



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Niagara-on-the-Lake is Breaking New Ground with Powerful Discussions at ROMA**

**For Immediate Release**

**February 7, 2023**

Town Council members and Staff represented Niagara-on-the-Lake at the 2023 Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) Conference in Toronto from Sunday, January 22 to Tuesday, January 24, 2023.

Town representatives met with four provincial ministries to advocate for local priorities such as public infrastructure financing, food security, land-use planning, and environmental protection.

The following Town representatives participated in the delegation meetings:

- Deputy Lord Mayor/Councillor Erwin Wiens
- Councillor Gary Burroughs
- Marnie Cluckie, Chief Administrative Officer
- Rome D'Angelo, Director of Operations
- Darren MacKenzie, Manager of Public Works
- Kirsten McCauley, Director of Community Development and Services
- Victoria Steele, (A) Town Clerk and Manager of Legislative Services

"This year's ROMA Conference facilitated enlightening and engaging discussions and once again provided an opportunity to effectively advocate for local issues," stated Deputy Lord Mayor Erwin Wiens. "Thank you to the Ministers and Parliamentary Assistants for their great advice, expertise and leadership throughout the Conference. I am looking forward to seeing how Niagara-on-the-Lake's delegations' topics and discussions will be addressed in the future."

"The ROMA Conference provides Staff and members of Council with a strong platform to foster partnership with other rural municipalities and elected Provincial government representatives," stated CAO Marnie Cluckie. "In addition to delegations with Ministries, the conference offers an extensive program and engaging keynote speakers that provide current and innovative information on issues affecting all of rural Ontario. I am grateful Niagara-on-the-Lake has the opportunity to participate in this wonderful conference each year."



The following is a high-level summary of topics discussed during the delegations.

**Niagara-on-the-Lake Irrigation Systems Strategy and Master Plan – Parliamentary Assistant (PA) Vijay Thanigasalam, Ministry of Infrastructure**

All Town representatives attended a delegation with PA Thanigasalam, continuing to advocate for the Town's unique municipal infrastructure system to be eligible for infrastructure opportunities and grants. Funding requests to improve Irrigation System GIS mapping and Bluetooth metering were highlighted during this delegation. The Town is committed to working with the Ministry of Infrastructure by providing data to value the irrigation system asset and advocating to expand the definition of core infrastructure.

**Energy Conservation and Demand Management (ECDM) Plans – Minister Todd Smith, Ministry of Energy**

In a joint delegation, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Township of West Lincoln met with Minister Smith to discuss ECDM Plans and climate change resources. Representatives from the Township of West Lincoln included Mayor Cheryl Ganann, Councillor Joann Chechalk, Councillor William Reilly, Regional Councillor Albert Witteveen and CAO Bev Hendry. This joint delegation included discussion surrounding pressures and competing priorities placed on rural municipalities to meet the demands of ECDM and Climate Change Plans. The primary request was for the Province to implement a grant program to provide funding for resources to advance ECDM and Climate Change Plans, similar to the Municipalities for Climate Innovation delivered by Federation of Canadian Municipalities in 2017.

**Niagara-on-the-Lake Irrigation Systems Strategy and Master Plan – Minister Lisa Thompson, Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs**

Representatives from the Town met with Minister Thompson to highlight steps the municipality has taken since her onsite visit in August 2022. The delegation emphasized the need for irrigation systems to be considered public infrastructure and identified the innovative project of bluetooth metering and the need to improve GIS mapping. The Minister was specifically motivated by the fact Niagara-on-the-Lake could produce more food if access to water improved.

**Bill 23 and Cultural Heritage – Minister Michael Ford, Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism**

Town Council and Staff met with Minister Michael Ford to discuss the impacts that Bill 23 will have on heritage conservation and tourism. Discussions surrounding maintaining the Town's heritage character, conserving important heritage buildings, and building Niagara-on-the-Lake's tourism sector took place. The need for additional Staff and



specialized expertise, in addition to balancing the quantity of housing with quality of development, was also discussed. Discussion ensued about protecting meaningful heritage, prioritizing issues, and capacity for the municipal register.

ROMA is the rural branch of Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) that advocates for policies and programs. Keynote speakers included the Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario, Honourable Sylvia Jones, Ontario's Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Honourable Steve Clark, Ontario's Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Honourable Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Breakout sessions included topics such as short-term accommodations, indigenous relations, managing municipal risk, and asset management.

Town representatives were proud to represent Niagara-on-the-Lake at the 2023 ROMA Conference.

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