

August 25, 2023

Policy Update - Busy AMO 2023 Conference Achieves Momentum Across Priorities

The AMO 2023 Annual Conference in London, Ontario focused discussion on priority areas such as: housing and homelessness, municipal finance and infrastructure, sustaining public health, and serving Indigenous peoples.

AMO President Colin Best [provided remarks](#) that highlighted municipalities' desire to work in partnership with the province on outcomes for Ontarians. AMO 2023 again provided the opportunity for municipal and provincial leaders to partner and discuss serving Ontarians.

Support for Housing

As part of his speech at AMO 2023, the Premier [announced](#) the new Ontario Building Faster Fund, a three-year, \$1.2 billion initiative to support housing related needs for municipalities. The Fund provides \$400 million annually to municipalities that meet 80 per cent of their housing targets. Ten per cent of funding is reserved for smaller municipalities without assigned housing targets. The Premier committed to work with AMO to hammer out the details of the program in the fall.

In response to AMO requests, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing [announced](#) that the new definition of affordable housing would consider income. These changes will be part of amendments to the Development Charges Act to be tabled this fall, which would consider income levels when determining access to exemptions from development-related fees. AMO has also requested that the government defer moving forward on development fees for "attainable" housing introduced as part of Bill 23, to ensure that discounts to developers are focused on incentivizing housing affordable for those most in need.

Minister Clark also announced the extension of Strong Mayor powers to additional municipalities with housing pledge commitments as well as the

appointment of Facilitators on September 11th for the Regions of Durham, Halton, Niagara, Waterloo and York, and the County of Simcoe.

Mike Moffat's recent [report](#) developed in partnership with the Ontario Big City Mayors provides helpful insights into challenges and solutions on housing.

Improvements to Public Health Funding

The Minister of Health, the Honourable Sylvia Jones, announced changes to how public health units will be funded, supported and directed. This included reverting back to a 75% provincial and 25% municipal cost sharing ratio and an increase in base funding for public health units by 1% annually. The province will work with AMO and other partners on a longer-term approach to funding, clarification of rules and responsibilities, and the facilitation of voluntary public health unit mergers.

New AMO Partnership with Ontario Native Women's Association

AMO and the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) [signed a memorandum of understanding](#) at the AMO Conference, committing the two organizations to a formal relationship that increases dialogue, involvement in AMO policy development, events and initiatives.

AMO is committed to supporting municipalities in the ways they engage, serve, and learn from Indigenous women in their communities. The ONWA MOU will improve AMO's engagement with Indigenous services organization, building on an MOU with the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC).

Minister's Forum Discussion at AMO 2023

The Minister's Forum provided another direct opportunity for elected municipal officials to engage with [provincial cabinet members on important issues](#), including:

- A request of the Minister of Finance from Mayor Marianne Meed Ward of Burlington to commit to a provincial-municipal conversation on "who does what" and a new municipal fiscal framework;
- Significant audience response to a question from Councillor Kelsie Van Belleghem of Kenora highlighting the urgency of moving forward

with improvements to municipal Codes of Conduct to protect staff and elected officials;

- Councilor Rowena Santos of Brampton and Peel Region's call on the Solicitor General and the Ministers of Children, Community, Social Services and Women's Economic and Social Opportunities to work with AMO on a strategy to address gender-based and intimate partner violence. The AMO Board has joined with many municipalities and the federal government in acknowledging this challenge as an epidemic; and,
- A question from Mayor of Mississippi Mills Christa Lowry to the Minister of Finance calling for an explanation of the ongoing delay of property tax reassessments.

Wednesday Programming on Homelessness

The third and final day of the conference was dedicated to ending homelessness in Ontario. Speakers highlighted the need for urgent action to move beyond crisis response and tackle root causes, with solutions that address housing, income security, and health.

AMO has called on the Government of Ontario to immediately increase social assistance rates and transform Ontario's system; increase the supply of deeply affordable community housing; continue to invest in community-based mental health and addictions services; and continue to increase base funding for the Homelessness Prevention Program. These provincial actions, in addition to federal enhancements to the National Housing Strategy, are critical to enabling a human-rights approach to housing and encampments at the local level.

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