



The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM) is a membership-based association that is the unified voice of Northeastern Ontario, representing and advocating on behalf of 110 cities, towns and municipalities. Our mission is to improve the economic and social quality of life for all Northerners and to ensure the future of our youth.

Agricultural Issues

Regulations and Support for Abattoirs in the North-east

The operation of abattoirs is important to support northern agriculture and the local economy.

FONOM has received reports of the inconsistent application of compliance requirements and that the requirements are cost prohibitive, to the point where some Northern abattoirs are up for sale or are facing closure.

Recently the Canada Meat Group Inc. in partnership with Bavarian Meats announced the construction of its new processing facility at the North Bay Airport Industrial Park in North Bay.

Ultimately, Bavarian is expecting to hire up to 15 new workers, while Canada Meat Group will create as many as 45 jobs.

The new facility will operate as a meat processing plant and cold storage facility, with the goal of increasing sales of Canada Meat Group's products, including Kosher and Halal meat products in Ontario, across Canada and globally. Their plans are to source local beef products from Northern Ontario, so it is important that compliance requirements are consistently applied, and the requirements are not cost prohibitive,

Recommendation:

FONOM requests the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs to continue to review compliance requirements and develop regulations for abattoirs that are reasonable and applied consistently in order to maintain the operation of these facilities in the north.



Agricultural Issues

Enforcement of Safety on Family Farms

FONOM through the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Township of Warwick Council has received information concerning the enforcement of safety on family farms.

FONOM is unaware of actions of this nature occurring in Northern Ontario, however we are concerned that this form of activism, if left unchallenged, could move north.

What is particularly concerning to FONOM, is that the Crown is withdrawing charges before trial after a significant OPP response paid for by local municipal taxpayers. Attacks on livestock farms and processing plants that go unchallenged open the door to more on-farm attacks and disruption at food suppliers.

Recommendation:

FONOM requests the Hon. Doug Downey, Minister of the Attorney General to work with his fellow MPP's and agricultural leaders to find a better way forward to ensure stronger enforcement of existing laws, or new legislation to ensure the safety of Ontario's farm families, employees and animals.

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Energy Issues

Electricity Pricing

Industries and municipalities in Northern Ontario continue to be challenged by high electricity costs which prohibits industrial development and is a significant cost to northern municipalities. Many industries that operate in the north, such as forestry and mining, are high-energy users and need to have lower energy costs to remain competitive.

FONOM is aware that The Ministry of Energy Northern Development and Mines held online consultations earlier this year as well as sector-specific consultation sessions with key industries, including forestry, mining, and steel production.

What was the outcome of those consultations and what plans does the government have to lower electricity rates for northern industries?

Recommendation:

FONOM requests the government to lower electricity costs for northern industries and consider providing support to northern municipalities that have high electricity costs to operate municipal facilities such as municipal arenas.

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Finance Issues

Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF)

The OMPF is the major funding source for northern municipalities. A decrease in OMPF would mean an increase in municipal tax rates or a decrease in service levels, or both, which northern municipalities cannot withstand.

On February 13, 2019, former Finance Minister, Vic Fedeli sent a letter to municipalities indicating that the Ministry of Finance was working to finalize data updates to ensure the OMPF continues to be responsive to changing municipal circumstances and that they would consult with municipalities to ensure the OMPF program is sustainable and focused on the Northern and rural municipalities that need this funding the most.

The letter also indicated that the Ministry was committed to announcing 2020 allocations well in advance of the municipal budget year so that municipalities have appropriate time to plan.

On February 19, 2019, FONOM wrote to the former Minister of Finance Vic Fedeli thanking the government for its decision to maintain the current structure of the OMPF and transitional assistance for 2019 and offered to be part of, or facilitate consultations with northern municipalities who rely on the OMPF Funding to assist in providing services to their residents.

At this point in time, FONOM has not been part of any OMPF consultations and the 2020 municipal budget year is fast approaching.

Recommendation:

That the government provide a dedicated and consistent allocation of funds under the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund; and that FONOM be provided a seat at the Minister of Finance's consultations regarding the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund.

