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September 3, 2013

AMCTO LEGISLATIVE EXPRESS

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What's New?

AMO Conference Update

Many of Ontario's municipally elected officials gathered in Ottawa for the Annual AMO Conference between August 18th - 21st along with a number of political and administrative representatives from the Province. Several issues directly impacting the municipal sector were discussed and debated throughout the few days. Some of these items are highlighted below and the remarks from Ontario's Premier and Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing are available below for those not able to attend:

- [Premier of Ontario - Kathleen Wynne](#)
- [Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing - Linda Jeffrey](#)

Key legislative items arising from the AMO Conference included the following:

- Minister Linda Jeffrey indicated that there is "simply not enough run-way left" to undertake changes to the Municipal Election Act. Although AMCTO sought a series of [early reforms in 2012](#), we did not wish to see last minute changes that would create operational havoc for our members, as seen in December 2009.
- Attorney General John Gerretsen indicated that the issue of Joint and Several Liability could see movement over the next six months. AMCTO plans to monitor the progress on this file closely.
- Minister Jeffrey discussed how Municipal Asset Management Plans were critical tools for Ontario's municipalities. It appeared, the Minister was inferring a potential move to this becoming a mandatory requirement, as opposed to being tied to provincial infrastructure

funding as it currently stands. AMCTO will provide follow-up on this when more information becomes available and please do check out the related Asset Management article in the upcoming Municipal Monitor.

- This Fall MMAH is undertaking a consultation process to allow municipalities to provide feedback around land-use planning matters in an effort to make it simpler and more efficient. This includes the Ministry reviewing the process for land-use planning appeals at the OMB.

AMCTO will continue to monitor these issues and seek out appropriate partners in order to ensure the sector's professional interests are best represented.

Government Relations & Networking

Admittedly, I could learn a few things from our AMCTO Municipal Management Interns who were fortunate enough to schmooze with both Premier Kathleen Wynne and Commander Hadfield at the recent AMO Conference.

For those not (yet) following us on twitter, please view the tweeted picture with the [Premier](#) and [Commander Hadfield](#).

Legislative Matters

Government Statement on Exotic Animals

Following the recent tragedy in New Brunswick, three provincial ministries have gathered to evaluate "what rules are in place to avoid such tragedies in our own province". As responsibility for exotic animals in Ontario is a municipal responsibility, it will be important and appropriate that any multi-ministry discussion on the matter include municipal representation.

AMCTO plans to work with partners to ensure there is a strong operational understanding related to issues around the treatment and enforcement of exotic animals. Providing this understanding to government will be critical to ensure they fully appreciate the implications of any potential policy direction they choose to pursue.

For background information, please read the [Government's Media Release](#) from August 13th, 2013.

Ministry of Natural Resources - Invasive Species Discussion Paper

MNR has released its [discussion paper](#) on invasive species as a means to consult and seek feedback from stakeholders. The paper discusses several management tools along with the general policy direction and legislation. For those wishing to provide feedback, you can do so via the [EBR posting](#), which closes on September 11th, 2013.

OAPSB Sessions

The Ontario Association of Police Service Boards (OAPSB) is holding a seminar on OPP Municipal Policing on September 26-27 in Toronto. The target audience includes municipally elected officials and staff. For more information on this event, please visit the [OAPSB website](#).

Regional Electricity Planning

The OPA/IESO regional electricity planning report titled "[Engaging Local Communities in Ontario's Electricity Planning Continuum](#)" has been released. This report incorporates some municipal consultations and was drafted over the summer. It has now been provided to the Minister of Energy and can be accessed [here](#).

Ontario Combining Emergency Management Ontario, Office of the Fire Marshal

The Ontario government recently announced that it is merging Emergency Management Ontario and the Office of the Fire Marshal into one organization; now called the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management. Key focus areas identified for this new organization is to "work with municipal partners to deliver fire safety and emergency management programs and services" and "support municipal response efforts when called upon in an emergency".

