. After discussion, the Board decided to forgo both sponsorship and exhibiting for the 2025 conference.

Motion: *"That the Board forego sponsorship/exhibitor participation for 2025".*

Moved: Nathan Townend

Seconded: Nicole Martin

TIMED ITEMS

10. Minister Thompson meeting pre-briefing – Karen Nesbitt/All (*Supplemental Package*)

Karen Nesbitt briefed Board members on key messages for the discussion with Minister Thompson. Focus of discussion would centre on rural fiscal sustainability, economic resilience, and how rural municipalities can support the province's economic development priorities.

Key issues included:

- The impact of trade tariffs on municipal capital projects and the need for stimulus investment.
- The importance of a comprehensive review of the municipal-provincial fiscal framework.
- Ongoing challenges with limited municipal tools to manage growing responsibilities in health, housing, and policing.

- Interest in provincial support for a potential federal rural infrastructure program.

11. 9:00 AM – 9:45 AM: Discussion with Minister Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs

The meeting focused on rural fiscal sustainability and economic development. Key issues discussed included homelessness, healthcare access, infrastructure needs, and the impact of trade and tariffs. The Minister highlighted the "Enabling Opportunity" strategy and the new \$20M Rural Ontario Development Program.

The Board emphasized the need for a rural lens in provincial policy, stronger inter-ministerial collaboration, and a comprehensive review of the provincial-municipal fiscal framework. There was shared interest in future rural summits to address ongoing challenges and build economic resilience.

12. 9:45 AM – 10:30 AM: Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan in Lanark County - Stephanie Gray
Coordinator, Lanark County Situation Table, Community Safety and Well-being Plan and Supt. Derek
Needham, Director of Operations, East Region Headquarters, Ontario Provincial Police (*Pages 106-113*)

The Board heard about the success of Lanark County's Community Safety and Well-being Plan, which emphasizes collaboration across agencies. Key highlights included the importance of shared goals, addressing issues like homelessness and mental health, and leveraging grant funding to support local initiatives. Municipal councils play a supporting role by promoting and advocating for the plan, rather than leading its implementation.

Motion: *"That the Board receive as information the presentation on the Community Safety and Well-being Plan in Lanark County."*

Moved: Dane Nielsen

Seconded: Natasha Salonen

13. 11:15 AM – 12:00 PM: ROMA Rebranding - Redbrick Communications – Megan Abraham, Senior Consultant, Redbrick, and Kaitlyn Mun, Digital Content Specialist, Redbrick (*To be delivered*)

The Board engaged in a discussion on ROMA's branding and public perception, emphasizing the importance of portraying rural Ontario as influential, resilient, and essential to the province's success. Key themes included sustainability, community well-being, and agriculture. The conversation also explored balancing modernization with ROMA's historical roots, aiming for a recognizable and representative logo.

Motion: *"That the Board receive the ROMA rebranding presentation by Redbrick Communications and endorse the proposed direction as presented."*

Moved: Jennifer Murphy

Seconded: Nicole Martin

INFORMATION ITEMS

14. Resolutions

Check in whether members would like any of the items pulled for discussion.

Bill 5

- i. 2025-05-13 Motion RE Bill 5_Chatham Kent *(Pages 114-115)*
- ii. PEC_2025-317 *(Pages 116-118)*
- iii. Town of Shelburne - Responsible Growth and Opposition to Elements of Bill 5 *(Pages 119-120)*
- iv. Township of Dawn-Euphemia re Bill 5_Letter to Chatham Kent *(Pages 121)*
- v. Township of Dawn-Euphemia re Bill 5_Resolution *(Pages 122-124)*

Child Welfare Funding

- i. #1 - 2025-01-08 Brudenell, Lyndoch and Raglan - Child Welfare Funding *(Pages 125-128)*
- ii. Municipality of St. Charles_ Res 2025-070 - Child Welfare Funding *(Pages 129)*

Increased and Sustainable Funding

- i. Resolution 2025-075_Twp of Alberton *(Pages 130-132)*
- ii. The Corporation of the Township of Chapple-Municipal Advocacy Strategy *(Pages 133-135)*
- iii. Twp fo Emo_Urgent Need for Increased and Sustainable Funding for Small, Rural and Northern Municipalities *(Pages 136-137)*

