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From: AMCTO | The Municipal Experts <broadcasts@amcto.com>
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To: Kelly Lush
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ROMA Conference Recap and Delegation Updates

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January 31, 2023

Advocacy Update: AMCTO at the 2023 ROMA Conference

AMCTO was once again proud to participate at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) conference from January 22-24th, 2023 in Toronto. We had the opportunity to speak with many local government professionals and elected officials about our **Issue Profile** and with conference delegates who stopped by our exhibitor booth to learn about our education and professional development offerings, accreditation and membership services. We also had the opportunity to learn from subject matter experts at concurrent and plenary sessions, hear directly from the government and opposition parties, and advance our advocacy priorities in delegation meetings.

AMCTO Vice President, Stephen O'Brien, participated with us in four delegation meetings over the course of the conference, including with the Honourable Kaled Rasheed, Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery, with members of the NDP, Liberal, and Green caucuses.

Delegation with Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery

Following up on our conversation with Minister Rasheed during the **2022 AMO Conference**, we continued our advocacy to comprehensively review the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1990 (MFIPPA)*, highlighting some of the administration challenges that small and/or rural municipalities face. We emphasized that our members value the importance of accountability and transparency and would like to see *MFIPPA* keep pace with changing technology and processes. We believe that the minister remains receptive to addressing these concerns and opportunities to bring changes forward.

We also discussed the death registration process and emphasized our support of the progress being made on modernizing death registration. Having a minimal viable product in place and testing with stakeholders, we would like the ministry to consider removing the 'middle person' role municipalities play in the current registration process. We look forward to continuing these conversations with ministry staff as the project continues.

Delegations with Opposition Parties

Given that since the **last time we met** with opposition parties, there have been provincial and municipal elections, and a series of landmark legislation introduced affecting the municipal sector, we reminded opposition parties about our AMCTO Issue Profile and advocacy priorities, offered our advice and technical expertise. We talked about the impacts of recent legislation including Bill 3, Bill 23, and Bill 39, especially as it pertains to operational and administrative impacts. We also discussed some of our priorities for 2023, including comprehensively reviewing *MFIPPA*, working to reduce administrative and reporting burdens on municipal staff, and reviewing the *Municipal Elections Act*. We will be following up with opposition parties to continue to offer our professional advice when it comes to municipal policy matters.

Political Speeches

The ROMA conference included speeches from the Government, including Premier Ford, Minister Clark, Minister Jones, and Minister Thompson, opposition leaders Marit Stiles, John Fraser, and Mike Schreiner, as well as the infamous ‘Bear Pit’ where delegates asked questions directly to political leaders.

Premier Ford’s speech focused on economic development, highlighting the importance of ensuring rural communities are prosperous. He talked about the importance of working together with municipalities and the federal government, and of keeping the cost of living down, highlighting the July 1, 2022 – December 31, 2023 **reduction of gas and fuel tax rate**, as something that helps rural communities in particular. Premier Ford spoke at a high level about the province’s housing plan, calling the actions bold, but reinforcing that bold actions are necessary in the face of current housing supply shortages.

In her first speech to ROMA delegates, incoming NDP Leader, Marit Stiles, emphasized the need for provincial-municipal partnership and reaffirmed the party’s commitment to working with municipalities to support resilient infrastructure including broadband, address housing and homelessness, and oppose top-down changes.

Liberal Party Leader, John Fraser, addressed the party’s poor results in the last provincial election, and talked about the importance of coming together to share ideas even when there are disagreements. He affirmed the party’s commitment to working with the municipal sector, stating that the party will earn the privilege of working together again.

Finally, Green Party Leader, Mike Schreiner, began his speech by reaffirming the party’s commitment to truth and reconciliation. He talked about the importance of new revenue tools for municipalities and ensuring municipalities have autonomy to use tools that best meet the needs of their communities.

Minister Clark announced that the province is extending the deadline for implementation projects approved under Intake 3 of the Municipal Modernization Program and the Streamline Development Approval Fund. He announced \$936 million in funding for municipal service managers and Indigenous program administrators for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 through the National Housing Strategy. He also announced that Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Kevin Holland, and Associate Minister of Transportation, Stan Cho, will be launching a consultation on railway crossing maintenance.

Other Conference Highlights

As the first major municipal conference since municipal elections in October, a key theme seemed to be assisting elected members of council in getting acquainted with their new role. We saw presenters throughout concurrent and plenary sessions help elected officials understand their role and the many obligations they hold. Of note, during the Michael J. Smither Question Panel, moderated by AMCTO member, Jody Johnson, a question was asked about the most important

things for a new member of council to be aware of. Jody emphasized the importance of becoming familiar with the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*, including understanding that staff cannot give members of council advice, as well as understanding the municipality's Code of Conduct, and their obligations under the *Safe Water Drinking Act*.

Another theme was workforce retention, with a concurrent session dedicated to this topic, as well updates on ROMA's advocacy on this front. During the Michael J. Smither Question Panel, panelists emphasized the importance of developing talent in municipalities.

Moving Forward

The ROMA conference provided us with an important platform to continue to advance our advocacy priorities. We will be following up with the government and opposition officials to continue these conversations and advocate on our members' behalf.

For more information about our advocacy efforts, please contact:

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