For more information on this new organization, please read the government's [News Release](#).

Municipal Funding Programs

Ontario's Municipal Energy Plan (MEP) Program

The [MEP program](#) is a program designed to help municipalities better understand their local energy needs and conservation opportunities, set goals and develop implementation plans within their communities.

The program will provide successful applicants with funding for 50% of eligible costs, up to a maximum of \$90,000. The focus is placed on **supporting small and medium-sized municipalities** who have fewer resources to develop these plans.

The deadline for applications is November 29, 2013 at 12:00 noon.

Rural Economic Development (RED) Fund Renewed

The RED Program has been provided in response to municipal needs and will make up to \$4.5 million in available funding per year for three years. This funding is aimed at assisting rural communities in promoting and sustaining meaningful economic development.

For more information on eligibility, fund streams and the selection process, visit the Ministry of Rural Affairs [RED Program website](#).

Culture Development Fund

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport has introduced a new Culture Development Fund with an annual allocation of \$3 million. This program seeks to strengthen cultural organizations within Ontario's communities. Interested municipalities can learn more about full program details and requirements by visiting the [Grants Ontario website](#).

Municipal Information / Resources

OMKN & AMO Best Practices in Local Food Guide

AMO and the Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network (OMKN) have released a guide on best

practices for municipal local food initiatives. Click [here](#) to access the guide or visit the [AMO website](#) for more background on the development of this guide.

MOL Website – Links to Newsletters

AMCTO in working with the Ministry of Labour (MOL) is happy to inform members of potentially useful materials concerning occupational health and safety in Ontario. As such, the Ministry wanted to inform AMCTO members of three newsletters which may be of benefit to members or those within your municipality who have responsibility for occupational health and safety. For those interested, please visit [MOL Website](#) and view the newsletters contained on the left hand column and subscribe to those you feel will be of value to your organization.

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Premier's Remarks at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario Conference

August 19, 2013 11:30 a.m.

Hello, Bonjour, Ahnee, Bojoo. It's great to be back in Ottawa and here on the traditional territory of the Algonquin and Anishinaabe Peoples. Thank you, Russ, for that kind introduction.

It's wonderful to be here with all of you. I'm so pleased to be joined by so many outstanding members of my team. You will hear from some of them throughout the conference. I want you all to know how much I respect the work you do and how much I value your understanding of your communities. Our relationship is very important to me, and very instructive in the way I do my job and the vision of my government -- and that is what I am going to be talking about today.

Now, I realize that I am not the first person you've heard from today, and that this morning's opening speaker is a very, very tough act to follow. This year marks my eleventh visit to AMO, but I cannot compete with someone who has gone to space three times. I can't think of a better person to have chosen to open your conference than Chris Hadfield, especially as the theme of this year's event is "Inspiring and aspiring." Commander Hadfield inspired us all during his final mission to the space station, and he gave us something to aspire to as well. You may recall his one-of-a-kind musical performance. I was at the Science Centre with a room full of students when he did his final broadcast from the space station, and there was one lyric that stood out for me: "You can't make out borders from up here."

In that simple phrase, he reminded us just how interconnected we all are, when we focus on the wider perspective. He did it with the photographs he Tweeted as well, many of which showed our province lit up at night. From Kitchener-Waterloo, to Barrie, Ottawa and Windsor, you could see each municipality shining like the stars in a great constellation. He showed the brightness and the beauty of Ontario from where he sat, hundreds of miles above our province. As the first Canadian to command the International Space Station, Commander Hadfield saw your communities clearly, and how they relate in the big picture. I'm not in the space station, but as the first person to go from being Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to being the Premier of Ontario, I see those connections too.

Many of you may have worked with me in my previous roles with various ministries - from the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs --and

those roles have informed my perspective now that I hold this office. On many fronts I understand where you are coming from and what your needs are because I have listened to you and worked with you in every role I have held. I have not changed my priorities or my style of doing business since becoming Premier. Decisions based on evidence, community input and collaboration are the best decisions.

