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TO: Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

DESTINATAIRE : Comité de l'agriculture et des affaires rurales

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SUBJECT: **ROMA 2023 Annual Conference Delegate Report (Councillor Kelly)**

OBJET : **Le rapport du délégué du congrès annuel de ROMA 2023 (Councillor Kelly)**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memorandum is to report to Committee following attendance at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) annual conference.

Pursuant to Section 4 of the Council Expense Policy, Members of Council who undertake City-funded travel must submit a written report to the appropriate Standing

Committee. Committee detailing their experiences, what they learned at the conference and how the City's position or interests were advanced.

BACKGROUND

The City of Ottawa is the fourth largest city in Canada and the second largest city in Ontario. As a leading municipality, Ottawa is a member of several municipal organizations responsible for advancing important priorities and engaging with upper levels of government. Our participation allows the City to influence policy development at the provincial and national level, while networking and learning from our peers. To this end, Members of Council are invited to attend various conferences, conventions, and meetings both within and outside the municipality.

The Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) – the rural voice of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario – hosted the 2023 Annual General Meeting and Conference from January 22 to January 24, 2023, in Toronto, Ontario. Councillor Clarke Kelly is the city's representative to ROMA.

DISCUSSION

The theme of the 2023 ROMA conference was "Breaking New Ground". This is to symbolize twofold the immense challenges rural Ontario is currently facing in the wake of the post-covid recovery, from inflation, housing pressures, labour shortages, and economic mobility. To the expansive opportunity that rural Ontario has coming forward. I attended programs on housing, asset management, diversifying municipal revenue sources, serving seniors in rural communities and much more. There were many interesting conversations surrounding the conference, and many vendors that provide interesting services to municipalities all of which I linked below.

One of the best parts about attending was meeting so many municipal colleagues from all over. From up and down the valley, to Windsor Ontario and everywhere in between. It was quite insightful that all the issues we face here in rural Ottawa are so similar to many of those felt from all reaches of the province. I highly recommend attending ROMA next year for thoughtful discussions on the issues that are echoed across Rural Ontario

ROMA Conference – Day 1

Asset Management Presentation by Bonnechere Valley, Township of West Lincoln, and North Bay.

Some interesting best practices in regards to asset management include; education of council and the public, a communication strategy along with a communication employee, grant funding, the importance of language, clear concise documentation both for the public and council, an asset management champion, annual reviews of investment, reserve and development charges policies, data as a key part in decision making, and lastly annual tour of facilities, roads and other assets are important to educate council in asset management decisions.

Q: Tell us how your Council takes recommendations on Asset Management?

Bonnechere (Elected Official) – The plan that is created to be our guiding document must be adoptable, flexible and important to assess every year of two years. It is important for staff to inform council what conditions the Roads are in.

West Lincoln (Elected Official) – Utilizing Grant Funding as a key part of balancing expenditures to make cost effective decisions. Council must rely on staff expertise. Utilizing grants such as the modernization grant/FCM to create a plan. Dependant on council using the plan. Making right decisions and the right time at the right cost all dependent on good data and information. North Bay (Elected Official) – The asset management plan was developed in 2008 and was formulated as a long-term plan. The plan guides small edits to policies. One recommendation is the make the plan actionable. The Asset Management plan modernizes capital plan. The city hired an asset manager and staff specialist to make data driven decisions.

West Lincoln (Staff) – Take asset management plan that is approved by committee take it out, use it and refer to it. When an asset is up for renewal, sometimes it is better to renew mid cycle. Listen to staff when asking for allocation to reserves. Reserves need to be paid the utmost attention to. Language is important when discussing asset management, (Ours for example is 130 pages long), take the plan down to a layman's level.

Bonnechere (Staff) – Take the Asset management plan and use it, take it and manage expectations of the public. Sustainable, consistent spending based on the plan.

Q: What conversations should staff, and council have on a regular basis in the lens of Asset Management?

Education sessions on the what, the how, and the why are not just thinking on one term. Asset management plans should drive budget policies. In addition to the conversation on what the asset management plan, grant funding is essential. Lobbying for unconditional grants from other government entities. Don't just apply for the sake of applying, it must link to the asset management plan.

West Lincoln (Elected Official) – Staff need to provide regular information on asset management. Regular reports to involve council. Don't just throw into consent agenda, we should be looking at something that allows discussion to provide more conversation on asset management.

Bonnechere Valley: Large asset, apply for grants. If you have shovel ready projects on the shelf and the grant is available, take it off the shelf and apply for that grant.

Q: How do you build Asset Management knowledge into Staff and Council?

Have an asset management champion. A staff member and a council member as an asset champion. Doesn't need to be an expert just needs some knowledge and ability to learn. Leverage the training available through AMO and the FCM such as the Asset management readiness scale on the FCM.

