

Staff Report 2021-0387

Meeting Date: November 30, 2021

Subject: Government Relations Update and 2022 ROMA Conference Delegation Requests

Submitted By: Devan Lobo, Senior Business Analyst, Corporate Strategy & Innovation, Office of the CAO

RECOMMENDATION

That the proposed 2022 Rural Ontario Municipal Association Conference delegation requests outlined in Staff Report 2021-0387, be approved.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- This report highlights major advocacy efforts and updates at the federal and provincial levels of government since May 2021.
- Positioning Caledon as a federal and provincial partner, and collaborating on joint advocacy opportunities continues to be important for advancing Town priorities.
- An upcoming opportunity for advocacy is the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) Conference, which will occur virtually from January 23-25, 2022.
- Municipalities can request delegations with Ontario government ministries as well as representatives of the opposition parties to present issues and challenges that require provincial support.
- The deadline to submit delegation requests to the Province was November 15, 2021. With no Council cycle between notification of the deadline and the submission deadline, staff submitted requests based on previous government relations priorities of Council.
- For ROMA, staff propose maintaining a targeted delegation strategy, focused on requesting meetings with Ministers related to key Council Work Plan priorities related to growth.
- Requests should also be submitted to meet with the New Democratic Party Caucus, Liberal Caucus and Green Party.
- This report is to confirm priorities and staff will modify the requests as required by Council.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Council regarding key government relations files and recent federal and provincial policy and legislation activities, as well as outline proposed next steps including ROMA Conference advocacy. Staff are seeking direction from Council on which delegation requests the Town should move ahead with for ROMA.

Government relations and engagement is as critical as ever as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic recovery and Caledon prepares for substantial population growth. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Town of Caledon has been working with all orders of government to ensure public health and safety as well as social and economic

response and recovery. As focus shifts towards reopening, post-pandemic recovery and the imminent growth of Caledon, it is recommended that Caledon continue a collaborative approach to government relations, in support of growth-related advocacy positions.

Update on Town Priorities

There have been advances in terms of Caledon's key priorities. A list of open advocacy files in 2021 is provided in Schedule A for Council's information. Major progress, impacts and opportunities for key Caledon priorities are outlined below.

Affordable Housing

- August 18, 2021 the Province announced nearly \$1.1 billion will be invested to enhance the province's housing programs and support homeless populations in 2022-23.
- On October 7, 2021 the Region of Peel provided a presentation to the Region's Strategic Housing and Homelessness Committee which included an overview of 2021 achievements, 2022 priorities, as well as updates on deliverable affordable housing units in Peel and the affordable housing incentives pilot program.
- On October 21, 2021 the Region of Peel provided a presentation to the Region's Government Relations Committee regarding Funding Programs to Increase Supply on Affordable Rental Housing: Challenges and Opportunities. The presentation highlighted the need for:
 - the federal government to improve the design of the Rapid Housing Initiative, delivered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) under the National Housing Strategy (NHS),
 - the provincial government to close the Region's Housing Master Plan funding gap, and
 - an all of government approach to (re)design existing and planned programs.
- On November 2, 2021 the Region of Peel hosted a sharing forum for the Igniting Housing Possibilities Solutions Lab with respect to collaborative solutions for affordable seniors housing in Peel Region.
- On November 30, 2021 as part of the Official Plan Review, staff will present the Town's Affordable Housing Strategy.

Broadband

- The Mayor and staff continue to advocate for broadband connectivity solutions through participation in the AMO Broadband Committee.
- The Town is awaiting results of Town-supported applications to the Universal Broadband Fund (UBF) and Improving Connectivity for Ontario (ICON) programs.
- In August 2021, the Province and SWIFT provided an update that more than 270 residents and businesses in Caledon communities have been connected to high-speed internet.
- On August 6, 2021, the Province announced its investment of over \$109 million in Telesat's Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite network, to meet future demand for high-speed connectivity.
- Infrastructure Ontario issued a Request for Qualifications on September 9, 2021 as part of a new competitive procurement process.

- On November 8, 2021 the Town announced construction of the backbone fibre-optic network on a section of the Caledon Trailway.

Infrastructure & Climate Change

- Under the jointly funded Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program: COVID-19 Resilience Stream the Town received:
 - \$292,453 for HVAC and Roof Repair/Replacement at Caledon Centre for Recreation and Wellness
 - \$93,817 to rehabilitate connecting walkway blocks throughout the community, improving pedestrian and cycling connectivity
- Updated Drainage Act regulations came into force and effect on June 30, 2021.
- On July 28, 2021 the federal government announced the Active Transportation Fund (ATF), which will invest \$400 million over five years to help build new and expanded networks of pathways, bike lanes, trails and pedestrian bridges and undertake planning studies. Municipalities are eligible to apply once the application period opens.
- On August 17, 2021 the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario (FAO) released a report that reviews the infrastructure assets owned by Ontario's municipalities and assesses the state of repair. Refer to the FAO [website](#) for the full report.

Planning Matters

- October 4, 2021, the Town submitted correspondence to the Region of Peel and the Province regarding the scope of the Peel 2051 Regional Official Plan Review.
- On October 7, 2021, the Province introduced Bill 13, Supporting People and Businesses Act which proposes amendments to the planning system and additional delegation of planning decisions. The Provincial consultation period for the proposed authority to delegate closed November 21, 2021.
- On October 26, 2021, the Town requested the Provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing issue a ministerial zoning order (MZO) for the development of warehousing, distribution centres and industrial uses in Ward 2 to support the creation of jobs.
- Bill 276, Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act, 2021 received Royal Assent on June 3, 2021. Among other changes, the Act amends the Planning Act with respect to merging of lots, interests in land acquired for an energy line, and administrative matters to clarify certificates, part lot control, leases and consents.

Provincial Offences

- Caledon continues discussion and advocacy to expand the role of administrative monetary penalties (AMPs) through participation on AMO's Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) Municipal Administration Advisory Group, to make it more feasible for rural municipalities to implement. The Town is awaiting the Province's AMPs regime for red-light and Automated Speed Enforcement technology infractions.

Transportation

- Bill 282, Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, 2021 received Royal Assent on June 3, 2021 taking effect July 1, 2021 to combat street racing/stunt driving, and aggressive and unsafe driving on our roads. The legislation includes measures to protect vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and highway workers, improve truck safety, and strengthen provincial oversight of the towing sector.

- On June 23, 2021, Caledon Council passed a resolution supporting the Region of Peel's resolution requesting the provincial government convene a stakeholder task force group to advise how a province-wide Vision Zero Strategy can be developed and implemented in Ontario.
- On June 28, 2021 the Province extended funding for communities providing transportation services through the Community Transportation Grant Program. The Town was originally set to receive \$500,000 of funding from 2018-2023, but will receive an additional \$195,508.12 in funding over 2023-2025.
- On June 29, 2021 the Province released a discussion paper, seeking public feedback to inform the Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan. September 28, 2021, the Town provided comments to the Province that included an initial business case that supports the Caledon-Vaughan GO Rail Line before 2041.
- On July 21, 2021, the Province released an interactive map of future repair and expansions of provincial highways. Currently, there are several planned Highway 9 rehabilitation projects that are expected to be completed for 2023-2024.
- On August 12, 2021, the Town received a letter from the Ontario Minister of Transportation expressing commitment to completing the GTA West Corridor Transportation Route Planning and Environmental Assessment (EA) Study. The Minister advised of additional public engagement over the next two years, with a Public Information Centre #3 planned for late 2021.
- Throughout Fall 2021, the Region of Peel has been working with the Province and lower-tier municipalities including the Town to organize a Road Safety Roundtable.
- As per the September 21, 2021 Memorandum to Council, the Town is awaiting MTO's response regarding traffic operations on Highway 10 approaching Olde Base Line as well as a follow-up meeting with the Ministry.
- As outlined in the October 26, 2021 Memorandum to Council, the Town has been focused on building the technical case for the Caledon-Vaughan GO Rail Line, developing a support structure amongst stakeholder municipalities via a group letter of support and advocating at the provincial level.

Other Recent Federal and Provincial Political and Policy Activities

Some opportunities that staff are monitoring include:

- In July 2021, the Province advised that the Town's Municipal Modernization Funding – Intake 2 Implementation Stream funding applications were successful. The Town is undertaking and expediting the modernization of key processes such as Planning, Finance and Human Resources Management.
- The Town has applied for several funding opportunities and is awaiting the announcement of results. This includes:
 - The Municipal Modernization Program – Intake 3 Implementation Stream for funding to undertake and expedite the modernization of key processes such as records management and Operations work orders. Results will be announced by the Province in January 2022.
 - The Enabling Accessibility Fund and the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program for funding related to the Bolton Fire Hub revitalization. Results will be announced by the Federal government.

- The Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund will be maintained for 2022, providing the Town \$699,300. This funding can be used to support the local priorities and specific needs of each community.
- A provincial cabinet shuffle occurred on June 18, 2021 moving several Ministers from cabinet and bringing in a number of new cabinet members for a total of 29 including the Premier. A few Ministry portfolios were modified, and Ministers shifted.
- The 2021 Federal Election was held on September 20, 2021 to form Canada's 44th Parliament, another Liberal minority government. There is an opportunity for Caledon to advance priorities that align with the Liberal Party platform such as affordable housing, green recovery, infrastructure funding, and sustainable transportation and Vision Zero. Conservative incumbent Kyle Seebach was re-elected Member of Parliament for Dufferin-Caledon.
- The Government of Canada announced September 30th, 2021, as the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.
- On October 4, 2021, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario's Speech from the Throne focused on addressing challenges related to COVID-19 through response, economic recovery, investment in hospitals and supporting the long-term care sector. Most relevant for Caledon includes:
 - Building roads, highways and transit in support of COVID-19 economic recovery
 - Working with municipalities to strengthen social and economic conditions
 - Investments have been made to transform Peel Memorial Centre in Brampton from a day clinic into a state-of-the-art, 24-hour facility.
 - Focus on vaccinations in order to avoid widespread closures and lockdowns.
- On October 7th, 2021 the Province released Conservation Authorities Act Phase I regulations which includes transition plan and agreements for programs and services.
- On October 26, 2021 the Prime Minister announced the new federal cabinet, bringing in many new members for a 39-member cabinet. A few Ministry portfolios were modified, some portfolios added, and Ministers shifted.
- The Province's 2021 Fall Economic Statement was released on November 4, 2021 focusing on strengthening Ontario's health and long-term care sector, infrastructure investments, and investments to support workers and economic development. Areas of the proposed plan most relevant for Caledon include:
 - doubling the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund for the next five years,
 - transit and transportation investments including Highway 413,
 - property assessment for the 2022 and 2023 tax years will remain unchanged,
 - regulation of federal payments in lieu of taxes,
 - establishing a Housing Affordability Task Force,
 - amending the on-farm business property assessment to increase the small-scale on-farm value-added business assessment threshold, and
 - increasing the minimum wage in Ontario to \$15.00 per hour effective January 1, 2022.
- First Session of the 44th Parliament of Canada opened on November 22, 2021. The Speech from the Throne 'Building a Resilient Economy: A Cleaner and Healthier Future for Our Kids' focused on health, economy, climate action, safer communities, diversity and inclusion, reconciliation and a secure, just and equitable world. Of the priorities mentioned in the speech, the most relevant for Caledon include:
 - Build more units per year, increasing affordable housing, and ending chronic homelessness through programs like the Housing Accelerator Fund

- Invest in public transit and mandate the sale of zero emission vehicles
- Develop a National Adaptation Strategy to address floods, wildfires, droughts etc.

Looking down the road, the federal and provincial 2022 budget processes are upcoming advocacy opportunities. In addition, the next provincial election is scheduled for June 2, 2022.

Staff will continue monitoring federal and provincial political and policy activities and assess any implications for Caledon.

2021 AMO Conference

The Town leveraged advocacy opportunities available at the 2021 AMO Conference that was held virtually on August 15-18, 2021. This included meetings with Ministers as well as the leaders of the opposition parties to discuss the Town's key priorities. Follow-up letters were sent to each of the Ministers highlighting key messaging that was discussed during the meetings and reinforcing the Town's advocacy positions. Staff will continue to follow-up on these key actions as well as propose continuing to advance priorities during the 2022 ROMA conference as outlined below.

Upcoming ROMA Conference

From January 23-25, 2022, the ROMA Conference will occur virtually. This year's conference will include keynote speakers and expert panels, breakout sessions and engagement with provincial representatives, among other opportunities to discuss and debate rural municipal issues.

