

**Remarks by:
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Deputy Mayor, Town of Innisfil**

**For: Panel Discussion on Working with Municipal
Associations**

**2018 NOSDA Conference
The Senator Hotel & Conference Centre
14 Mountjoy Street South
Timmins, Ontario
Wednesday, June 13, 2018
3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

(Check Against Delivery)

Thank you for the introduction... and hello everyone.

It's a pleasure to be in Timmins.

On behalf of the hundreds of Ontario communities that make up AMO, I want you to know that we appreciate the invite to speak on the theme of 'working with associations'.

It's important for AMO to be here at NOSDA along with our sister organizations NOMA and FONOM. Both Al and Wendy are close colleagues on the AMO Board of Directors.

As AMO President, I have the opportunity to connect with municipal leaders and staff from all corners of the province, on a broad range of policy matters.

Social and community service issues always strike a chord because it hits so close to home.

DSSABs and municipal governments are on the front-lines taking care of our most vulnerable residents. What you do to help make their lives better is one of the best measures of our society.

I believe more than ever that Ontario's 444 municipal governments and their associations need to speak with strong voices.

There is much in common between the needs of the north and your southern neighbors, but there is also much that is different.

That is why AMO applies a northern and rural lens to our policy work and works so closely with NOSDA, FONOM and NOMA to advocate about the unique needs of the north.

AMO staff have a very close working relationship with your CAO's on a range of issues. It results in better policy advice and advocacy to the Province.

To name just a few familiar faces in the NOSDA family-

Don Studholme and Dan McCormick are part of AMO's Health Task Force looking at paramedic and other health related issues. I'll talk more about this later in my update.

Henry Wall is an invaluable addition to AMO's Indigenous Relations Task Force chaired by Wendy, my colleague here.

Henry also advises us as a member of AMOs Housing Task Force.

Janet Patterson has participated in a Minister's Advisory Group on childcare and early learning.

Bill Bradica is active alongside AMO on a number of policy tables on housing.

Brian Marks is a trusted source of advice on various matters from income security reform to housing.

Lastly, Fern Domenelli is always educating us, and the provincial ministries, about the value and the need for enhanced service system management in the north.

So this is all to assure you, AMO has a solid foundation working with NOSDA.

We have common cause with your association and also NOMA and FONOM.

Right now – Ontario’s municipal community needs to be as strong as possible.

And we need to speak with one, clear voice.

AMO spends many hours at Queen’s Park – pushing and pulling on policy initiatives with all the parties, not just the government.

I know first-hand how important it is for the municipal sector to speak with a common strong voice.

That will not change for the new government - just as it was important for previous governments.

I hope you and your councils saw how busy AMO was during the writ – working to put municipal governments' interests and needs into the election narrative.

We know how intrinsically linked the province and municipal governments are, but the public often do not.

We ran 10 different Facebook ads in different markets with a video in the most promoted. There were 2 million total impressions for the ad and almost 800,000 for the video ad.

We were active on twitter daily – and many members were engaged with us.

We had OP-ED columns in major and local papers.

And advertorials in postmedia and metroland.

We had a 15-second video on auto play on the weather network.

We were active in amplifying municipal government throughout the election.

We pushed out the party positions on municipal government concerns and needs.

It is a consolidation of shared concerns and needs across all municipal governments.

So the election process is over. It was the starter. Now the post-election period is the real meal deal.

So what comes next?

Attention now turns to the transition of government.

What ministries will there be?

Who will be ministers and their staffing?

When will the House resume?

What will be the first piece of government legislation, besides the “Act to perpetuate an ancient parliamentary right” which is always Bill 1?

And what will follow?

Building day-to-day relationships with the new government is the immediate work.

Moving a municipal agenda is also part of that work. My Board meets very shortly and it will be looking at its priorities in terms of the new government's election commitments and how we might influence its first 100 days.

You should expect that AMO's "Local Share, Local Say" advocacy during the election to continue.

Local Say is about the policy and regulations that do not work for us.

We need to see Queen's Park move beyond the one-size fits all approach.

To streamline and eliminate reporting red tape for municipal governments.

I bet each of you could identify more than one regulatory requirement that is not helpful and does not advance service delivery.

In fact – if you have examples, please send them to AMO so that we can add to our list. Please – fill up our Executive Director, Pat Vanini's email!

Local Share is about our fiscal sustainability. Property taxes are not going to do it – unless they increase well beyond the rate of inflation.

The scope of the challenge is vast – it shows a \$4.9 billion annual need for ten years to close the gap.

Clearly, it requires a solution that is beyond the property tax.

We have called for a 1% HST dedicated to municipal infrastructure.

Many of you will have heard about this already from AMO communications, presentations to your councils and to NOMA and FONOM.

It is a big and bold ask. It would benefit every municipal government.

We do have support from other municipal organizations, such as ROMA, NOMA, and FONOM.

As well, council by council, community by community, we are steadily achieving broad consensus.

Yes – asking for a percentage share of provincial revenue would be an easier ask.

We do not see how the province's finances would support this.

We would also be at the mercy of their own fiscal priorities.

My colleagues in Saskatchewan have direct experience with give and take of a share of provincial tax revenue.

We have done three polls over the course of the last 2 years. The public support a dedicated municipal HST for infrastructure.

They do not support cuts or increases to property taxes. They get it.

As I said before, Local Share/Local Say campaign is not going away.

Now to my important ask of you.

While we have had growing support for new revenue source that works for all municipal governments, we will especially need your help come December when new faces will be joining councils.

To be clear, I am only asking that you help us to reach out to your new colleagues to help us inform them of the problem and what could be a solution.