Bonnechere – Review annually talking to council about investment policies, reserve policies to allow council knowledge on both. The champion should provide council with a negative perspective on how responsible you are for water and sewer (remember personal liability in Walkerton course).

North Bay: Agrees with a staff and council champion, training. Most importantly it is utilizing data as a key aspect of asset management. Asset management needs to be a part of every aspect of decision making, it is key to making sure we spend the right dollar at the right time at the right place. Educating the public and making them a part of the decision-making process, explaining the data and what the cost in terms of tax increases is needed to transfer understanding on what the public can stomach.

West Lincoln – Use of language of asset management. Language of asset management should be in every report. Council needs to be repeatedly aware of replacement costs, risk and more. It should be clear on the risks of not moving forward. It is not about what we have to do but why this is a good move for the community. We need to educate, understand fully to be able to communicate the language of asset management to the public. Rationale should be included in any reports necessary to educate staff, public and council.

Q: What's the best way to ensure best investments into capital?

Data Driven Decisions. Full-time asset management coordinator.

North Bay – Balance the requirement for current assets and investing in new growth investments. The flashy projects vs. the essentials say a fire truck. Sustainability (Pay-as-you-go) or financing. North Bay utilizes a risk matrix (<https://www.northbay.ca/media/invagnvd/asset-management-plan-2022-final.pdf> pg. 37) to normalize the big grand projects vs. asset renewal. This matrix includes community impact, risk of failure and allows users to measure the flashy projects vs. the regular. We need data and good data retrieval to make the right asset decisions. Accounting standards forced an inventory database of municipal assets, there is GIS and Asset management coordinator. Simple language helps for community buy-in.

Q: What's next for asset management?

North Bay – Including non-core assets and to review the long-term finance budget. Managing changes and streaming the culture of asset management into the organization.

West Lincoln – Build up community support. Hiring a communications person to communicate asset management with the public. Partnering with neighbouring municipalities. North Bay lost their asset management coordinator which made a huge difference in asset management discussions. Measuring service levels to find desired levels of service. Preparing Asset Management plan in house. Tie the asset management plan to reports to council. Communicate better with the public to better understand rationale of decision-making.

Bonnechere Valley – Communication using social media. Show both the investments in the flashy projects and the not so flashy projects. Robust communication plan to better educate the public. It's incumbent on council to be educated. Good inventory database, lifecycle cost calculation + maintenance costs all need to be the next step. Collecting data for service concerns to make good decisions.

Additional:

- Website has a landing page of asset management with an executive summary. Using report a concern function to track data.
- Town of Meaford both the website and the asset management plan is a great thing to emulate, it is only 9 pages.

- Communication strategy is a great idea to transfer the asset management culture to the public.
- *Natural Assets are beginning to be included in Asset management, Bonnechere includes trails.*
- *Ingersoll involved their whole town in the Strategic Planning process to provide more buy-in to residents.*
- *It's a good idea to have a tour of facilities annually with staff.*

Plenary

Jesse Wente – Indigenous Philosopher Outlining indigenous relations and truth and reconciliation.

Jesse outlined a different perspective on Truth and Reconciliation. Communicating that we are currently outside the window of reconciliation (unreconciled). He stated that T&R is not for indigenous people it is for everyone else, asking “what truths and what reconciliation do indigenous people need to do?”. Jesse broke down all three parts of truth and reconciliation word for word on what each word means to him and the barriers to achieving T&R. He put forward the concept of right relations framing that includes aspects of respect, responsibility, relevance and reciprocity in not only creating relations with indigenous people but with each other. Relations are not transactions. Jesse also pointed the importance of land acknowledgements as having an impact in making members of the public feel comfortable in place.

It was a great and interesting discussion. Many in the audience were very impressed and learned a lot about the topic.

ROMA Requests to the Government of Ontario

1. Bill 23 – Reassess the definition of attainable housing to align with ROMA’s definition.
2. Take the term Rural Character out of the Provincial Policy Statement and put it in OP.
3. Area Boundaries – Designating boundary areas changing using planning terms by population density rather than urban use.
4. Water/Wastewater – Lots reserve capacity for sewage, licence for capacity if planning on any growth you will need to get an environmental assessment. Licensing is determined by algorithms this needs to be updated considering low-flushing toilets. This lowers costs of production and allows more homes to be build.

ROMA Housing

Rural Ontario Institute – Rural Housing Information System. Planned for Spring of 2023. A data analytics tool for both developers and not-for-profits in building affordable housing. Developed in partnership with the Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus. It is a data driven tool for housing needs, includes official plans and zoning maps for services provided on lots for developers. It can be used by non-profits for Affordable Housing Grant with the CMHC along with private developers, and it can be used as a comparison to other municipalities. The Rural Ontario Housing Institute plans to have a completed tested-version ready for scale across the province Feb 2023.

