

Advocacy Update

Presented To:	Finance and Administration Committee
Meeting Date:	July 13, 2021
Type:	Managers' Reports
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Recommended by:	Chief Administrative Officer

Report Summary

This report provides information about recent government relations and advocacy efforts made on Greater Sudbury's behalf by Mayor Bigger through his membership in various municipal associations.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP)

This report describes actions that relate to several elements of the Strategic Plan, but are most directly related to Goal 1.3, "Maximize value of relationships with provincial and federal governments to support community infrastructure goals".

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

Executive Summary

The City of Greater Sudbury is a member of a variety of associations that advocate on behalf of the municipal sector. Mayor Bigger represents the City at several of these associations, which meet periodically throughout the year.

Recently, several of these associations – the Northern Ontario Large Urban Mayors (NOLUM), the Ontario Big City Mayors (OBCM), the Regional/Single-Tier Mayors and Chairs of Ontario (RSTCAO), and the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) – met and discussed a variety of issues. These meetings produced several resolutions calling for action from the Federal and Provincial governments, described in this report, that have a direct effect on the quality of life within every community.

Background

The NOLUM mayors met June 2, 2021 and discussed a variety of issues. Comprised of the five largest municipalities in Northern Ontario, NOLUM members regularly meet and discuss issues of common interest, shared advocacy opportunities and information that supports "best practice" policy and process development.

OBCM, formerly the Large Urban Mayors Caucus of Ontario, met June 18, 2021. Chaired by Barrie Mayor

Jeff Lehman and Vice Chair, Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie, OBCM's membership includes mayors from 29 Ontario single-tier and lower-tier cities with populations of 100,000 or more. OBCM engages in policy debates that impact Ontario cities through policy development, discussion and partnerships.

The RSTCAO group also met June 18, 2021. Chaired by Regional Chair Karen Redmond of Waterloo Region, the RSTCAO's membership includes Chairs and Mayors from Ontario's Regions and Single-tier cities with populations exceeding 100,000.

NOSDA held its annual general meeting (AGM) June 22, 2021. NOSDA was formed to develop a cooperative and collaborative approach with municipalities and municipal organizations to facilitate the consolidated municipal delivery of services in Northern Ontario. It offers a political forum for reviewing and developing both policies and program delivery issues from a northern perspective.

Analysis

These meetings addressed several issues:

1. Mental Health and Addiction
2. Residential School Unmarked Burial Sites
3. City of London, Ontario Terror Attack
4. Infrastructure Funding Flexibility
5. National Child Care Plan

Mental Health and Addiction

The NOLUM mayors noted the high incidence of opioid use in their communities and called on both the federal and provincial governments to address service and infrastructure needs that address this still-growing problem (see **Appendix A**). This was echoed at the NOSDA AGM, where three resolutions were passed calling on the Premier of Ontario to respond (see **Appendix B**). In particular, it called for:

- The Ministry of Health to establish a joint partnership committee with the Ontario Health agency and NOSDA members, recognizing the Service System Manager role of the NOSDA members, to ensure direct funding is secured by the mental health and addictions service providers;
- Continued advocacy by NOSDA for mental health and addictions system capacity so that those Mental Health Associations and organizations can and will provide appropriate support to community housing residents that require service;
- An "all of government" approach to manage and find solutions to the public health crisis in the North;
- The establishment of a Northern Ontario Joint Partnership table to manage the public health crisis in Northern Ontario; and,
- Collaboration with the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) and Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM) to work with the province to deal with this public health crisis.

While the provincial government has the lead responsibility for mental health and addictions, OBCM also takes the view that collaboration and coordination are needed. The group passed a motion (see **Appendix C**) endorsing a policy and calling on senior governments to work with its members on implementation. This approach recognizes:

- Ontario municipalities deliver community health, income support and social services, recreation, housing, and policing services, all of which connect to mental health service delivery.
- Mental health and addictions cause some of the most serious challenges in our communities, and those who suffer from them are among those in greatest need.

