



MINUTES

ROMA Board Meeting

Friday, September 20, 2024
9:00 AM – 1:30 PM

HYBRID Meeting

PRESENT:

Chair Christa Lowry, Municipality of Mississippi Mills (Zone 8)

Zone and AMO Rural Caucus Representatives:

Jamie McGrail, Councillor, Municipality of Chatham-Kent (Zone 1)

Steve McCabe, Councillor, Township of Wellington North (Zone 2)

Dave Beres, Deputy Mayor, Township of Tillsonburg (Zone 3)

Christina Early, Councillor, Town of Caledon (Zone 4)

Pam Sayne, Councillor, Township of Minden Hills (Zone 5)

Jennifer Murphy, Councillor, County of Renfrew (Zone 6)

Carma Williams, Deputy Mayor, Township of North Glengarry (Zone 7)

Mark Wilson, Councillor, City of Temiskaming Shores (Zone 9)

Janet Hager, Councillor, Municipality of Red Lake (Zone 10)

Nicole Martin, CAO, Township of Amaranth (AMO Rural Caucus)

Dane Nielsen, Deputy Mayor, Municipality of Grey Highlands (AMO Rural Caucus)

Natasha Salonen, Mayor, Township of Wilmot (AMO Rural Caucus)

Nathan Townend, Deputy Warden, County of Lennox & Addington (AMO Rural Caucus)

Tanya Vrebosch, Councillor, City of North Bay (AMO Rural Caucus)

Staff:

Brian Rosborough, Executive Director, AMO

Afshin Majidi, Executive Treasurer, AMO

Lindsay Jones, Director, Policy and Governmental Relations

Petra Wolfbeiss, Director, Membership Centre, AMO

Spencer Sandor, Senior Advisor, Policy, AMO

Adam Garcia, Manager, Executive Office, AMO

Farah Tayabali, Vice-President, Redbrick

Lora Tigno, Administrative Assistant, Membership Centre, AMO

Guests:

Hon. Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs

Hannah Anderson, Chief of Staff, Ontario Minister of Rural Affairs

Riley Braunstein, Director of Stakeholder Relations & Operations, Ontario Minister of Rural Affairs
Robin Jones, AMO President, Mayor, Village of Westport

Early Departures:

Christina Early, Councillor, Town of Caledon (Zone 4)

Regrets:

None Identified

1. Chair's Welcome and Introductions – ROMA Chair, Christa Lowry

Chair Chista Lowry welcomed the Board and the new members who were elected to the AMO rural caucus and attending their first formal meeting; Natasha Salonen, Tanya Vrebosch, Dane Nielsen, Nicole Martin, and Nathan Townend.

Chair Lowry read the following Land Acknowledgement:

"We recognize that our work as the ROMA Board, and the work of our members, takes place on traditional Indigenous territories across Ontario. We recognize and respect the history, languages, and cultures of the First Nations, Metis, Inuit and all Indigenous peoples whose presence continues to enrich our communities."

AMO President and Past ROMA Chair joined the meeting for a brief touch base. ROMA Board members congratulated President Jones on her appointment and thanked her for her commitment and tireless work as ROMA Chair for the past number of years. President Jones thanked the board members for their dedication in the advocacy work that ROMA has been doing.

2. Declaration

- Pecuniary interest- None declared
- Early departure – Identified above

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

3. Approval of Friday, September 20, 2024, Meeting Agenda (*Pages 1-4*)

Motion:

"That the Board approve the agenda for Friday, September 20, 2024."

Moved: Nathan Townend

Seconded: Christina Early

CARRIED

4. Approval of Friday, July 19, 2024 & Sunday, August 18, 2024, ROMA Meeting Minutes (*Pages 5-17*)

Motion

"That the Board approve the minutes from the July 19, 2024, and August 18, 2024, meeting".

Moved: Steve McCabe

Seconded: Pam Sayne

CARRIED

5. Election- Board 1st and 2nd Vice Chair positions - Chair Christa Lowry/All (*Verbal*)

With the appointment of Christa Lowry as ROMA Chair, vacancies in the 1st and 2nd Vice Chair positions were created. Brian Rosborough and Afshin Majidi facilitated the nomination process for these 2 positions. Carma Williams and Jamie McGrail were nominated for 1st Vice Chair, with Carma elected. Janet Hager and Jamie McGrail were nominated for 2nd Vice Chair, with Janet elected. The ballots were destroyed following the process.

