



AMO Communications
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Subject MEMBER COMMUNICATION - WHAT'S NEXT ONTARIO
UPDATE

August 17, 2015

MEMBER COMMUNICATION – WHAT'S NEXT ONTARIO UPDATE

Dear Colleagues:

In April 2015, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) launched a discussion with its membership to begin charting a common path towards achieving long-term fiscal sustainability. Our sincere thanks to the hundreds of leaders from across the province who participated in this initial phase of *What's Next Ontario*.

Today I spoke to the AMO members at our Annual Conference [[LINK TO SPEECH](#)]. My remarks included our work on *What's Next Ontario* and AMO's next steps for this key member initiative. This information and direction is captured in the attached summary report of the *What's Next Ontario* member engagement.

AMO launched the discussion knowing that the municipal-provincial intergovernmental relationship needs to continuously evolve and be renewed. We've done this before, with meaningful results for our communities. With the upload of many social assistance programs nearing completion in 2018, we asked the fundamental question, what's next Ontario?

A total of **739** municipal elected officials and staff participated directly in the consultations. We received **40** written submissions, held **10** face to face meetings and consulted with **10** different municipal associations.

Participants focused on the following fundamental problem facing the municipal sector and property taxpayers. Assuming all other revenues remain stable and services remain unchanged, property taxes will need to increase by an estimated 8.35% per year for the next ten years to meet operating needs and close the estimated \$60 billion infrastructure investment gap.

The *What's Next Ontario* discussions revealed a great deal of concern with this reality and what it means for the sustainability of the municipal sector. We received very thoughtful and well-considered submissions from across the province regarding the challenges municipalities are facing and concern for how the status quo can meet anticipated future needs.

This concern was expressed in the following themes: infrastructure, (including state of good repair, ability to pay, service demands in high-growth municipalities, service demands in low-density, rural or northern municipalities, climate change), interest arbitration, policing, the aging population, social housing, revenue in small, rural and northern Ontario and the future of provincial equalization and operating assistance.

The feedback received from the membership confirms the need to continuously renew and refresh the intergovernmental fiscal and service delivery relationship. AMO's Board of Directors reviewed with strong interest the diverse but common concerns expressed by the membership regarding the future. With this feedback, the Board of Directors recently adopted the following action plan which includes:

- directing AMO staff to begin the necessary policy work and analysis of opportunities behind developing a new approach for additional revenue sources for all municipalities;

- working towards developing a package of reforms to refresh provincial-municipal relations; and
- establishing a committee of municipal and community leaders this September to explore options related to the above.

It includes the following milestones for the next year:

- By January 2016, the AMO Board will present detailed options for the sector to consider.
- By August 2016, AMO will arrive at a member-directed position to chart our future together.

The Member Engagement Summary report includes some of the specific feedback received from the membership and options considered by the Board. The report and previously distributed material is available at <http://whatsnextontario.amo.on.ca/>.

We invite members to continue passing on their thoughts, comments, and questions in the months ahead by email at: whatsnext@amo.on.ca. Watch for additional updates in the future.

Thank you for working to make Ontario municipal governments stronger.

Sincerely,



Gary McNamara
President of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario

PLEASE NOTE: AMO Breaking News will be broadcast to the member municipality's council, administrator, and clerk. Recipients of the AMO broadcasts are free to redistribute the AMO broadcasts to other municipal staff as required. We have decided to not add other staff to these broadcast lists in order to ensure accuracy and efficiency in the management of our various broadcast lists.

DISCLAIMER: Any documents attached are final versions. AMO assumes no responsibility for any discrepancies that may have been transmitted with this electronic version. The printed versions of the documents stand as the official record.

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Whats Next Ontario Summary 2015-08-17 RPT.pdf