I strongly, recommend looking into this, it is a really interesting tool that while not out yet, will be up and running soon and is remarkable in the lens of housing data.

www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca then go to <https://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/RHIS> and [Rural Ontario Institute - Filling the Housing Gap in Rural Communities](#)

ROMA Conference – Day 2

MPAC

Summary:

- Property assessments are not taxation.
- The values of all assessments (including new builds) are all valued reflective of January 1, 2016. <https://aboutmyproperty.ca/> is the tool to check how the assessed value of your home compares to others.
- There is no 1:1 relationship with housing value rising and taxation payables.
- Trends in Manufacturing? Existing facilities are generally being purchased and used rather than new builds, alternatively there is a move towards logistics and distribution rather than production.
- Mall's assessments are generally based on income assessments (Occupancy and rent charged). Increases in vacancy has impacts on the valuation involved in the assessments.
- No indication of any change in when the Assessment will be reinstated to today's numbers.
- How will MPAC handle the change in property values? Digital Toolkit and how your property is behaving in relation to others in your area.

Attracting Development to Rural Ontario (Lens of Affordable Housing)

Derek Lobo: Attracting Developers to build rental housing. Developers need buy-in to build purpose-built rentals as they have profit making incentive to continue with the Single-Family homes currently built. To get that buy in it depends on what language we use, rather than discuss margin we should talk about equity multiples (If you build an apartment complex for 500,000 you could sell for 1,000,000 thus a 2x equity multiple). Preferential financing through the CMHC. Why private developers? According to the speaker they are faster and nimbler than non-market housing such as NFPs and Co-ops. How can a municipality better attract private developers to do this? 1. Understand the financial model.

2. Defer property taxes for 1-5 years. 3. Put land as equity in the deal. 4. Ask ourselves what will make our community more attractive than other for the private sector? Other municipalities are our competition. 5. Faster, cheaper easier and sustainable (in the case of private development vs. NFPs).

Key to do this: Keep your house in order, money doesn't chase controversy. Stacking Government programs such as federal, provincial and others, some municipalities EcDev department does this. Lastly, roll out the Red Carpet connect developers with senior management.

Bruce County: Bruce County developed an affordable housing toolkit.

<https://www.brucecounty.on.ca/affordable-housing-101> . This combines the strengths of public, private and non-profit partnerships. It smoothens the process of developing affordable/attainable housing.

Additional:

There was a discussion from the audience over the Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan that lower tier municipalities are implementing as an additional incentive towards affordable housing development, I have linked the program for those who wish to further look into it: <https://carletonplace.ca/community-improvement-plan.php>

Steve Clark and Ministers Forum

- There will be a provincial consultation on rail crossing maintenance and its effects on municipal finances.
- The province of Ontario will continue to provide \$936 million dollars in funding for the national housing strategy through 2023-2024 and 2024-2025.

- The Province of Ontario will increase funding the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit for women escaping violence. Increasing funding by \$23 million.
- Bill 23 – To better understand the costs of Bill 23 on municipalities 3rd party audits of select municipalities on participants' reserve and DC policies, will be used to gauge costs on municipal finances in a collaborative fashion. This will be done to better give the province the understanding of the effects of Bill 23 and how to mitigate it.
- The Provincial Policy Statement will be amended to better suit the needs of rural Ontario as requested by ROMA.
- The modernization program deadline for all implementation programs has been extended to the end of 2023.

ROMA Board Election

Christa Lowrey was successful in her bid to become the Zone 8 representative. I had the chance to catch up with her following her win and believe that she will be a great representative of our rural area at ROMA.

ROMA Conference – Day 3

One Investment – Program

One investment is a Non-Profit, arm of LAS (AMO Business Services). One investment provides alternative revenue sources for municipalities. Given stringent investment policy laws as most municipal investing offerings are through a legal list, one investment offers investment products through the prudent investor which provides greater flexibility, diversity and potential for better returns than traditional municipal investment products. One investment would assist in creating one Joint Investment board that encompasses bylaw, code of conduct, and much more. Current products offered are HISA, Canadian Government bond, Canadian Corporate Bond, Canadian Equity, Global Equity and Global Fixed. One investment would meet with the treasurer and work to outline an investment policy.

Housing Panel – Discussion

I have linked the discussion below. It was a great insight on the social aspects of housing and worth listening to. I enjoyed along with others at the conference - [How Can We Confront Homelessness in Rural Ontario? \(YouTube\)](#)

In addition, one of the panel members is a part of the institute of southern Georgian Bay where there are various reports on housing and more to come as indicated in the discussion posted. [The Institute of Southern Georgian Bay - Reports](#)

Lastly, ROMA has its own task force report on housing <https://www.roma.on.ca/housing>

CONCLUSION

It is through the commitment of Members of Council, to attend conferences like the ROMA 2023 Conference, that the City of Ottawa's interests are advanced.

Clarke Kelly

Councillor, Ward 5 West Carleton-March