Motion

"That the Board elects Carma Williams as the 1st Vice Chair for the remainder of the term until the Officers Election at the 2025 Annual Conference."

Moved: Nathan Townend

Seconded: Dane Nielsen

CARRIED

Motion

"That the Board elects Janet Hager as the 2nd Vice Chair for the remainder of the term until the Officers Election at the 2025 Annual Conference."

Moved: Tanya Vrebosch

Seconded: Carma Williams

Motion

"That the ballots cast for the election of the 1st and 2nd Vice Chair positions be destroyed."

Moved: Dane Nielsen

Seconded: Steve McCabe

CARRIED

6. Executive-Treasurer – Afshin Majidi, Executive Treasurer

i. ROMA Q2 Financial Statements – Afshin Majidi, Executive Treasurer (*Pages 18-24*)

Afshin Majidi presented the ROMA Second Quarter Financial Statements and provided highlights from the 2024 conference, noting that revenues exceeded budget targets by 26% and last year's revenue by 28%. The success was attributed to higher exhibitor participation despite rising costs due to inflation. Key factors in the increased costs included meals and speaker fees, both of which were impacted by inflation. Net revenue totaled \$583,000, with additional revenue from interest income surpassing expectations. Some unbudgeted items included an exhibition fee and sponsorship costs, which were supported through reserves.

The board also discussed ongoing legal costs related to municipal drainage works and railway disputes. ROMA has earmarked \$100,000 to support legal advocacy on behalf of rural municipalities, specifically to address whether federally regulated industries like railways must comply with municipal bylaws and provincial legislation. The board will receive a more detailed update on this issue at the next meeting. The discussion also included a review of reserve funds for post-secondary education, with a suggestion at a future meeting to reassess the amount allocated for conference reserves due to the growth in conference size and expenses.

Motion

“That the June 2024 financial statements be accepted as presented.”

Moved: Christina Early

Seconded: Steve McCabe

CARRIED

DISCUSSION ITEMS

7. Policy Briefing – Lindsay Jones, Director of Policy, AMO

i. Considerations for ROMA Policy Priorities (*Pages 25-33*)

Lindsay Jones briefed directors on the AMO advocacy positions and preparation for the likelihood of an upcoming provincial election. This briefing included discussion on considerations for directors on positioning and aligning the ROMA Board key advocacy priorities within the AMO strategy and their own election advocacy. The identification of access to housing, primary care, solutions for homelessness and infrastructure with the inclusion of broadband and energy specifically, were agreed to as the focus of advocacy for ROMA.

These issues not only align with the recent policy work of the Board but also ongoing rural issues and needs.

Priorities as agreed to:

1. **Ensuring Access to Housing –Enabling Infrastructure for Small, Rural and Northern Municipalities**
2. **Access to Primary Care and Hospitals in Rural Communities**
3. **Solutions for Homelessness in Rural Ontario**

ROMA advocacy as identified above will also focus on reigniting its advocacy on broadband and focusing on energy solutions.

Lindsay briefly spoke to the ongoing matter related to national railway adherence to provincial legislation indicating a full briefing will be provided at the October 18 meeting.

Motion:

“That the ROMA Board adopt the three priorities of: access to housing, access to primary care and solutions for homelessness in rural Ontario; and two priority items of broadband and energy procurement for the workplan”.

Moved: Dane Nielsen

Seconded: Mark Wilson

ii. Energy Procurements (*Pages 34-43*)

Spencer Sandor’s briefing discussed key issues in energy project development, focusing on fire safety, land use planning, and municipal capacity. The Ontario Fire Marshal will provide advisors to municipalities, and a guidance document on battery project safety is available. Land use planning emphasized protecting agricultural land, with specific measures like prohibiting solar on private agricultural land and requiring agricultural impact assessments. The province is requested to clarify decarbonization timelines and decommissioning responsibilities. A municipal roadshow is planned for spring 2024 to enhance engagement. The next procurement will have a longer timeline, and incentives for northern and Crown land projects are expected.