Today I will talk most about collaboration because it is a challenge, but evidence and community input inform my decision making. I have maintained my focus on finding collaborative solutions.

I firmly believe that strong relationships and open communication are the foundation on which we will create the best policies for your municipalities and the strongest province for all of our friends and families. That is why I will continue to build on the meaningful discussions we've had through our MOU meetings, and it's why I've been travelling extensively since I was sworn in last February.

I aspire to be the Premier for the whole province and that means recognizing that Ontario's 444 municipalities are an ecosystem, and that our province can only hope to succeed if each one of your municipalities can succeed and each one of your residents can prosper and thrive. We can't treat urban, suburban, rural or northern issues in isolation from each other, or say that one place or one demographic takes priority over another.

I want to build my relationship with Ontario's municipalities so that we can find ways to work together on our shared priorities. That's why I held the first cabinet meeting in the North in nearly 20 years in Sault Ste. Marie - thank you, Mayor Amaroso for hosting. It's why I have visited Mayor Brocanier in Cobourg and Mayor Laughren in Timmins, and toured Merrickville with Mayor Struthers so he can show me the issues that he is dealing with. I have met with Mayor Lehman of Barrie, Mayor Francis of Windsor and had breakfast with Mayor Watson here in Ottawa, so I understand their priorities and their concerns.

I have tried to get to as many of your municipalities as possible and to meet with people in communities across Ontario. This is what I need to do to figure out what you are up against, and what I can do to help. I know, for example, that because of the current state of our global economy, many of you are losing some of your tax base. That's a problem you face every day, and so my government is focused on building regional economies and creating jobs in all of your municipalities. My ministers and I have held jobs roundtables in many of your communities, and it is why we continue to invest in our successful regional development funds.

The Eastern Ontario Development Fund has helped create and protect more than 14,000 jobs in that region. And the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund supports more than 6,000 jobs.

From London to Belleville to Kingston, I have heard business leaders tell me again and again how vital these funds are to the health of the manufacturing sector. A company in Brockville is using this support to invest in new water treatment technologies so it can excel in the global marketplace. The technology they are building on was developed right here in Ontario. In Cobourg, a plastics manufacturer is hiring about 20 new employees with support from these funds. And in Peterborough, a major parts manufacturer is expanding its operations, creating more good, local jobs.

We want to see that kind of momentum take hold across every region and every sector in this province. That's why we are continuing to adjust the funds so they work well for you. Just on Friday, we announced that we are expanding the boundaries of these funds. We listened to the concerns of communities who felt they were slipping through the cracks of these programs, and adjusted the boundaries to address their needs. That is the relationship I want us to have. I am here to help your municipalities succeed by building on the strengths and priorities of your communities.

Ontario is defined by the strength of its people. Our best asset is our educated, innovative and diverse workforce, and every municipality needs to be able to tap into that strength and that savvy as it prepares for the future. In places like Ottawa and Kitchener-Waterloo, that means we're going to help build on your knowledge-based economies and make sure businesses can access the capital they need to innovate and fund new ventures. We are going to make sure young entrepreneurs have the right resources to turn their ideas into realities.

My government is going to promote local food across this province so we can support farmers, food processors and research in places like Perth, Leamington and New Liskeard. To address the needs of communities around the Ring of Fire, we're going to make sure that natural resource extraction comes with the critical programs and infrastructure necessary to support growth and create positive opportunities for the people who call that region home.

We are doing all of that because we know it will help address the issues you face every day. But I want to do more. When I'm in Windsor, and I hear that there's a shortage of 200 welders, I want to help train those people so that the city has the skills base it needs to remain a vital manufacturing hub for our province.

When I'm in Cornwall or Brockville, and I hear that local businesses need skilled mechanics or electricians, I am determined to make sure our young people know those are good, strong careers that will give them a solid future in those communities and other parts of our province.