A series of recommendations in a related position paper address specific calls for action, including:

- Structural recommendations to improve mental health services and ensure more Ontarians get the help they need, when they need it, and where appropriate;
- Support that helps improve and connect municipal services with community mental health services;
- Legislative and regulatory changes that reduce the harm of substance abuse and support system change, and
- Municipal leadership opportunities.

Implications for Greater Sudbury: Particularly over the last 15 months, municipal efforts to address the needs of Greater Sudbury's most vulnerable community members reinforce the urgency for all levels of government to coordinate their efforts and, importantly, do their part to address the complex issues associated with mental health and addiction. The NOSDA and OBCM motions align with NOLUM Mayors' call for senior government action to address the opioid crisis, particularly in northern Ontario.

These calls for action also align with local service changes City Council has been directing to address homelessness, transitional housing, supervised consumption and affordable housing. During the finalization of 2021 budget, Council approved a business case for the development of transitional housing and directed staff to prioritize this effort. Work on finding a suitable location continues. In June, Council also approved a process to establish a temporary supervised consumption site on a municipally-owned property at Energy Court.

Residential School Unmarked Burial Sites

OBCM passed a resolution expressing condolences and offering support to the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation and continuing to support our local indigenous communities and organizations through addressing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It also expressed support for the funding of searches of all former residential school sites and the proposed Day of Mourning.

Implications for Greater Sudbury: Mayor Bigger moved this motion during the meeting. Expressing such support and committing to address the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is entirely aligned with local efforts to strengthen indigenous relations throughout our community.

City of London, Ontario Terror Attack

OBCM condemned the act of terrorism that occurred on June 6, 2021, in London, Ontario and expressed sincere condolences to the Afzaal family. Members expressed support for Mayor Holder of London and his community. They discussed the hate and islamophobia present in Ontario, and collectively condemned all forms of racism and islamophobia. They encourage participation in anti-Islamophobia events and activities.

Implications for Greater Sudbury: Council's Strategic Plan includes a goal of creating a healthier community. This includes advancing the city's Population Health agenda and, particularly, demonstrating that Greater Sudbury is a compassionate city. Condemning acts that demonstrate or promote hate not only aligns with the corporation's values, but it is also simply the right thing to do.

Infrastructure Funding Flexibility

OBCM called on the Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO) to work with the province on finding flexible approaches for municipal infrastructure financing. It also endorsed the Federation of Canadian Municipalities call for the federal government to continue providing stable, predictable infrastructure funding for Canadian cities. This stems from municipal efforts to respond to the directions provided by *O.Reg 588/17: Asset Management Planning for Municipal Infrastructure*, which calls for municipalities to have sustainable funding mechanisms in place for their key assets by 2024.

Implications for Greater Sudbury: Sustainable funding for infrastructure renewal is a universal, perennial issue for all municipalities. Provincial regulations that require increased data collection and reporting on municipal asset management plans will, without more funding options, place additional strain on municipal budgets and the limited revenue streams municipalities currently use. New financing options and continued financial support from senior governments for asset renewal and replacement are important for minimizing pressure on property taxpayers.

National Child Care Plan

NOSDA passed a resolution at its AGM calling for NOSDA to advise the Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education of its support for a National Child Care Plan. NOSDA indicated its interest in working with the Province in developing a responsive, affordable, and high quality early learning and child care system that recognizes the value and contribution of early years professionals.

Implications for Greater Sudbury: With the Federal Government's April announcement that it would commit up to \$30B in the development of a national early learning and child care strategy over the next five years, and that it will provide permanent ongoing funding of \$8.3B annually by 2025-26, there are significant new opportunities to support Council's Strategic Plan. Reduced fees in regulated child care and additional spaces for before- and after-school care have the potential to support both Council's "Economic Capacity and Investment Readiness" and "Create a Healthier Community" strategic plan goals.

Resources Cited

News release: Downtown Initiatives Undertaken by City of Greater Sudbury since the pandemic began

<https://www.greatersudbury.ca/city-hall/news-and-public-notice/2021/downtown-initiatives-undertaken-by-city-of-greater-sudbury-since-the-pandemic-began/>