Motion

“That the ROMA Board receive the Policy briefing as information.”

Moved: Tanya Vrebosch

Seconded: Pam Sayne

CARRIED

8. ROMA 2024-2025 Workplan Review and Discussion – Chair Christa Lowry/All (*Attached, Pages 44-50*)

The 2024-2025 Workplan was refined to focus on the three advocacy issues of access to housing and homelessness solutions, access to primary care and infrastructure, as identified above with the inclusion of policy priorities related to broadband and energy.

The Board reviewed the importance of key partnerships and evolving engagement with critical stakeholders such as the Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus, Western Ontario Wardens Caucus, Paramedics and others.

It was agreed that the Board will utilize its communication plan and work with Redbrick to advance its priorities, advocacy positioning and strategies.

Motion

“That the Board approve the work plan as amended to reflect the 5 priorities of access to housing, primary care, finding solutions to homelessness in rural Ontario, broadband, and energy procurement.”

Moved: Natasha Salonen

Seconded: Carma Williams

CARRIED

9. ROMA Communications Update – Farah Tayabali, Vice President, and Megan Abraham, Consultant, Redbrick (Pages 51-65)

Farah Tayabali provided a background of Redbrick to the new board members. Redbrick has supported AMO for two decades, focusing on external communications and media relations. Redbrick has been supporting ROMA in recent years on conference planning, and in 2020, was engaged to develop and implement the Board’s annual communication plan.

The focus of the communication plan is to promote ROMA’s advocacy work, highlighting rural innovation, and amplifying key messages through social media and newsletters. The team supports media relations and provides communication tools for the ROMA annual conference.

The Redbrick team emphasized the approach of consistent communication to engage rural communities and promote ROMA’s initiatives. They are focused on refining ROMA’s communications strategy as identified and supported by the board and supporting future conferences and advocacy efforts. Redbrick also provided a review of the current communications plan and the approach to developing and implementing the plan.

Motion

“That the ROMA Board receive update from Redbrick and that the communication plan be amended as discussed to reflect the Board’s renewed priorities.”

Moved: Carma Williams

Seconded: Dane Nielsen

CARRIED

10. Approval of 2025 Board Meeting Dates, timing and format – Chair Christa Lowry/All (*Attached, Pages 66*)

This item was deferred to the October 2024 Board Meeting for discussion.

INFORMATION ITEMS

11. ROMA Post-Secondary Bursary Program – Adam Garcia, Manager, Executive Office, AMO (*Pages 252-253*)

A memo was presented to the board by Adam Garcia regarding the post-secondary awards program established by Roma. In 2021, Roma expressed interest in connecting with post-secondary students to support strategic objectives, including rural influence in emerging policy issues. A working group from the ROMA board decided to partner with three universities—University of Guelph, Lakehead University, and Trent University—each providing two students per year with \$2,500 awards, amounting to a \$15,000 commitment over five years.

The universities handle the administration of the awards, with most students automatically considered based on criteria such as financial need and rural background, excluding students from non-rural areas like Toronto. Trent University uses an application process overseen by their Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, a rural geography professor. The program has seen some engagement, with board members attending award ceremonies when possible. However, one challenge is that some students do not disclose their status as recipients, limiting feedback to the board.

12. ROMA Conference Sponsorships - Petra Wolfbeiss, Director, Membership, AMO (*Pages 254-257*)

ROMA has traditionally committed \$10,000 annually to support conferences for sister municipal organizations, FONOM and NOMA. These sponsorships provide opportunities for the ROMA Chair to speak and align ROMA's messaging with other organizations. Last year, a similar \$10,000 sponsorship was approved for the Ontario Small Urban Municipalities (OSUM) to support their conference after a period of inactivity due to COVID-19. ROMA's financial strength allows for these contributions, benefiting smaller organizations that rely on this support. The sponsors reflect the ROMA Board strategic priority of aligning municipal advocacy and efforts.

13. ROMA 2025 Conference Update – Petra Wolfbeiss, Director, Membership, AMO (*Verbal*)

Petra Wolfbeiss advised the Board that work is underway on programming and in leadup to the conference updates will be provided to the Board.

