

**AMO President Jamie McGarvey Remarks
2019 AMO AGM and Annual Conference
Monday, August 19 at 10:15 AM
Canada Hall 1, Shaw Convention Centre**

Check against delivery.

Good morning ... and welcome.

Bonjour.

Aanii Boozhoo.

It's a pleasure to provide you with an update on your Association's efforts to represent Ontario's municipal governments.

What you see here over three days is a snapshot of the role that AMO serves every day.

People are enjoying summer.

The Legislature will not be back in session until the fall.

Things appear to be relatively quiet.

However, looks can be deceiving.

The spring Budget has kept us busy. It laid out a plan for cuts including some for 2019.

The government has agreed not to do those cuts.

It left questions about future years.

The spring Budget also referenced a significant number of policy reviews.

Aggregates, ambulances and animal welfare.

Policing and public health.

Social assistance reform.

The list goes on. They are reviewing joint and several liability.

That's good.

Our insurance burden needs to be more balanced, practical and fair.

We are working on that.

Other reviews have raised significant concerns, such as the restructuring of public health.

We're working on that as well.

As quiet as the summer may seem, AMO has been busy... day in and day out.

And things are happening.

Last week we received news about cannabis funding and the blue box program.

For years, AMO has been promoting greater producer responsibility for waste management.

If you want to reduce waste, improve packaging, and assign costs fairly – transfer the cost and responsibility over to people who can make the packaging... and can change it.

Move it from tax payers, over to waste producers and consumers.

The Ontario Government will do just that... over the next 6 years.

Doing the right thing on waste will also reduce municipal costs by about \$130 million dollars annually.

This gives us space to work on organics.

We certainly didn't get here overnight, or by accident.

AMO can make the walk from AMO's office to Queen's Park blindfolded.

We walk it every day...

Working hard for members – and securing important changes like this.

Meanwhile, our LAS business services arm create opportunities and builds solutions.

Insurance risks – like ransomware attacks – are a hot topic.

LAS is doing more than just bringing us good information and best practices.

It is working with cyber experts and insurers to create practical tools for you.

Tools that will help protect municipal governments, and keep services running, if you are hit.

Add that to their string of successful programs and initiatives.

Like energy savings...

Smarter and more affordable lighting for rinks and recreation centres...

And better returns on your investments, through ONE Investment.

AMO also administers the federal gas tax program in Ontario.

In July, AMO distributed \$970 million worth of federal infrastructure funding.

That number includes the one-time doubling of the fund for 2019.

We got that money into your hands quickly.

Efficient administration has saved you \$12 million.

That \$12 million is going back to you – to build more, and achieve more.

And in November, we will distribute the remaining 2019 allocation.

Staff at AMO – and LAS – do great things for us, and it is appreciated.

Please joining me in thanking them with a round of applause.

I also want thank my fellow Board members.

Service on AMO's Board requires time and effort.

Especially when our province is so large and diverse.

The Board's broad range of perspectives makes us stronger.

We are all different – but we work together well.

We speak and listen respectfully. We look for solutions that bridge differences.

We work together to serve all of our members and communities well. As surprising as that may sound, it is not surprising to those of us who have been around municipal council chambers for many years.

I am merely describing how municipal councils operate, when they are operating at their best.

AMO is as strong as you make us.

Your ideas and opinions are important to us.

For 120 years, AMO has been working to advance goals, solve problems, provide services and create opportunities.

AMO is proud to serve Ontario's municipal governments – and we are proud of what municipal governments do.

Municipal governments provide most of the front-line public services that the people of Ontario use most often... and we provide them on tight budgets.

By necessity, we value innovation... efficiency... collaboration... teamwork... problem solving... and practical common sense.

That's why we are all here.

This is more than a municipal conference.

Our Provincial and Federal peers are also here to work with us.

And I'm pleased to say that we're building stronger connections with Indigenous partners.

Everyone is welcome here... and we appreciate everyone who believes in being here.

Tout le Monde est bienvenue...

Alors nous apprécions tous ceux qui pense qu'ils devraient être ici.

We are all here to serve the people of Ontario to the best of our ability...

And we serve Ontario best when we all work well together.

In a few moments I will introduce Premier Ford. It is important that he is here along with all of Cabinet.

They will host as many as 600 delegation meetings.

This all speaks to the importance of our relationships – and the complexity of our connections. We both face challenges, and AMO believes we should face them openly and work together.