When I'm in New Dundee and I hear producers talk about how they need more young farmers, I want to make sure we shine a light on the rich diversity of opportunities available for our young people in the agri-food sector. And I want to figure out ways to help young people get into agriculture even if they don't come from a farming family.

That is why we have launched our new Youth Jobs Strategy, to connect young people with good careers, and to build communities through economic opportunity and expansion.

We have challenges in this province - there are hills to climb. But the more time I spend in your municipalities, the more clearly I see the solutions. I am optimistic about the future because I see how much your communities have to offer. And because of that, I see my role as an advocate for your needs and your priorities. I want to work with you on our shared priorities. But I also want to take your experiences and insight, and work on your behalf with other levels of government.

I will be your voice outside of Ontario. That's why I attended the Great Lakes Governors meeting on Mackinac Island earlier this year. I know that declining water levels are having a negative impact on Ontario communities on the shores of the Great Lakes, and that their economies are hurting as a result. In addition, I know that we must be stewards of the quality of our Great Lakes. So I took my place at that table so I could be part of the government solution - so I could stand up for Ontario's needs.

I also brought the municipal perspective to the meeting of the Council of the Federation, which I hosted earlier this summer in beautiful Niagara-on-the-Lake. There, I met with my provincial and territorial counterparts and as Chair I led the conversation on the need for job creation, skill development and infrastructure investment in this province. Because those are the issues that will impact every part of Ontario, no matter the size of your municipality, or your location, or your predominant industries.

I believe it is my responsibility to fight for investment in this province, and I convinced my colleagues to join me in this shared cause to advocate to the federal government to dedicate funding towards strategic infrastructure in this country.

I know infrastructure is a big concern for you. I listened when you told me that municipalities need stable funding to address their pressing infrastructure needs. And that is why our government has launched a new, \$100 million fund this year, to help small, rural and northern municipalities pay for critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, water and wastewater projects. Municipalities will be able to receive support starting in October, and our government

will make this program a permanent source of funding, because that is what you told us you need. It's also why we made the gas tax permanent in our budget this year.

I heard you. I am working with you to improve our infrastructure. But the federal government also has a responsibility to act. For a bit of context, this year, Ontario plans to invest about \$13 billion in strategic infrastructure. The federal government plans to invest less than \$6 billion... in provincial, territorial and municipal infrastructure across the country. I think we can expect better.

We have seen this problem clearly this summer, through the impact of freak storms and in the terrible circumstances of Lac-Mégantic. We have to prepare our systems for extreme events, and we have to invest in our own safety. Your own asset management plans are a big part of this process - they tell us your priorities and allow us to work together to find solutions and smart investments.

Every member of my team is committed to working with you. We will fight to address your issues and we will not shy away from real debate. But we have to answer the right questions and address the real roots of our problems, rather than just making empty gestures or falling back on meaningless rhetoric. These real issues are not always glamorous or easy to sum up in a 30 second sound bite. They are not necessarily easy to solve. Progress on those solutions begins with practical programs that address your local concerns.

We want to cut red tape to attract investment across the province and create new jobs in your communities. To that end, we are moving forward with the Investment Ready Program. It is Canada's first province-wide "certified site" program. It shows companies around the world the places in your municipalities that are ready to be developed, giving them increased certainty about environmental concerns, utility lines and servicing access. In practical terms, it means businesses can quickly make more informed decisions, and help expansion projects get underway sooner. For municipalities, it provides another tool to promote your communities, attract new investment and foster growth.

Tomorrow, you'll hear from Linda Jeffrey, our Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. She will talk to you about additional parts of our plan to adequately respond to the changing needs of your communities, and to make sure that municipal planning tools are strong and effective. As we move forward, Linda and I rely on your input and your partnership. You know your communities' needs.

I appreciate your help on so many fronts: You helped us redesign the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund to make sure it continues to meet the needs of Ontario's communities. We are

going to announce the details of the newly redesigned program in the fall - in time to support your budget planning process.