This year, the following topics have been listed on the program:

- Taking a Pulse Check on Rural and Northern Health
- Human Services Transformation for Poverty Reduction
- The Continued Quest to Improve Connectivity in Ontario
- OPP Detachment Board Implementation and Community Safety and Well Being Plans
- Climate Change and Municipalities: How Community Energy Plans and Land Use Planning Can Help
- Homelessness in Rural Ontario: Challenges and Opportunities
- Fines and Enforcement: Advancing the Local Administration of Justice
- Navigating the New Regulations under the Conservation Authorities Act
- Innovative Housing Solutions in Rural Ontario
- Opportunities for Rural Ontario: Post-COVID Recovery

In addition, the Province accepted requests for virtual delegation meetings with provincial ministers. Meetings are usually no longer than 15 minutes in length, so it is important to have a focused agenda for each. Municipalities can request delegations with Ontario government ministries as well as representatives of the opposition parties to present issues and challenges that require provincial support. The deadline to submit delegation requests to the Province was November 15, 2021.

With no Council cycle between notification of the deadline and the submission deadline, staff submitted requests based on previous government relations priorities of Council as outlined below. Staff is looking for Council to confirm its priorities and staff will modify the requests as required by Council.

Proposed Caledon Delegation Requests

In order to focus Caledon's 2022 ROMA delegation requests, staff recommend Caledon delegate on Council Work Plan priority issues that are critical to Caledon's growth and modernization and post-pandemic recovery. With population growth comes increasing demand for infrastructure and services. The following are the list of proposed delegations:

Ministry of Infrastructure

Broadband Connectivity

- Accelerate the allocation of broadband funding and construction of infrastructure ensuring affordable rates for residents, particularly rural properties.

Infrastructure Management

- Establish measures or strategies to address increasing infrastructure deficit such as long-term infrastructure funding to maintain costly capital assets and infrastructure systems, support climate adaptation and disaster mitigation projects that protect people and communities from climate change impacts.

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Bolton Special Policy Area

- Finalize the Town's Bolton Special Policy Area (SPA) working with the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Local Planning Equity

- Support local planning equity for the Town of Caledon, within the Region of Peel to protect the integrity of Caledon's local planning process.

Affordable Housing

- Advance policies and programs that expedite a full range of affordable and rental housing options across Caledon.

Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources & Forestry

Aggregate Site Rehabilitation

- Amend the Aggregate Resources Act and regulations to require site plans in an area with a rehabilitated master plan (RMP) to conform to the Council adopted RMP, as well as planning policies to allow for more innovative reuses.

Ministry of Transportation

Transportation Planning

- Re-prioritize the Caledon-Vaughan GO Line with an in-service date of “before 2041” in the 2051 Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan Update.

Road Safety

- Traffic calming measures and safety on Provincial highways running through communities.

Region of Peel Priorities

The Town of Caledon does seek to collaborate where beneficial with other municipalities on common issues, including the Region of Peel.

Next Steps

Throughout November and December, staff will work with the Mayor and Council Office as well as Caledon delegates to prepare and review conference briefing materials. Staff will coordinate scheduling and materials with Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones office and the Region of Peel.

Ministries will confirm the Town’s delegation requests approximately one week before the beginning of the conference. Following the conference, staff will provide further information to Council with a summary of what was requested, any follow-up action that was committed to in the meetings, and next steps to further advance the above priorities.

While staff recommend aligning the Town’s advocacy for ROMA with growth-related topics, it is important to note that advocacy on other council-endorsed positions will continue through various advocacy tools.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications associated with this report.

COUNCIL WORK PLAN

Sustainable Growth:

- Continue the implementation of the Transportation Master Plan including transit, infrastructure, cycling, traffic management, traffic calming, livable and walkable communities
- Advance policies to the Government of Ontario that aid the repurposing of future decommissioned aggregate land
- Advance proactive infrastructure development solutions for growth management
- Pursue intensification in concert with accessibility and public transit, Bolton GO Station and other transit hubs

Connected Community:

- Enhance high-speed internet connectivity
- Promote an age-friendly community through the formation of youth and senior retention plans

Good Governance

- Balance financial planning for both operating and capital budgets
 - Capital budget - balance aging infrastructure with growth-related infrastructure needs

ATTACHMENTS

Schedule A: Town of Caledon Active Advocacy Files