



Administrative Report

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

To: Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

From: Sandra Zwiers, MAcc, CPA, CA
Chief Administrative Officer

Date: Wednesday, February 07, 2024

Subject: 2024 ROMA Conference – Delegation Update

Report #: 2024-0207-CAO-R02-SZ

Purpose

To provide County Council with a summary of the advocacy efforts undertaken by the Corporation as part of the 2024 Rural Ontario Municipal Association Annual Conference held in Toronto, Ontario from January 21st to the 23rd, 2024.

Background

The Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) holds an annual conference to provide members an opportunity to collaborate, learn and advocate. A significant feature of the conference is the ability to directly interact with provincial Cabinet Ministers on many of the critical issues confronting municipalities. The ability to delegate in front of Cabinet Ministers (or their designates) is considered a highlight of the conference and involves advance approval and subject matter preparation.

The 2024 ROMA Conference was attended by more than 1,600 municipal leaders, government officials, public servants, sponsors, exhibitors and media personnel. Premier Doug Ford, provincial Cabinet Ministers and leaders of the Liberal, NDP and Green Party attended the conference this year.

County of Essex Delegation Process

To ensure a professional and well-informed delegation presentation to Ministers, the following process is in place at the County of Essex:

- 1) Issue Identification - Administration assesses operations, industry trends, County Council discussions/directions and anticipated service provision challenges to identify issues that warrant provincial advocacy.
- 2) Apply to Delegate – Approximately 9 weeks ahead of the ROMA Conference, application forms are completed for delegation status on an issue/Ministry basis. Administration completes these applications on behalf of the Corporation. The application includes the name of the Ministry the Corporation would like to meet, who from the Corporation will be presenting, a summary of the issue to be presented as well as any pertinent background information.
- 3) Refine Presentation – While the Corporation waits for its application to be approved or denied, Administration further refines the presentation’s advocacy points and prepares deliverables that will be used and/or given to the Minister during the meeting. These deliverables include: speaking notes for the presenters, a briefing note of the advocacy issue, a more detailed background report and an executive-level infographic.
- 4) Results of Delegation Status – About three weeks prior to the ROMA Conference, the Corporation learns whether its application has been approved and is provided with the date and time of its delegation.
- 5) Final Preparations – During the days immediately preceding the ROMA Conference, the presentation team members meet to confirm speaking roles and review the final deliverables. The Communications Department prepares printed packages and provides them to the CAO, who ensures the materials are presented to the Minister.
- 6) Delegation Presentation – The Warden, as the head of Council, and the CAO, as the head of Administration, lead all of the Corporation’s delegations. Department Heads/Directors and/or Agency Partners serve as subject matter experts depending on the advocacy issue/topic. If available, local MPP’s attend in a supportive role. Delegations are time limited, generally to 15 minutes, requiring presenters to be well prepared to ensure professional and impactful advocacy.
- 7) Public Reporting of Delegation Efforts –At the next regular meeting of County Council after the ROMA Conference, the CAO prepares a summary report of the Corporation’s delegation efforts. The report includes a summary of the process, identification of Ministries to which delegation applications were made, what advocacy issues were put forth, the success of applications and a summary of the advocacy

issues, including deliverables submitted to the Ministry. Immediately following the public report at County Council, the Communications Department posts the advocacy information to the Corporation's website and social media channels.

Discussion

In late November, 2023, Administration applied to delegate to three Ministries:

- 1) Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP): PA John Yakabuski
 - Attendees: Warden Macdonald, CAO Zwiers, GM Bishop (EWSWA);
- 2) Ministry of Infrastructure (MOI): Minister Kinga Surma
 - Attendees: Warden Macdonald, CAO Zwiers, Director of Infrastructure & Planning Services Botham; and
- 3) Ministry of Health (MOH): Minister Sylvia Jones
 - Attendees: Warden Macdonald, CAO Zwiers, CEO Blanchette (WECHU/OHT), ED Reilly (Windsor Family Health Team/OHT).

MECP

The delegation to MECP highlighted concerns associated with the exclusion of certain properties such as municipal facilities, not-for-profit businesses, places of worship and industrial, commercial and institutional (IC&I) properties from the new Blue Box Regulation. Changes to the regulation wording were sought to reduce the negative impact that will come from not allowing co-collection of recycling material from these sources with residential pick up. If left as is, the regulation will perpetuate inefficient collection practices, loss of economies of scale to support financially efficient contracts and likely result in the disposal of recyclables into municipal landfills. The unintended consequences of the current regulation will mean a financial, operating and environmental burden to municipalities. For those municipalities in a rural context, the negative consequences will only be amplified. The Parliamentary Assistant, John Yakabuski and his ministry staff were receptive to our request for regulation refinement. Michelle Bishop, General Manager for the Essex Windsor Solid Waste Authority, is actively engaged in follow up conversations with the MECP. Refer to Appendix A for MECP delegation details.

MOI

The delegation to MOI was declined and redirected to the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation & Trade (MEDJCT). The delegation to MEDJCT highlighted the infrastructure pressures stemming from the region's transformational economic growth opportunities: namely the battery plant, Gordie Howe International Bridge and the mega hospital. The Corporation's long-standing history of prudent growth planning and financial management were highlighted as keys to the County's success to date. The extraordinary pace of change to our region was identified as a challenge resulting in the need to advance capital projects in the expansion timeline as well as raise the standard of roadway and intersection improvements at a considerable additional cost (eg. Grade separated intersections). The MOI's decision to redirect our delegation to MEDJCT was a notable takeaway from the meeting. Minister Vic Fedeli recognized the importance of engaging the MOI and vocalized support in addressing our specific infrastructure concerns with his ministry peers. MPPs Dowie and Leardi attended in support. Refer to Appendix B for MEDJCT delegation details.

MOH

The focus of the delegation to the Ministry of Health was the pressing need for provincial support to address the critical shortage of healthcare professionals and enhance access to Primary and Urgent Care clinics in Essex County. By improving this root cause problem to connect residents to well-rounded preventative care it is believed that stresses to our EMS operations and offload delays can be improved.

While physicians are needed in our region, discussions with our Ontario Health Team partners at the Windsor Essex County Health Unit and Windsor Family Health Team, revealed an opportunity to jointly advocate for funding to support the expansion of health professionals into established family health team networks. Upwards of thirteen (13) Expressions of Interest from across the Essex-Windsor region were submitted to the Ministry of Health for consideration. Minister Jones was supportive of the collaboration the County of Essex has with its OHT partners. Results of the review of Expressions of Interest are expected within the coming weeks. Refer to Appendix C for MOH delegation details.

Financial Implications

Preparing for delegations at the ROMA Conference requires the resources of a number of departments: the operational department most impacted by the advocacy issue, the Communications Department, the CAO's office and the

Warden. The Corporation is fortunate to have in-house expertise to manage the process and develop and create the deliverables. The cost of this work is absorbed in the daily running of the business.

The opportunity to advocate before a Minister is considered a privilege and while no financial commitments are secured from the Province during delegations, these opportunities open the door to the potential for new programs and financial supports from the Province, which can work to reduce pressures on the Corporation's tax base.

Consultations

N/A

Recommendation

That Essex County Council receive the 2024 ROMA Conference – Delegation Update report for information.

Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra Zwiers

Sandra Zwiers, MAcc, CPA, CA, Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix	Title
A	MECP Delegation Materials
B	MEDJCT Delegation Materials
C	MOH Delegation Materials