We also continue to rely on your valuable input on interest arbitration. I know this is an issue that is very important to you. Our government is determined to build a sustainable model for wage negotiations that is respectful of both collective bargaining and a fair and transparent interest arbitration process. Our Minister of Labour, Yasir Naqvi is committed to working with all of our partners to achieve that. I hope you will approach this process as openly as possible. It will take collaboration between you and your labour partners to solve this issue. But we have to stay focused on addressing the real issues, and building on the strong relationships that can help us navigate through these challenging times.

I really do believe that we can talk through many of our issues. It's what I've been doing since I took on this role: sitting down with stakeholders, labour partners and members of the Opposition to try and find a better way forward. What we do is so important - as municipal leaders, as ministry representatives, as a provincial government...but the way we do it is important, too. It is easy to be negative and to find points of conflict, but the reality is that we are in this together; we are on the same team. And my focus on collaboration and real, practical solutions is inspired by my belief in you and quite frankly, the way you do business. It's inspired by my belief in your communities and your constituents.

Our government understands that we cannot slash the services on which you rely to address our bottom line - that wouldn't be fair. That's why we're continuing to upload municipal costs.

We also know that investments in vital transit and transportation infrastructure can't place more pressure on your property tax base. We have to find real solutions because that is what the people of this province deserve.

This September, we will resume the legislature in our minority government. The political climate does not make it easy to introduce real progress, but I will not give up on what is possible. I am focused on governing and I am here to work with you and for you. I want to grow and innovate together and build Ontario's future on the strength of our communities. That is what Commander Hadfield inspired in me with those pictures... To think of the big picture, the view from above that shows how connected we all are.

Ontario is one province, filled with possibilities. And I am committed to working with all of you to make sure those possibilities are fulfilled. Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

Association of Municipalities of Ontario
2013 Annual Conference

Remarks by the Honourable Linda Jeffrey
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Tuesday, August 20, 2013
1:25 p.m.

Check against delivery

Thank you.

Thank you for coming to Ottawa to take part in this important annual event.

I want also to thank the AMO executive and staff who have worked over the last few months to put this conference together.

And I'd also like to thank Russ Powers, for his time and advocacy over the past year – and for his leadership at our regular monthly meetings.

I have been coming to AMO since I was first elected in the early 1990's but this is my first time up here at the podium as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

I have to admit it's a little intimidating; but it gives me a different perspective.

Shortly after being made minister, I threw myself into the job and I went to as many spring conferences, meetings and AGMs as possible.

At each of those events, you shared with me your concerns and I appreciated your candour. It is clear to me that you truly care about the communities you represent.

And that's a passion we share. As a former city councillor, I know first-hand about the hard work every one of you puts into making your communities a better place to live.

I've learned over the years – it's a small world, so it's important to be respectful and to build strong relationships.

I've always believed that the best solutions start out with an honest conversation.

That is why our Government's relationship with AMO has been so productive. Both sides have never shied away from the big issues, or from giving difficult advice.

I will admit, it's not always easy to hear that a program isn't working but together we both make better decisions by taking the time to listen to each other.

It's because we both benefit so much from these conversations that today I am proud to sign a renewed Memorandum of Understanding.

Today's MOU renewal will ensure that these conversations continue. It will also allow us to build on the successes we have had in the recent past and to pave the way to a strong future.

I'm sure you will agree that one of our greatest shared successes is the uploading of social assistance benefits and court security costs that had previously been borne by municipalities.

As you know, this year alone, these uploads have already produced savings of \$1.4 billion.

These savings provide the fiscal room that you need.

We took action because you told us that it just wasn't fair – it wasn't reasonable to download costs to the property tax base.

So we took steps to restore fairness.

You also told us that you need strong roads and bridges, as well as the dollars to maintain them.

So we acted... by reconfirming our government's plan to invest \$35 billion in infrastructure over the next three years.

And then we committed to an additional \$100 million dollars for a roads and bridges fund for small, rural and northern communities across the province.

