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TO: Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

DESTINATAIRE : Comité de l'agriculture et des affaires rurales

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DATE: October 23, 2023

23 octobre 2023

FILE NUMBER: ACS2023-OCC-CCS-0140

SUBJECT: **ROMA 2023 Conference Delegate Report (Councillor Brockington)**

OBJET : **Le rapport du délégué du congrès annuel et salon professionnel de FCM 2023 (Conseiller Brockington)**

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 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.

## DISCUSSION

The Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) works collaboratively with Ontario's municipal community to ensure that provincial funding, policies and programs consider rural perspectives and unique challenges. ROMA's voice has steadily been growing stronger through its conference, outreach and advocacy work. As the rural arm of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Board advocates through AMO on rural matters and works in collaboration with AMO to have its say in provincial discussions that impact rural places. Over the past year, the Board also sat in one-on-one meetings with provincial Ministers to discuss issues critical to the wellbeing of our communities. The current ROMA President is Mayor Robin Jones, Mayor, Westport.

The 2023 Strategic objectives of the Association are:

1. Advance the priorities of rural municipalities with a clear and distinct ROMA voice.
2. Advocate for government investment, services and policies that support the prosperity and essential role of rural municipalities as advanced by the 5 themes and recommendations of the Rural Opportunities paper.
3. Support the successful implementation and acceleration of broadband investment to support economic and social development

4. Build on the recommendations of the Rural Attainable Housing Task Force recommendations to ensure infrastructure and planning policies reflect and support rural Ontario.
5. Deliver an outstanding ROMA conference in 2023.
6. Continue to build ROMA's communication plan through strategic communications and active social media.
7. Support organizations, events and activities that advance, promote and celebrate the strength of rural communities in the social, cultural and economic fabric of Ontario.
8. Bring a strong rural influence on current and emerging social, justice, economic and environmental issues and policy in Ontario.
9. Work in partnership with other organizations to support a strong and unified municipal sector in Ontario.

I attended the conference on the evening of Sunday January 22 and all-day on Monday, January 23. As this was the first conference by ROMA/AMO since the October 2022 election, I wanted to attend my first ever ROMA conference to better understand the issues of rural municipalities across Ontario, including similarities with Ottawa and advocate for Ottawa's issues.

The morning plenary session on Monday consisted of speeches from the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nations and Mayor of the Town of Caledon, ROMA President, Premier Ford, Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Gudie Hutchings, Minister of Rural Economic Development and Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

The mid-morning learning session I attended was Innovative Practices to Attract and Retain Talented Staff to Rural Municipalities.

The Learning Lunch session I attended was Sustainable Investing in Water and Wastewater – Where to Find and Put Those Precious Dollars.

By early afternoon, I attended another Learning session, Perennial Emergencies: Planning for Tomorrow's Challenges.

The final grand plenary session of the day consisted of addressed from Marit Stiles, then Leader-Elect of the Official Opposition, ROMA Advocacy Update: Connectivity and Access to Services, Message from Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO),

Colin Best, President, AMO, Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, ending with the always popular, Ministers' Forum.

The ROMA Conference is certainly recommended by me to Council colleagues for its relevant subject matter plenaries and sessions and importance given Ottawa's large rural population.

The next ROMA AGM & Conference will be held January 21-23, 2024, in Toronto.

## 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.

Riley Brockington

Councillor, Ward 16 River