Opposition to Strong Mayor Powers

- i. 2025.04.22 - Support Tillsonburg Resolution Stronger Mayors_Mun. of South Bruce *(Pages 138-139)*
- ii. 2025-316_PEC *(Pages 140-141)*
- iii. Municipality of Central Huron - Letter of Support - Opposing Strong Mayor Designation *(Pages 142-146)*
- iv. Twp of Faraday_ Tillsonburg Town Council Decision Letter - April 14, 2025 - Strong Mayor Powers *(Pages 147-150)*
- v. Resolution - Strong Mayor Powers_Quinte West *(Pages 151-152)*
- vi. Tillsonburg Town Council Decision Letter - April 14, 2025 - Strong Mayor Powers *(Pages 153-154)*
- vii. Town of O'Connor re opposition to Strong Mayor Powers 2025 *(Pages 155-157)*
- viii. Town of Shelburne - Opting out of Strong Mayor Powers *(Pages 158-159)*
- ix. Town of Tecumseh_2025-44-22 Resolution letter- Strong Mayor Powers-Final *(Pages 160-163)*

Tariffs

- i. 2025-05-12 Certified res_ USA Tariffs on Canadian Goods_Twp of Russell *(Pages 164-165)*
- ii. Renfrew_2025.02.25 - Letter of Support - US Tariff Negotiations *(Pages 166-167)*
- iii. Tillsonburg Town Council Decision Letter - March 24, 2025 – Tariffs *(Pages 168-169)*
- iv. TMV Resolution 03-RC-15 Apr 2025 Tariffs *(Pages 170-172)*

Other

- i. North Algona Wilberforce Township_EOWC - Ontario Wide licensing Framework for rideshare companies *(Pages 173)*
- ii. Renfrew_2025.01.14 - Letter of Support - Resume the Assesment Cycle *(Pages 174-176)*

- iii. Renfrew_2025.01.28 - Letter - Requesting Improvements to Current Justice System (Pages 177)
- iv. Senator Rob Black - Critical Soil_Twp of Amaranth (Pages 178-179)
- v. Support Resolution Re Resuming the Assessment Cycle_Twp of Nairn and Hyman (Pages 180-182)

Motion: *"That the Board receive as information the resolutions received from April 5, 2025 to June 6, 2025."*

Moved: Natasha Salonen

Seconded: Nathan Townend

15. Correspondence

- i. A letter from the Hon. Jill Dunlop Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response (Pages 183)
- ii. Asphodel Norwood_04-08 Asset Management Planning Request for Provincial Support (Pages 184-185)
- iii. CMHC - Urgent Need for Amendments to Funding Policies and Criteria (Pages 186-191)
- iv. CMHC response April 14, 2025 PECAHC signed (Pages 192-193)
- v. Corporation of the Village of Oil Springs_Proposing to amend existing landfill (Pages 194)
- vi. EOWC Letter - Strengthening Eastern Ontario Through Sustainable Investment in Higher Education - May 21, 2025 (Pages 195-199)
- vii. Letter from the Hon. Graydon Smith, Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Pages 200)
- viii. Letter from the Hon. Sylvia Jones Deputy Premier and Minister of Health -- April 8 2025 (Pages 201-202)
- ix. Letter of Support EOWC Support of Canadian and Ontario Governments negotiations with the United States Government on Trade Tariffs_County of Hastings (Pages 203-205)
- x. Letter_Perth to Minister of MMAH-Proposed Expansion of Strong Mayor Powers (Pages 206-209)
- xi. Letter Town of Caledon to Premier Ford Re Tile Drainage (Pages 210)
- xii. LTR - Min. Flack to Mayor Lowry Reply Congrats SIGNED_MMAH (Pages 211)
- xiii. LTR - Twp of Lanark Highlands to Min. Flack - Response to Strong Mayor Powers (Pages 212-214)
- xiv. LTR- RESPONSE TO RMA- President Westerlund (Pages 215-216)
- xv. Reply from Minister Thompson (Pages 217)

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

Moved: Carma Williams

Seconded: Mark Wilson

OTHER BUSINESS

16. Other business brought forward by members

17. Agenda items for future ROMA Board meetings

ADJOURNMENT

18. Next meeting: Friday, July 18, 2025 - Virtual

19. Adjournment

Motion:

"That there being no further business, the Board move to adjourn."

Moved: Dane Nielsen

Seconded: Mark Wilson