

The Corporation of the Township of Brock

Councillor Conference Report

Report Prepared by: Regional Councillor Jubb

Date: 25 Jan 2023

Conference Name- ROMA

Conference Date and Location - 22-24 Jan, 2023 in Toronto, ON

About the ROMA annual conference

I had the pleasure of attending the Rural Ontario Municipal Association 2023 Conference. Again, this year, it was an extremely valuable information and learning experience which saw over 1,500 municipal elected officials from all over the province attend. I attended many sessions throughout the 48-hour period. As always, I find that the networking is of utmost importance. Whether it is talking to Ministers, Mayors, other council members or senior staff, I learned so much of how business is done throughout the province, at the municipal level. Some examples are Bill 23, STR's, development charges reviews, roles and responsibilities and infrastructure issues. All issues that are front and center in Brock. Again, it is very rare to have the access to so much knowledge in one room. Educationally, I will highlight some of the key sessions I attended and some important conversations I had throughout the two days.

Overview of many sessions attended and key learnings-

- Opening Keynote: ***Jesse Wentz, Broadcaster, Indigenous Advocate, Pop Culture Philosopher Unreconciled: Making Meaningful Change***

In this explosive talk, Jesse Wentz brings to life his national bestselling book *Unreconciled: Family, Truth, and Indigenous Resistance*. Using stories from his life and his family's history Jesse takes stock of the current state of truth and reconciliation in Canada, the challenges that exist to achieving both truth and reconciliation and what can be done to further the process. Using his experience advocating for and creating space for First Nation, Inuit and Métis people in the arts sector, Jesse will explore how companies, organizations, institutions and governments can create meaningful change for Indigenous people and themselves. Jesse will touch on themes of sovereignty and self-determination, systems change, and decolonization. This talk is appropriate for those looking to take a deep dive into truth and reconciliation, to have their ideas challenged, and those willing to face the challenges ahead.

Short-Term Accommodations

This was by far the most informative session I attended at ROMA. STR's are an on-going issue in Brock, however, we have taken control of the issue with our many by-law amendments and increase in staffing. Although we still see some issues, the main problems encountered in 2020-2021 have been drastically reduced. With this said, we heard from the CAO of Tay Township and a senior staff member from Prince Edward County. These municipalities are flooded with STR's. It is estimated that Tay Township may have upwards of 700 and Prince Edward County well over 800. The pandemic caused an explosion in STR's due to travel restrictions, such as out of province travel which resulted in travellers seeking weekend getaways, just north of the GTA. All municipalities I talked to agree that 2022 saw much less stress on accommodation related issues as travel restrictions were eliminated. It was noted that there is a tourism and economic benefit that STR's do play. Lastly, Tay Township advised that they sought legal advice and that STR's are deemed as residential uses and that they are currently at the OLT (Ontario Land Tribunal) with parties from both sides of the issue.

Blue Box Transition and the Circular Economy

AMO, ROMA and municipal governments across Ontario are pleased that the provincial government finalized the regulation to move the Blue Box to full producer responsibility. This approach makes those who make and sell products responsible for recycling their goods and packaging. The finalized regulation was announced on June 3, 2021, and implementation will begin in July 2023. Producers will need to provide province-wide accessibility and targets by 2026. The final regulation includes the following:

- a province-wide common collection system that transitions all current municipal programs and expands service to:
 - all communities regardless of size (except Far North)
 - all residential dwelling types
 - all schools
 - all publicly run retirement homes and long-term care facilities, and
 - more public spaces
- an enhanced standardized list of materials that will need to be collected and recycled
- high, progressive, and enforceable targets
- certainty for planning to ensure a seamless transition.

The above excerpts are from AMO. During the session at ROMA, these main points were discussed in detail. I support this new program as it puts the responsibility on the producers of their packaging. It was noted how many large companies use excessive packaging for their products. The Region of Durham is currently working with contractors to fully understand how this transition is going to roll out for curbside pickup of residential and commercial establishment. I will update as more information becomes available.

Supporting Seniors in Rural Communities

Supporting seniors in rural communities is an extremely important aspect of any healthy municipality. Issues such as transit, food security, social services and housing are just a few of the issues that effect our seniors in Brock, and the Region of Durham as a whole. It is important for elected officials to address these issues. The session included a presentation from Tay Valley Township in eastern Ontario. Tay Valley is a small municipality that lacks many basic services; however, they have been very effective in obtaining upper-level government grants to assist in senior assistance programs and services. Below is a excerpt from Tay Valley:

“Tay Valley Township has received a \$54,000 Inclusive Communities Grant from the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility to begin implementing the Township’s *Age-Friendly Community Plan*, to support the emerging needs of its diverse senior’s population.

The Township’s *Age Friendly Community Plan* addresses all aspects of community life from transportation, housing, and outdoor spaces to communication and social inclusion to ensure seniors can participate. The Plan was created by a working group of residents from across the Township and was approved by Council in 2017”.

This is just a small piece of what a small, rural municipality is doing to assist and support seniors that are secluded due to geography and available recourses. Although Brock is part of the Region of Durham, I do feel that many services could use additional resources and as Regional Councillor I plan on advocating for just that over this term of council.

MPAC (Municipal Property Assessment Corporation)

The lunch session on MPAC was very informative and explained how assessments are carried out in the province. Main point to note is that MPAC is responsible for home assessments in Ontario and not the municipality. Assessments are currently on hold by the province. It is important to note that if a property assessment goes up by a certain percentage, your taxes do not go up the same amount. There is a ratio for this that uses the average home value in Brock. It is anticipated there will be many questions on the assessments once released and MPAC will be available to answer questions of council and the public at a future council meeting. Lastly, a very important point that was relayed was that if a resident feels their assessment is over valued, there is a re-assessment process you can request from MPAC.

OFATV (Ontario Federation of All Terrain Vehicles)

I had a great conversation with representatives from the Ontario Federation of All Terrain Vehicles. They are very interested in starting a trail system in Brock. This would promote tourism, economic development as well as add a further level of recreation in Brock. More to follow in the future as this will require residents to start a local ATV association. With the yearly membership fee of \$150, you are able to use all trail systems within the OFATV circuit. In return, the OFATV provides guidance, insurance and help with land rights agreements.

Summary

All and all, I cannot stress how important ROMA is to serving members of council. Programming is very different, year by year, and is intended specifically for elected officials. It is important to note that this does come as a cost to the taxpayer, however, I firmly believe the knowledge obtained saves the municipality in the long run. We are not reinventing the wheels in many issues and the information learned can save many hours of staff time and resources.

Recommendations

Move that this report be received for information.

Regional Councillor Jubb

Reviewed by,

Ingrid Svelnis
Chief Administrative Officer