Because of that strong working relationship, we've been able to see real results on building code and fire safety improvements; on economic development and youth job creation; and on social service reform and waste diversion.

Our Government made these changes to assist you in making our communities more livable.

But we know there's more work to be done.

In particular, more needs to be done on the affordable housing file.

The simple fact is - Ontario needs more affordable housing. It creates jobs and it grows the economy.

When families have a home to call their own, they have improved health, education and employment.

In this country, far too many people spend the day unsure where they will sleep at night.

A recent report estimated that over 200,000 Canadians go homeless every year. In a prosperous country like Canada, **that's just shameful.**

In March, Ottawa announced a five-year renewal of the Investment in Affordable Housing program.

I'll admit I was afraid they might not even make that commitment.

But, despite this announcement, we still see a gradual withdrawal by the Federal government from their role in working with other levels of government on this file.

It's become clear that if action isn't taken, their commitment to affordable and social housing will evaporate over the next 20 years.

The reality is that a strong national economy depends on a healthy housing market that serves **all** Canadians.

This summer, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities issued a statement supporting our call for a long-term federal commitment on housing.

The need for housing is not just a municipal issue, it's not just a provincial issue and it's not just a federal issue.

It is a societal issue that all levels of government need to tackle; together!

To achieve our shared goals, I need your help - I need your help in convincing Ottawa and your local MPs to stay at the table and work with us.

But it is not just housing where we need to work together to make our communities more livable.

We need to work together to address our long-term infrastructure needs and we can't do this without an inventory of our assets.

In Ontario we know climate change is a significant issue. The effects of climate change can bring unexpected damage to our homes, our property and the infrastructure we rely upon.

Over the past year, communities across Ontario have been hit by devastating floods— from Thunder Bay and Wawa, to Huntsville, and Kawartha Lakes.

Upon hearing the news, my staff were on the ground working with municipal officials.

We committed up to \$18 million to help with the response and infrastructure repair costs for the municipalities hardest hit.

And we continue to work closely with the eight affected municipalities and their local Disaster Relief Committees.

I want to commend the efforts of all the first responders and public works officials for supporting their communities during an extremely difficult period.

I was able to see firsthand an Emergency Operations Centre in action in the town of Bracebridge and I was impressed with what I saw.

Disasters showcase the strength of our communities but they can sometimes expose gaps in our existing infrastructure.

They remind us that we've got to take stock and continually evaluate our roads, bridges and other structures.

It's all about planning ahead.

That's why our government places so much weight on asset management plans. I just can't stress enough how important it is for each municipality to develop a plan.

When our Government released the Municipal Infrastructure Strategy last year, a significant number of you took the time to prepare a comprehensive asset management plan.

I'm pleased that so many municipalities have taken advantage of the new resources, including \$9 million dollars in funding and staff resources to get these plans done.

I know there's a lot of work involved in completing these plans. But I think you'll agree –it's the right thing to do and there's a significant pay-off.

We're here to support you in your infrastructure planning, and, as we move forward, we will continue the push to get all levels of government moving in the same direction.

With sound asset management plans, all levels of Government will be better positioned to invest in the projects and priorities that will help you improve our communities.

We'll be better able to target our investments, which in the long run saves us all money.

In fact, I believe we have an obligation to ensure our children and grandchildren aren't left with aging or worn out infrastructure.

The global economic downturn has meant that all levels of Government have had to do more with less.

We're all doing our best to practice financial restraint.

Sharing services is one way to provide relief to our strained budgets.

Of course, I don't have to tell you, sharing services between municipalities is nothing new or unique.

The overwhelming majority of municipalities already have some sort of shared service agreement.

The benefits can be great: from cutting costs and increasing efficiency, to greater local autonomy for you to plan and achieve the priorities that you set.

I want to showcase a few examples where communities are being innovative:

The Peel Public Sector Network was developed by the Region of Peel, Mississauga, Caledon and Brampton – my hometown – to provide a high-speed fibre optic network to municipalities, hospitals and educational institutions.