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Finance Issues

May 2019 Provincial Budget

On May 29, 2019 FONOM wrote to Premier Ford and Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister, Steve Clark thanking them for announcing that there would be no in-year cuts to public health, childcare, and ambulance services.

This was welcome news to northern municipalities that continue to face budget challenges due to losses in property assessment, aging infrastructure, youth outmigration and an aging population.

We understand that the government wants to see change and FONOM is willing to work with the government to resolve fiscal sustainability challenges without unduly impacting northern municipalities and service providers.

Recommendation:

FONOM would like the opportunity to discuss the financial challenges northern municipalities and services providers face either through AMO MOU process, or as part of individual municipal consultations as these services are of vital importance to northern municipalities due to vast geographical areas and extreme distances. FONOM also encourages the government to ensure that both northwestern and northeastern Ontario are equally awarded with any new centers of operation.

Finance Issues

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Resource Revenue Sharing

Provincial resource revenue sharing continues to be a request of northern municipalities where many of Ontario's resources are mined or harvested.

During the January 2019 ROMA Conference, the FONOM Executive met with the Hon. Greg Rickford, Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines. Discussed at that time was resource revenue sharing and several other issues important to northern municipalities.

Following that meeting, FONOM sent a letter to Minister Rickford reconfirming their interest in working with the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines (ENDM) to facilitate discussions between the government and northern municipalities on resource revenue sharing, the NOHFC program and energy costs to industry and municipalities in the north.

To date, FONOM has not received a response from the Ministry of ENDM regarding this request.

Recommendation:

That FONOM be involved in any future discussions by the government regarding ENDM initiatives such as resource revenue sharing; the NOHFC program, as well as energy costs to northern industries and municipalities.



Infrastructure Issues

Broadband and Cellular Service

As part of the 2019 Ontario budget, the government announced its intentions to invest \$315 million over the next five years for broadband and cellular expansion.

The investment included a \$150-million commitment for a new broadband fund intended to leverage private-sector funding along with support from other levels of government.

The fund, set to begin between 2020 and 2021, intends to drive investment and expansion to the communities targeted by the service improvement plan.

Other parts of the plan include a \$71-million commitment to a network improvement project for eastern Ontario as well as up to \$63.7 million in funding for a regional broadband project in southwestern Ontario which have recently been announced

When can northern municipalities expect to receive an announcement from the province about improvements to broadband and cellular expansion in northern Ontario?

Recommendation:

FONOM considers broadband and cellular service across all northern Ontario an essential service to enable future economic development and employment opportunities and requests the government to immediately invest in this important service.



Resource Issues

Support for the Forest Industry in Northern Ontario

FONOM is pleased to see the government's recent announcement promoting the use of sustainable renewable resources and its investment of \$5 million in Element5's new facility, the province's first cross laminated timber plant in St. Thomas, as well as its commitment to increasing the use of timber in the home building industry through the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan and the Housing Supply Action Plan.

For our part, FONOM President Danny Whalen has written to Waterfront Toronto regarding the proposed Quayside Project being considered for the Toronto waterfront encouraging the inclusion of wood as a major component of the project to show the importance and value of wood in today's construction sector and as a valuable commodity from Northern Ontario.

FONOM has also had a letter to the editor published in the Toronto Sun on July 24, 2019 encouraging the use of wood in the Sidewalk labs' proposal.

FONOM would like to see a vital link created as this project has the potential to impact not only Toronto, but also the communities in Northern Ontario that make up the backbone of Ontario's \$15-billion forestry sector.

According to their plan, it would source Canadian timber, including spruce trees from the boreal forests of Ontario, and work closely with foresters and sawmills to create building parts. Right now, that wood is shipped offshore for processing. Under this plan, it would be shipped to southern Ontario for processing.

The Sidewalk Labs proposal is not just about Toronto, but about the economic future of the entire province. Development projects are rarely ambitious enough to spread this kind of economic growth across the whole province, but this is a one-of-a-kind opportunity to bring innovation and prosperity to all Ontarians, not just those in Toronto.

Recommendation:

FONOM encourages the government to continue with its commitment to increasing the use of timber in the home building industry through the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan and the Housing Supply Action Plan and increasing the use of Northern Ontario timber in buildings, including the Sidewalk Labs project.