Because we serve the same taxpayers, the same constituents, and the same communities.

It is fair to say that solutions to these challenges will have a common set of ingredients.

Those ingredients are time, money, innovation, and cooperation.

Successful changes always have these ingredients. We understand the province has some fundamental goals:

More efficient government services.

Greater respect for Ontario's tax payers.

And fiscal sustainability.

We know these goals.

Same taxpayer.

Same constituents.

Same communities.

We cannot achieve these things with abrupt, unilateral changes... and it will take more than simple belt tightening to make things better.

Working together, we can avoid unnecessary turmoil, and respect the essential front line-services that our governments deliver.

We can get to places where we both want to go, but it will take investments in time... money... innovation... and cooperation.

It always does.

To be frank, we believe that greater cooperation with Ontario's municipal governments can help the Ontario government to achieve more.

We... are worth talking to.

If the goal is saving money, improving services for people, and showing greater respect for taxpayers, we wouldn't start with public health or paramedic services.

Municipalities collect the smallest share of tax revenue – and we have the weakest legislative authority.

It stands to reason that we have done a good job of finding efficiencies and innovation in areas where we have some control.

Paramedic services are loaded with innovations and efficiencies.

It stands to reason that opportunities for improvement can be found in areas where municipal hands are tied.

Working together – in true partnership – we would serve people better...

And make better use of tax dollars.

In a meeting with the Premier earlier this month, I pointed to the role that the Treasury Board serves in the Ontario government.

Simply put, Treasury Board looks at the big picture, to keep the Ontario Government on Budget.

It makes sure that all the little decisions made by Ministries are manageable in the short term... and fiscally sustainable in the long term.

That makes sense.

They should approach impacts on municipal government with the same due diligence.

Someone in the provincial order of government should have a clear mandate to make sure that ministry decisions are within our means.

For years, we have been sounding the alarm over cumulative impacts, with a steady flow of changes, coming out of one ministry after another.

Usually, we have to make do with less.

Deliver more...

Or follow a new process that's more expensive.

23 ministries make decisions that affect us.

Treasury Board makes sure their decisions respect the Ontario government's budget.

Someone should make sure they respect municipal budgets, and our fiscal sustainability.

Let's improve services together. Let's do a good job of respecting tax payers.

The province needs to proceed carefully... and it needs to be willing to change.

It needs to be willing to invest money where money is needed.

And yes, that may require us to reduce spending somewhere else.

Working together we can identify practical changes that reduce spending.
Give us time to innovate...

Let us approach things differently.

Work with us – in strong collaboration.

Recognize that our frustration is not opposition to change.

In my meeting with Premier Ford this month...

And in many meetings with Ministers over the past several months...
I have emphasized our interest in good government, fiscal sustainability and quality services.

I emphasized that municipal governments are an effective partner.

Much has been said about the fact that Minister Clark is a former mayor and a former AMO President, but it is helpful.

He is accessible and committed, and our discussions are meaningful.

AMO is committed to maintaining strong channels of communications between our two orders of government.

Our association exists, in large part, to make sure that we always have quality conversations.

We will always approach our relationship that way.

AMO is not an organization that fights Queen's Park from the lawn.

AMO sits at a shared table, and speaks respectfully, face-to-face.

That's the spirit of this conference... whether it is discussions in hallways, the Minister's forum, or in hundreds of delegation meetings.

Last August, when Premier Ford was introduced, the comment was made that the new government wasted no time in getting down to business.

In hindsight, maybe it was a bit of an understatement given the pace and scope of change so far in 2019.

It was also one of his first appearances as Premier, and we appreciate that he placed a priority on addressing AMO delegates.

In the meeting with the Premier, we spoke about some of the thoughts that I just covered.

We spoke about the need to look at the big picture, and to ensure that his government is paying attention to how its decisions impact municipal budgets.

We talked about ways to monitor and manage cumulative impacts on municipal government, related to costs, mandates and reporting requirements.

We spoke about our long-standing efforts to draw attention to these concerns – with every previous provincial government.

I told him that we need the former municipal councillor... who understands the unnecessary frustrations... and we need a Premier who will fix them.

We also talked about how he needs our ideas and solutions – and how we can better set the provincial-municipal table going forward.

Lastly, we talked about how intently people would be listening to what he and his ministers had to say at this AMO Conference.

I know I will be listening intently.

Before we welcome Premier Ford onto our stage, I just want to say that it is an honour to serve as your President.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Please welcome, the Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario.