



MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

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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 2024 Conference Delegate Report (Riley Brockington)**

OBJET : **Le rapport du délégué du congrès annuel de ROMA 2024 (Riley 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 the Council Expense Policy, Members of Council who undertake City-funded travel to the ROMA annual conference must submit a written report to the

Finance and Corporate Services 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 2024 Annual General Meeting and Conference from January 21 to January 23, 2024, in Toronto, Ontario. In addition to Councillor Clarke Kelly, the city's representative to ROMA, Councillor Riley Brockington, Councillor Catherine Kitts, and Councillor George Darouze attended this event.

DISCUSSION

I had the pleasure of attending the annual ROMA Conference in January 2024. My objective was to obtain a better understanding and appreciation of the main issues impacting Ontario's rural communities, particularly since the City of Ottawa has such a large rural component that makes up our city.

It was great to see Councillor Kelly, Council's representative on ROMA, as well as Councillors Kitts and Darouze who were serving in other capacities, while in attendance at the conference.

ROMA's Vision is a progressive future for rural Ontario.

ROMA's Mission is to support municipal governments to make rural communities the best they can be.

ROMA's Top Advocacy Initiatives are:

1. Attainable Housing Task Force
2. Broadband and Cellular Service
3. Fill the Gaps Closer to Home

4. Opportunities for Rural Ontario in a Post-COVID World

The theme of the 2024 Conference was: ROMA 2024 Closer to Home.

At the Conference, I was able to attend the following Sessions:

- Immigration to Rural Communities
- Economic Development in Local Communities
- Indigenous Partners: Unlocking the Power of Collaboration
- The Future of Feeding Ontario
- Experiences and Solutions for Rural, Northern and Remote Homelessness
- Access to Services in Rural Ontario

As well as a Learning Lunch, How Ontario's Energy Transformation Benefits Communities

All party leaders spoke at the conference, including Premier Ford, NDP Leader and MPP Stiles, Liberal Leader Crombie and Green Party Leader and MPP Schneider.

The very popular 'bear pit' session also included a 65-minute Q&A session with almost every Cabinet member. This is always a well-attended session at AMO conferences, as a myriad of questions and subject matter is covered.

Observations:

1. The City of Ottawa must take steps to coordinate delegations with Ministers and Ministry officials. The City of Ottawa is the largest municipality that is a member of both ROMA and AMO and this remains an area of improvement for us. We have priorities, there are opportunities to sit down with Ministers, let us use this time wisely.
2. Other members of Council, including the Mayor should consider attending this conference. There are day packages available if the entire conference is too long to commit to.

The next annual ROMA Conference is scheduled for January 2025 in Toronto.

CONCLUSION

It is through the commitment of Members of Council, to attend conferences like the ROMA 2024 Conference, that the City of Ottawa's interests are advanced.

Riley Brockington

Councillor, Ward 16 River