Motion

“That the ROMA Board receive the items as information.”

Moved: Janet Hager

Seconded: Jamie McGrail

CARRIED

TIMED ITEMS

11. 9:30AM-10:00AM – Pre-meeting on discussion with Minister Thompson – Lindsay Jones/All

Lindsay Jones provided a briefing before the meeting with the Minister advising that this engagement was a meet and greet opportunity and an opportunity to hear from the Minister on her priorities.

12. 10:00AM-10:30AM – Discussion with Minister Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs

The meeting with Minister Lisa Thompson centered on the priorities of focusing on improving cellular connectivity, modernizing the Rural Economic Development Fund and introduction of new legislation to support the funding modernization. The Minister expressed her support for ROMA being an important partner in her work and deliberations as she moves ahead.

13. 11:00 AM – 11:30 AM – Briefing on AMO’s Healthy Democracy Project – Stewart McDonough, Municipal Engagement Advisor, AMO (*Verbal*)

A brief overview of the Health Democracy Project was provided with the fuller briefing pushed to the November meeting of the Board.

Motion

“That the ROMA Board receive the item as information.”

Moved: Steve McCabe

Seconded: Natasha Salonen

CARRIED

INFORMATION ITEMS – Correspondence

14. MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

- a. 07.23.2024 Resolution to Support EOWC Investment in Municipal Infrastructure (*Pages 67-69*)
- b. 07-23-24 Dysart Signed Resolution - Sustainable Infrastructure Funding for Small Rural Municipalities (*Pages 70-71*)
- c. 24.09.03_Resol 139-2024 re EOWC Mun Infrastructure (*Pages 72-73*)
- d. 24-07-17 - Investment in Municipal Infrastructure for Eastern Ontario's Small and Rural Communities_by Greater Napanee Council (*Pages 74-75*)
- e. 24-08-19 - Resolution - Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus-Tay Valley Township (*Pages 76-78*)
- f. 2024-07-18 Calling for Investment in Municipal Infrastructure for Eastern Ontario's Small and Rural Communities_Municipality of Trent Lakes (*Pages 79-80*)
- g. Advocating for Infrastructure Investment_Township of Augusta (*Pages 81-82*)
- h. County of Peterborough Resolution Regarding Investment in Municipal Infrastructure for Eastern Ontario's Small and Rural Communities (*Pages 83-84*)
- i. EOLC Resolution - Supporting Investment in Municipal Infrastructure for Small & Rural Communities in Eastern Ontario - June 27, 2024 (*Pages 85-87*)
- j. EOWC - Resolution R223-2024 - Municipal Infrastructure_Township of Otonabee-South Monaghan (*Pages 88-90*)
- k. EOWC-Municipal-Infrastructure-Policy-Paper_Township of Stirling-Rawdon (*Pages 91-127*)
- l. July 9, 2024 Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus-Investment in Municipal Infrastructure (*Pages 128-130*)
- m. PEC Resolution - Federal & Provincial Partnerships to Maintain Municipal Infrastructure in Eastern Ontario's Small Municipalities (*Pages 131-132*)
- n. RES - Support Resolution - Sustain Infrastructure Funding for Sml Rural Mun _ Aug-13-2024 (*Pages 133-134*)
- o. res 2024-229; Support - Sustainable Infrastructure Funding19072024082845_Township of Georgian Bay (*Pages 135*)
- p. Resolution Support, 'Investment in Municipal Infrastructure-Northumberland County (*Pages 136-141*)
- q. SDG Resolution - Municipal Infrastructure (*Pages 142-143*)
- r. Sppt Resolution Perth East to Premier Ford - Sustainable Funding for Small and Rural Municipal Infrastructure (*Pages 144-147*)
- s. Support Letter and Resolution Calling for Investment in Municipal Infrastructure for Eastern Ontario's-Bonnechere Valley (*Pages 148-149*)
- t. Support Resolutions (x4) - Infrastructure Funding for small rural municipalities (*Pages 150-157*)
- u. Sustainable funding for OPP-Municipality of Killarney (*Pages 158-163*)
- v. Township of Addington Highlands_Investment in municipal infrastructure (*Pages 164-166*)
- w. Village of Burk' s Falls_infrastructure funding (*Pages 167-168*)

15. HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

- a. 2024 08 29 - Solve the Crisis Campaign - NOMA Letter of Support (*Pages 169-170*)
- b. CLK-2024-09-03-Resolution-24-278-Homelessness Crisis-Timmins (*Pages 171*)
- c. CNB Res. 2024-240 Homelessness Crisis (*Pages 172-188*)

- d. Council Resolution 2024-196 - Re. Homelessness Crisis-Greater Sudbury (*Pages 189-190*)
- e. Prime Minister re homeless crisis.Sept.6.24-Timmins (*Pages 191*)

16. ASSESSMENT CYCLE

- a. Letter of Support - Urging the Government to Promptly Resume Assessment Cycle Township of Brudenell, Lyndoch and Raglan (*Pages 192-194*)
- b. res 2024-228; Assessment Cycle19072024081009_Municipality of Callander (*Pages 195*)
- c. Resolution Support 'Promptly Resume Assessment Cycle' Northumberland County (*Pages 196-203*)
- d. Support resume assessment cycle-Township of McMurrich Monteith (*Pages 204-208*)

17. OTHER

- a. 24-08-19 - Resolution - Province Removed Wetlands Protection for Eastern Ontario (*Pages 209-210*)
- b. 2024-32 - Recognizing the Essential Role of Nurse Practitioners in NOMA Healthservices (*Pages 211-212*)
- c. 2024-33 - Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus 7 in 7 Regional Housing Project Support (*Pages 213*)
- d. Clerks_20240821_143327-Private Water Testing from the City of North Bay (*Pages 214-215*)
- e. EOWC-WOWC-EOMC Joint Letter - AMO Continues to Advocate for a Social and Economic Prosperity Review - August 18 2024 (*Pages 216-218*)
- f. Letter of Support - Resolution to exempt Emergency Vehicles from Emission Standards_Township of Brudenell, Lyndoch and Raglan (*Pages 219-222*)
- g. Letter of Support AMO OMA Joint Health Resolution_Township of Terrace Bay (*Pages 223*)
- h. Letter of Support NOMA Resolution - Support for OINP (*Pages 224-225*)
- i. Letter of Support Ontario Long Service Medals (*Pages 226-227*)
- j. Letter of Support Public Health Phasing out Free Water Testing for Private Wells_Terrace Bay (*Pages 228-229*)
- k. Municipality of Killarney_Champlain Bridge Rehab (*Pages 230-232*)
- l. NOMA Letter to Dr. Acorn re Support for NP to Obtain Billing Numbers (*Pages 233-234*)
- m. R2024 - 207- CN Private Crossing Upgrades Impacting Landowners - Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal (*Pages 235-236*)
- n. Response from Minister Fraser to Peter Emon_EOWC (*Pages 237-238*)
- o. RES - Support Resolution - Resolve Financial + Budgetary Pressures _ Aug-13-2024 (*Pages 239-240*)
- p. Support Letter and Resolution Calling for reconsideration of Capital Gains Tax Changes-BONNECHERE VALLEY (*Pages 241-242*)
- q. Support Resolutions (x3) - Resolve Financial and Budgetary Pressures (*Pages 243-247*)
- r. Town of Hearst Council Resolution No. 231-24_Town of Hearst (*Pages 248-251*)

Motion

"That the ROMA Board receive the item as information."

Moved: Jamie McGrail
Seconded: Carma Williams

OTHER BUSINESS

18. Other business brought forward by members

19. Agenda items for future ROMA Board meetings

October 2024 meeting:

- Trains and Drains
- LAS Water and wastewater expert panel and other LAS services
- Rural Caucus report back
- ROMA 2025 meeting dates

November 2024 meeting:

- Meeting with Minister Calandra
- Policy items:
 - o Pre-election discussion
 - o Social and Economic Prosperity Review
 - o Broadband Update
- HDP Update

ADJOURNMENT

20. Next meeting: **October 18, 2024**

21. Adjournment

Motion:

"That there being no further business, the Board move to adjourn."

Moved: Dane Nielsen
Seconded: Natasha Salonen

CARRIED