Transportation Issues

Provincial Oversight of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission

Of the issues that have a direct impact in northeastern Ontario, transportation is a constant topic of concern and FONOM believes, an opportunity. The Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC) provides vital rail and highway connections across the north with rail having a predominant presence in the northeast.

Recent discussions have come to FONOM's attention regarding the presence of the ONTC within the Ministry of Energy Northern Development and Mines.

FONOM questions if this is the best opportunity to grow the ONTC and if the needs of the residents of the north are best met with this current arrangement.

FONOM has in the past supported by resolution any action that would see the ONTC moved from the Ministry of Energy Northern Development and Mines to the Ministry of Transportation (MTO).

It is FONOM's belief that such a move would open financial benefits currently not available to the ONTC as well as allowing the rail service to assist in recharging our forestry sector and maintaining and growing our mining sector. Further, FONOM see's benefit in aligning passenger transportation services within the MTO and allowing coordinated planning with Metrolinx.

The MTO has a history of experience in northern transportation needs, as well as staff and equipment to engineer and construct transportation links. This engineering expertise and equipment resources could be of benefit to both the MTO and the ONTC and eliminate the duplication of resources. A sharing of tendering processes could also potentially reap further financial benefits.

The list of benefits from this realignment to both the ONTC and northern Ontario is lengthy and worth investigating. By moving this vital part of the Ontario economy to the MTO we will be better positioned to get our resources to global markets. We will also be better positioned to grow our northern economies; provide improved services for northern residents and strengthen the northern labour force.

Recommendation:

That the government move the accountability for the ONTC from the Minister of Energy Northern Development and Mines to the Minister of Transportation for fulfilling its legislative obligations, the management of its resources, and the standards it provides.



Transportation Issues

Going the Extra Mile for Safety (GEMS) Committee Pilot Project Proposal

For many years there have been calls for significant improvements to Highway 11 in Northern Ontario. The Solution is a 2+1 highway where there are 2 lanes in one direction and one lane in the other direction separated by a median barrier. This road profile changes from side to side allowing for passing opportunities for both directions on a regular basis.

The cost of this type of project is not prohibitive especially if implemented in an area already selected for normal upgrading and resurfacing. GEMS is promoting a pilot project of 20 to 25 km. Ireland began their 2+1 program with 4 separate pilot projects (total of 48kms) in various parts of the country.

The 2+1 model reduces fatalities and serious injuries in countries where it has been implemented. It is a model that is financially responsible and is very flexible to the geography of the road. It is a model that will improve the efficiency of the road and will reduce the number of road closures due to fatality investigations. It is a model that could be used in other parts of Ontario where similar traffic safety issues are present and a properly implemented pilot project on Highway 11 will give the entire province an opportunity to see the benefits of the 2+1 model.

The proposal is to implement a pilot project on Highway 11 at a suitable location between North Bay and Cochrane has been provided to the MTO and presentations have been given at a variety of Municipal Conferences across the Province where it has received overwhelming support.

Recommendation:

That the Ministry of Transportation commit to constructing a 2+1 highway improvement pilot project on Highway 11 at a suitable location between North Bay and Cochrane as a step toward improving road safety in northern Ontario.



Other Northern Items

FONOM Operational Funding Request

FONOM wants to reiterate our appreciation for the annual financial support that the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines provides to FONOM to offset the travel and meeting expenses of the Board.

This funding enables FONOM to serve as a sounding board on provincial government initiatives and a vehicle to consult with the 110 municipalities in northeastern Ontario.

FONOM Conference 2020

FONOM would like to invite the Premier and all members of cabinet to attend the FONOM Northeastern Municipal Conference. This annual conference is attended by municipal delegates from the 110 municipalities in Northeastern Ontario who use this opportunity to network, learn about municipal best practices and discuss issues important to Northerners.

The 2020 conference marks the 60th anniversary of the FONOM conference which is being cohosted with the City of Timmins on May 13-15, 2020.

A portion of the conference is reserved for a Ministers Forum. This is an opportunity for the government to talk about their accomplishments; plans for Northeastern Ontario and to take questions from delegates.