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Subject: Revised: AMO Policy Update – Record-Setting AMO 2024 Conference Focuses on Core Municipal Priorities

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AMO Policy Update – Record-Setting AMO 2024 Conference Focuses on Core Municipal Priorities

Note: This revised version of the update corrects the name of our incoming president.

The AMO 2024 Annual Conference in Ottawa, Ontario was attended by over 3300 participants and focused on priorities such as: homelessness and the opioid crisis, infrastructure for housing, and the need for a fundamental rethink of the provincial-municipal fiscal relationship.

Elections were also held for the 2024-2026 [AMO Board of Directors](#). The Board plays a critical role in setting policy priorities and shaping positions that reflect the breadth and diversity of the municipal sector in Ontario.

Social and Economic Prosperity Review

AMO President Colin Best [provided remarks](#) that celebrated both AMO's 125th year and the work of municipal Councils and staff, and

highlighted for provincial-municipal partnership to tackle systemic challenges that are undermining Ontario's economic competitiveness and quality of life.

Mayor Robin Jones from the Village of Westport was elected as the new President of AMO. [Her speech](#) echoed the need for a Social and Economic Prosperity Review and the importance of working together as a sector.

Neither the Premier nor his Cabinet spoke to whether the government plans to work with AMO on a rethink of the provincial-municipal fiscal framework. However, the need for such a review was highlighted in many ways throughout the 2024 AMO Conference, including:

- In commitments by all three Opposition parties as part of speeches by leaders Marit Stiles, Bonnie Crombie, and Mike Schreiner;
- In a mainstage panel featuring the President of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the CEO of the Ottawa Hospital, and the Peel Region Chief of Police on the importance of strong and sustainable municipalities to the economy, healthcare, and public safety;
- In questions such as those put to the Ministers' Forum by Burlington Mayor and AMO Board Member Marianne Meed Ward, Township of Brock Mayor Walter Schummer, and Ottawa Councillor Wilson Lo about the need for a review and the unsustainable demands of pressures like transit; and
- In Wednesday morning plenary panels on Housing and Infrastructure moderated by Steve Paikin, to be broadcast this fall as part of TVO's *The Agenda*.

AMO will continue to call for a Social and Economic Prosperity Review and focus on developing potential options from both an uploading and a revenue perspective throughout the fall.

Homelessness and the Opioid Crisis

The Minister of Health, the Hon. Sylvia Jones, announced \$378 million to support 19 treatment and social support hubs for individuals with mental health and substance abuse challenges. Addressing the opioid crisis and the related homelessness crisis are key priorities for AMO and Ontario's 444 municipal governments.

"The homelessness and opioid crises are hurting people, communities, and businesses in every corner of Ontario," said Colin Best, Past AMO President. "Today's announcement responds directly to municipal asks for resources. Funding is needed for treatment and wraparound supports. It is an important step towards the comprehensive, long-term strategy that is needed to address root causes of homelessness."

The Minister of Health also announced the closure of nine safe consumption sites in cities across the province, and the Ontario government's intention to prohibit the opening of any new safe consumption sites.

"Supervised safe consumption sites are a critical part of tackling the opioid crisis. The evidence shows that harm reduction saves lives, saves money, and reduces crime. It takes the pressure off our police, paramedics, and hospitals. Municipalities – in collaboration with health, police, and other partners – are best positioned to decide whether supervised, safe-consumption sites are right for their communities," said Best.

Progress on Infrastructure Programs

The Minister of Infrastructure, the Hon. Kinga Surma, announced the launch of the application process for the Housing-Enabling Core Servicing stream of the \$1 billion [Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program](#). Under this process, municipalities can apply for \$400 million in funding to build, maintain, and repair core assets such as municipal roads, bridges and culverts that will support the construction of new homes. Of the \$400 million, the government is allocating another \$120 million to projects in small, rural and northern municipalities that do not have housing targets to better support the unique needs of these growing communities.

The application process was also launched for the \$200 million Community, Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund under the Ministry of Tourism and Sport.

Finalized Provincial Planning Statement

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Hon. Paul Calandra, announced the release of the updated Provincial Planning Statement. The finalized statement streamlines previous provincial planning policies and responds to municipal feedback provided as part of the consultation process.

“The new Provincial Planning Statement is an important part of enabling municipalities to effectively plan for growth” said new AMO President Robin Jones, Mayor of Westport. “The inclusion of intensification targets, requirements to use provincial population growth estimates as part of planning, and the protection of agricultural and employment lands respond directly to municipal feedback. AMO looks forward to working with the province on key implementation priorities, like the development of guidance to support effective engagement with Indigenous communities.”

Minister’s Forum Discussion at AMO 2024

The [Minister's Forum](#) provided another direct opportunity for elected municipal officials to engage on important issues such as northern economic development, childcare, gender-based violence, the energy transition, and community safety.

Councillor Mara Nagy from the City of Pickering and Deputy Mayor Lori Hoddinott of the Township of McNabe/Braeside put to Minister Calandra questions about the ongoing lack of progress on implementing Code of Conduct legislation for municipalities to support consistent standards and enforcement mechanisms for ethical conduct. When questioned on his commitments at the 2024 ROMA Conference to bring forward proposals in the near future, Minister Calandra pointed to ongoing consultations with the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario.

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