

All Eyes on Queen's Park for this Week's 2017 Provincial Budget

Note: This Alert provides you with i) key messages going into Budget Day; and ii) how you can stay on top of what the Budget means for municipal governments.

Finance Minister Charles Sousa will deliver the Budget on Thursday. AMO has offered through its pre-budget submission, and other activities, ways the Province can help municipal governments.

We know all Ministers are busy completing their mandate letters from the Premier, some of which could find their way into the Ontario budget bill. In recent days, the government's "Fair Housing Plan" outlined a number of initiatives that impact municipal governments. More details may be in the budget documents. AMO is meeting with Finance and Housing officials this week.

Key Messages going into the Budget:

- Municipal governments and the daily services they provide to communities can ill afford to be micro-managed by Ontario;
- Grant-based infrastructure programs restrict municipal governments ability to meet their local needs – competitive grant processes doesn't fit with asset management plans or municipal budgeting;
- A balanced budget is important to the Province but putting more unfunded mandates on the backs of municipal governments is not acceptable;
- There are several actions the Province can take to help municipal governments without any cost to the provincial treasury (e.g. joint and several; better capacity to pay criteria in interest arbitration; reduce/change what and how municipal government must report to the province);
- Will the provincial government signal that it holds an interest in working with us to develop a revenue framework for all municipal governments that goes beyond property taxes, user fees and grants so that long-term municipal fiscal needs can be better met going forward;
- Municipal governments rely on property taxes as their main source of revenue and changes to the property assessment system can do irreparable harm.

A few of the specific things we'll be looking for in the budget papers:

- Will we see an annualized profile of the Province's infrastructure funding for municipal governments for the remainder of its 10 year plan?
- Will the level of provincial contribution for Phase 2 of the federal cost-shared infrastructure funding be enunciated and be 1/3, even where the federal government contributes a greater amount?
- Will the provincial commitment to grow OCIF over the next two years be maintained as well as for the Connecting Link program?
- Will the Province provide funds to municipal government to implement its proposed new regulation to change how municipal asset management plans are developed?
- Will there be an inflationary increase to the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF) to help some of Ontario's municipal governments cope with no or little growth and increased costs, such as OPP?
- Will the Province proceed with a fire-med proposal notwithstanding municipal governments and paramedic stakeholder groups are in strong opposition?
- Will the Province become a funding partner for social housing, which was downloaded to municipal governments 18 years ago?
- Will the Province deal with joint and several or offer something else to deal with the rising costs of municipal insurance?
- Will the Province find additional funds to invest in education as means to dampen some of the school closures?
- Will long term care, especially municipal long term care facilities, receive additional funding?
- Will there be any changes to Ontario's labour laws that would impact municipal governments?
- Will the amount of cost-shared funding for public health and land ambulance be maintained?

AMO will be at Queen's Park on April 27 to provide immediate budget analysis for you.

Here's how you can help:

- Use the above key messages locally and through social media.
- Tweet a link to the AMO budget submission ([Pre-Budget Submission](#)) and tag your MPP as well as @AMOPolicy.
- On budget day, keep an eye on the AMO Twitter feed (@AMOPolicy) for an immediate and response to the budget and retweet.
- Watch for a membership AMO Update at the end of the day which will provide more information on the budget components.