The Network saves \$2.5 million annually and has won the Showcase Ontario Merit Award for delivering vital public services to the community in a cost-efficient, convenient and effective way.

This is a great example of inter-government collaboration and co-operation that saves money.

Another successful model is the Fire and Emergency Services Communications Centre of the City of Oshawa.

The Centre handles dispatch services for the City of Oshawa, the Municipality of Clarington, the Town of Whitby, the Township of Brock and the Township of Scugog.

Emergency services are an ever-increasing cost for municipalities.

The Oshawa centre is a state-of-the-art facility with industry-leading technology. If each municipality had put the dollars in to build this technology, it would have cost significantly more.

That kind of proactive, creative thinking naturally leads to the development and sharing of best practices for fire dispatch communications.

It also creates the potential for additional revenue sources.

And there are ways that we at the provincial government can help you too.

One example of improved financial planning that we have been working on, with the Municipal Finance Officers Association, is a program called the Costs of Development Model.

This program allows municipalities to compare the costs associated with different types of development, so that you can compare between low density and compact urban development forms.

With this program, you can get a better look at your overall planning picture by seeing the potential financial implications of planning decisions 10, 15 and even 20 years down the road.

We will be working with our partners to pilot this tool with a select group of municipalities, so stay tuned. We'll let you know when the tool will be available for your use.

My ministry wants to support you in delivering services and infrastructure more efficiently and we want to help you find the right tools and practices to do that because we know one size does not fit all.

We want to make the tools you have available more accessible, including ones you use for planning.

Over the years, we've brought in reforms to improve both the land use planning system and the Ontario Municipal Board.

We have worked together to bring forward an historic vision for land use planning through the Growth Plan and the Greenbelt.

But we've heard from you and we've heard from the public that the rules can sometimes be too complex and the delays and appeals can be frustrating.

This frequently contributes to conflicts between municipalities, developers and community groups.

Our government wants to address these concerns, and we're committed to improving the land-use planning and the decision-making process.

This fall, my ministry will begin a consultation process to enable municipalities, community groups, and stakeholders to give us feedback and help us develop solutions.

We want to make it simpler and more effective. We have heard your concerns and we will be reviewing the process for land use planning appeals at the Ontario Municipal Board.

We want to find ways to make our land-use planning system better, to foster better co-operation between municipalities, developers and community groups so they can work together to make those tough decisions.

Finally, I'd like to talk about the Development Charges Act and other costs associated with development.

Earlier this month, my staff and I hosted a forum on planning in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. We heard some great ideas on how we can improve the Development Charges Act.

I know that, as municipal leaders, you feel the current system limits your ability to recover all capital costs for some services and your ability to pay for vital infrastructure projects.

And I have heard from developers that they want more accountability and transparency.

Everyone who sits at the table wants more clarity when it comes to the costs government imposes.

We believe it's time for a refresh – it's time to be sure the system still answers all our needs.

This fall, we are going to begin the process to evaluate development charges to ensure it is still responsive to the changing needs of your communities.

We'll be contacting you to discuss such changes as section 37 and parkland dedication under the Planning Act.

And we will work with AMO to ensure that you, our municipal partners, stay engaged throughout the process.

If you know me, you know that I like to think I'm a good listener.

I want to hear from you – because no one knows the people in your communities better than you do.

You've fought for them through adversity, and I know we can – and will – work together on the challenges coming down the road.

As our local leaders, you will face the expected obstacles – like working to improve services while keeping costs down.

And you'll encounter unforeseen hurdles – like the ones mother nature sometimes can throw at us.

You need to be able to anticipate both, and as much as possible you have to look 10, 20 years down the road, and make plans for every contingency. I know it's not an easy task.

But I want you to know that your government stands with you. We will work with you and all of our province's communities.

Not just for today, but for the decades to come.

Thank you.