



Administrative Report

To: Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

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

Date: Wednesday, February 4, 2026

Subject: ROMA 2026 Delegation Update

Report #: 2026-0204-CAO-R04-SZ

Purpose

To provide County Council with a summary of the advocacy efforts undertaken by the Corporation as part of the 2026 Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) Conference held in Toronto, Ontario from January 18th to the 20th.

Background

The Rural Ontario Municipal Association holds an annual conference that provides members an opportunity to collaborate, learn, and advocate directly with provincial Cabinet Ministers on issues affecting rural and small urban communities. Delegation meetings continue to be a key communication channel for advancing County priorities with senior levels of government.

In December 2025, Council received Report [#2025-1203-CAO-R12-SZ](#), which outlined the County's advocacy priorities for 2026 and established a coordinated, strategic approach to provincial and federal engagement. The approved priorities, including transportation infrastructure, EMS modernization, housing, and environmental resilience, guided the preparation of delegation materials and ensured alignment with the County's Strategic Plan (2024–2027).

The 2026 ROMA Conference was well attended by more than 2,000 municipal leaders, government officials, public servants, sponsors, exhibitors, and media personnel, providing an important forum for the County to advance Council-endorsed advocacy priorities.

Discussion

The Corporation submitted, and was approved for, two delegations at the 2026 ROMA Conference:

1) Ministry of Transportation – Roads to Prosperity

Unprecedented growth in our region continues to place added pressure on the County's transportation network. Generational investments, including the EV battery plant, Gordie Howe International Bridge and new regional hospital are driving significant increases in population and housing demand.

The delegation to the Ministry of Transportation focused on the critical need for a grade-separated interchange at County Road 22 and County Road 19, a key transportation artery linking planned housing to major employment areas and the province's Highway 401. Addressing existing congestion and preparing for anticipated growth requires this infrastructure investment to support safety, mobility, and the unlocking of developable lands needed to meet provincial housing targets.

The delegation (attached as **Appendix A**) was presented by the Warden and CAO to Parliamentary Assistant Ric Bresee. The County was supported by MPP Andrew Dowie and representatives from MPP Anthony Leardi and Trevor Jones' offices.

2) Ministry of Health – Answering the Call – The Clinician Connection

The current dispatch model for Windsor-Essex involves the deployment of paramedic resources through a communication centre that operates separately from the paramedic service. To support improved integration, communication, and system efficiency, the County is seeking approval to embed clinicians within the Windsor Central Ambulance Communication Centre (CACC) during the implementation of the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS).

Embedding clinical expertise directly within dispatch is intended to strengthen triage accuracy, improve patient pathways, and enhance the value and performance of EMS amid rising call volumes and continued regional growth.

The delegation (attached as **Appendix B**) was presented by the Warden, CAO and Chief Lammers to the Deputy Premier, and Minister of Health, the

Hon. Sylvia Jones. Attending in support was Chief Greg Sage of the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs, MPP Andrew Dowie, MPP Anthony Leardi and MPP Trevor Jones.

Media Traction

In real time following the delegation meetings, our Communications Department issued press releases to highlight our advocacy work on our website and social media channels. As a result, local media outlets sought the following interviews:

- MTO Delegation – Roads to Prosperity:
 - January 19th: The Warden was interviewed by the Windsor Star and AM800
 - January 20th: The CAO was interviewed by AM800 and CBC Radio
- MOH Delegation – The Clinician Connection:
 - January 20th and 21st: Chief Lammers was interviewed by AM800 and CTV

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

Using County Council's 2026 Advocacy Priorities as a foundation, the Chief Administrative Officer consulted with the Senior Leadership Team and the Warden to identify priority issues suitable for delegation.

Strategic Plan Alignment

Working as Team Essex County	Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence	Building a Regional Powerhouse
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scaling Sustainable Services through Innovation <input type="checkbox"/> Focusing “Team Essex County” for Results <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advocating for Essex County’s Fair Share	<input type="checkbox"/> Being an Employer with Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A Government Working for the People <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promoting Transparency and Awareness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Providing Reliable Infrastructure for Partners <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporting Dynamic and Thriving Communities Across the County <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Harmonizing Action for Growth <input type="checkbox"/> Advancing Truth and Reconciliation

Recommendation

That Essex County Council receive report number 2026-0204-CAO-R04-SZ, ROMA 2026 Delegation Update as information.

Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra Zwiers

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

Appendix	Title
A	Roads to Prosperity
B	Answering the Call