

September 7, 2022

AMO 2022 Annual Meeting

After two years, the Association of the Municipalities of Ontario resumed in-person meetings and seminars held this year in Ottawa August 15, 16th and 17th. Councillor Mike Jubb and I were the members of our Council in attendance representing the Township of Brock. Durham Region senior management and members of our neighbouring municipal councils were in attendance along with those representing municipalities from Ontario's far north to the corners of the south east and south west regions of this province. Over 1,700 Council and Staff were in attendance including Premier Ford with most of the provincial cabinet ministers and staff. Keynote speeches also included leaders of all the provincial parties.

The event, in part, keynote platform speakers followed by breakout seminars. One thing I have learned over the years is that attendees find that there are issues we have in common across the province, as well as issues geographically specific, and other issues along an urban/rural divide. I would encourage all members of council and senior staff to take the opportunity to attend AMO. The knowledge gained will improve efficiencies in Brock Township with the delivery of service to the residents who benefit by their representatives being updated on policy and procedures regarding every aspect of Municipal affairs. To put it bluntly, the tax savings, the knowledge and the implementation of product and service more than justifies the cost of attendance.

The following is a summary on various subjects that I attended.

Housing Crisis in Ontario

The Province of Ontario is attempting to address the shortage and affordability of housing. Municipalities are now tasked with carrying out fast tracking of development via Bill 109. Continued consultation is required to address what is a complete application for a development, when delays are caused by the developer, when other commenting agencies do not meet deadlines at the potential expense of the municipality and the potential of jamming the Ontario Land Tribunal system. There is a long list, and I suggest a good place to start is the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) on their Top Ten Housing Solutions & Affordability Recommendations. Included is some council delegation to staff for some of the more minor plans. Other potential changes is moving from paper based to cloud planning applications. The Association of Adjustments & Consent Authority suggest removal of exclusionary zoning, and to delegate more minor variances under jurisdiction of staff.

Additionally, Claire Dobbs, Planner and Director of Development Services for Township of South Frontenac notes, from a rural perspective, many rural municipalities, like Brock Township, do not have municipal services (ie: water & sewer) to support any development. An issue that the Province must address to ease the housing crisis.

Another idea is to permit upper tier municipalities establish CIPS and fund financial incentives for lower tier municipalities.

I did have an opportunity to discuss Brock issues with the seminar group, and later, with the Chair and board members of ROMA. As it turns out, they are fascinated with the development challenges in Brock. They are now aware that Brock has insufficient water & sewer to accommodate the planned growth. That growth is constrained to three village boundary limits as we are a 100% Green Belt municipality.

All are in agreement that there should be a sunset clause on approved plans. Also, water & sewer cannot be reserved and only be provided on a first come first served basis at the building permit stage.

In a closing note, Ontario has 100,000 approved lots for development that developers have not proceeded with at this point in time.

Site Plan Controls, Official Plan Review, and Climate Change

A recurring theme is addressing and adapting to climate change. Dr. Henstra, University of Waterloo, and the Climate Risk Research Group provided a state of the union. Stating the obvious they conclude we are currently at the beginning of warmer, wetter weather. We will experience warmer winters and our summers will experience double or triple "extreme heat" day events. Storms will overwhelm drainage and drought will increase the number of wildfires across the country contributing to greater and hydro demand. There will also be more heat related health challenges for our already over taxed medical system. Our historic settlement sites will change with increased evacuations and relocations. We will be required to respond to climate shocks, stress and must be adaptive.

With this changing environment, to mitigate change, the opportunity is to address these issues with construction controls so that development will be climate resistive and that municipal staff reports should be inclusive of a review and response to adapting any development and infrastructure changes to climate change mitigation.

Further that climate change is a key factor to be addressed in the Official Plan Review. Plans of subdivisions, zoning by-laws and development conditions for any new development must include climate change impact studies, storm water studies, and site controls that include bio-swales to slow the flow or mitigate off site movement of water. There should be target fees and credits to lessen climate change impacts. Also, just some examples, Municipalities can seize the opportunity to include in their site plans for stormwater charges and credits, wetland rehabilitation, green roofs, and street tree plantings.

Another issue that must be addressed is that the National Building Code and Ontario Building code are different and these differences need to be resolved.

LAS - Local Authority Services

Established as a non-profit corporation by AMO in 1992, LAS provides a number of services including bulk purchasing opportunities, risk management, energy price protection (hedging), and council training sessions. There are now opportunities for financial efficiencies with electronic signatures, e-permitting, speed enforcement cameras, ticketing, court processing and cyber security assistance. They will assist with setting up AMPS. All with no upfront costs or long term contracts. Also, a reminder, LAS provides municipal investment opportunities for over 50% of Ontario municipalities.

During the question period they confirmed my enquiry they are exploring a program to administer STR tickets and court proceedings.

LAS can be of great benefit to Brock Township and most definitely worth exploring.

Provincial Offences Court Modernization

Lisa Brooks, Municipal Court Managers Association, and employed at York Region provided an update. There are 52 POA courts in Ontario since the 2002 transfer from the Province. In total, there are 1.5 million annual appearances, that dispute rates are growing and that the need to modernize and streamlining is long overdue. Further, there have been no courts in session during the Pandemic with closures for 15 months and just re-opening in April 2022. COVID has amplified the backlog increasing operating costs versus diminished fine revenues. Now there is the transfer of Part III prosecutions and the cost increases to municipalities. Noted as well was that our fines are based on 2006 limits. Recommendation was made to add default fines to property taxes.

I would strongly Recommend the Township reconsider by-law enforcement tickets, AMPS along with STR ticketed offences with the eventual potential for LAS to do the collections and court appearances.

Short Term Rentals

I had the opportunity to discuss the subject of STRs with three Georgian Bay municipalities. They are willing to discuss their solutions to ghost hotels. Basically, STRs that are not attended by the property owner are considered commercial business. As a result, they do not conform to municipal by-laws and are not permitted. Others, have by-laws with an outright ban. The only appeal was by one property owner who was advised by the "presiding" Judge to withdraw the complaint as it will be a long and costly process. The property owner withdrew and the municipality to this day, has no STRs. I will be looking further into this for council and staff information. Awaiting by-laws for review.

Should note, that most waterfront communities had huge issues with STRs during 2021 however, with the normalizing of travel, the complaints have dropped dramatically in 2022.

Bon Air Long Term Care

Just prior to the provincial government dropping writ calling for an election, Arch Corporation received an Ontario government grant for a new build doubling the number of residents that will be accommodated and also a doubling of staff and local job opportunities. As we are aware, Bon Air faced a closure in the next few years as the facility no longer meets provincial standards. As representatives of Arch were to be in attendance at AMO, I took the opportunity to request Laurie Scott, MPP to host a breakfast meeting. This took place on Monday August 15th. At my invitation, John Presta, Commissioner of Durham Works attended the group to address the issue of water and sewer and the solutions required for the new build. Brian Bridgeman, Commissioner of Durham Planning provided a written report on requirements for any changes to Durham OP and Brock zoning by-law amendments. Everyone left the meeting understanding what is needs to be done to assure a successful build project. I will keep everyone posted as information is available.

CONCLUSION

There are many opportunities presented in this report that affects just about all of the services provided by the Township of Brock. My hope is that all opportunities are reviewed, and where appropriate, be reflected in a Core Services Review, Strategic Plan Review, Asset Management Review, and Departmental Future Needs Forecast. Hopefully, these opportunities will be explored early in the next term of council.

Respectfully submitted,

John Grant

Mayor, Township of Brock