In the dozens and dozens of meetings across the province, we have asked elected officials to focus on the concept – to try on the idea and see how it fits.

As well, reaching out to local MPP's of all political stripes, whether in the government or not, would be helpful to them know your support of Local Share/Local Say.

We have a wealth of resources available on the AMO website.

Local Share videos. Tells the story simply.

There are detailed reports with the best history on municipal finance and the background on the download, upload and other municipal financial information.

There is a research and options report.

I would go as far as to say each of the three reports should be mandatory reading for any councillor, new or returning.

We have developed a principled, illustrative 1% HST allocation for every municipal government.

It reflects capacity and need in a way that demonstrates how this could work and answer the question – what is the possible benefit for me.

Helping people understand is our number one goal. So I hope you can help us.

I know this is a bigger and bolder option. Many stars need to align for this to become a reality.

Important matters require time, focus and effort.

Therefore, we will continue our advocacy on Local Share and Local Say.

We will continue to pursue policy areas, which will help sustainability.

And we will try to prevent government policy outcomes that impinge sustainability.

And yes, and I now this will come as a surprise to you, that provincial policies made do not always account for the needs of municipal governments.

We are always sure to remind the Queen's Park policy makers that 'one size doesn't fit all'.

The unique needs of the north still need to be accounted for in policy and funding decisions.

AMO acknowledges that there is a crucial role played by DSSABs and municipal governments who perform a service system management role in areas such as housing and childcare.

The role has evolved significantly since the early days of local service realignment in the 90's.

Service managers clearly contribute to building healthy and resilient communities in a number of important ways.

They are not just engaged in social development but also play a role to foster economic development.

You do this by providing services that support workforces in your communities.

This is accomplished with the challenges of serving large, geographically dispersed areas.

System management as you all know is much more than just ensuring service delivery.

We all know that a great deal of effort goes into planning and managing responsive services in your communities.

That is why the municipal service system management role is so vital, especially in the north.

We often hear about the lack of provincial planning in areas like employment services and mental health and addictions.

You are uniquely positioned on the ground in your communities to inform that service planning. This needs to be impressed upon Queen's Park.

Now I can provide a few updates about things about AMO is working on in regard to health and social services.

First, I would like to talk about AMO's Health Task Force. They are currently developing a policy paper that we are planning to distribute to our members and the provincial government later this year.

The Task Force is driven by concern that the municipal role in health is increasing in ways that may be inappropriate and not adequately funded.

The paper will cover a lot of ground on municipal cost shared services like public health, long-term care, and emergency medical services.

We are also looking at issues around municipal contributions to hospitals and physician recruitment incentives.

It will also look at recommendations on broader community interests ranging from addressing the opioid crisis to increasing accessibility for residents with disabilities to the impacts of cannabis legalization.

There will also be a specific focus on the addressing the health needs of Indigenous Peoples especially in the northern context.

Concerning funding, AMO is of the opinion that health services are a provincial responsibility and as such, the cost-shared programs should be funded adequately.

For example, AMO has called upon the Province to properly fund ambulance services by paying for the actual costs of delivery, not just the deemed eligible costs.

AMO has also called upon the province to fully fund things like the drugs needed to treat opioid overdoses by our paramedic first responders. It should not be paid for out of the 50-50 cost shared formula.

Also on EMS, AMO has been advocating to the province to accelerate improvements to ambulance dispatch as lives are at stake.

We are also holding firm that the Province must address the costs of non-urgent inter-facility transfers.

On the latter, AMO has asked that third party operators provide non-urgent inter-facility transfers like they do in much of southern Ontario.

Many talk about the benefits of community paramedicine.

AMO supports an expansion as long as it is fully funded 100% by the province as it is primary care.

This, and more, will be detailed in the policy paper.

Rest assured, it will capture the northern perspective as the task force has northern representatives including Al Spacek, Norm Gale the City Manager for Thunder Bay and two DSSAB CAO's - Dan McCormick and Don Studholme.

On another topic –housing - we understand that social housing has become de facto supportive housing for persons with complex needs including mental health and addictions.

This cannot continue. It is not sustainable.

The Province needs to build more supportive housing units and at the same time fund community health services to support successful tenancies in social housing with joint accountability for outcomes.

Also on housing, we now have an agreement in place between the federal and provincial governments so we will start to see new funding flowing to Ontario. Our task ahead is to identify municipal priorities, including northern needs, to guide these investments. AMO will be working with NOSDA closely on this in the days ahead.

So there is a need, and opportunity for ongoing collaboration between all of our respective associations on a number of fronts to improve the delivery of human services and also to address fiscal sustainability.

I know AMO staff will continue working with the other municipal associations on policy development and advocacy.

One of the things that our Board likes to hear is that we are aligned on key messages as much as we can.

It makes for a more effective municipal voice to Queens Park.

In closing, I would like to remind you that in August, AMO will be having our own conference in Ottawa. I invite you to attend. It will be our 119th annual gathering.

It will likely be the first event at which the new provincial government – Premier Ford and his Cabinet Ministers will interact with municipal governments.

It will be an important event.

The August conference will also mark the end of my two-year tenure as AMO's President. It is a tremendous honour to represent municipal governments.

I have witnessed the diversity of our communities first hand.

Our communities add up to a great province.

It is the sum of its parts. Those parts are crucial to provincial well-being.

Together - AMO, NOSDA, NOMA and FONOM – can continue to work together in common cause to represent the unique needs of the north.

Thank you for inviting me to provide remarks to you today, and thank you for the work that you do every day to serve your local residents.