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May 28, 2020

AMO COVID-19 Update - Looking Ahead

It's been 10 weeks since the state of emergency was declared in Ontario. Municipal governments have been on the front line of response and recovery every day since and will be for the foreseeable future.

In every sector, questions remain about how our communities, our province and our country will move forward to sustain, transform and fund services people rely on most, and to rebuild our economies.

All orders of government have made massive investments in keeping people safe, in bolstering economic security, and in protecting the social fabric of society. There is a new appreciation of the role of government, especially during an unprecedented health and economic emergency.

Our residents and businesses have made enormous sacrifices to keep our communities safe. Municipal employees have made heroic efforts to protect essential services and to support and protect the most vulnerable people in our communities. Municipal Councils have ensured needed resources are in place.

Ontario took immediate steps to assist municipalities, such as the \$148 million Social Services Relief Fund, which has literally saved lives - an important measure described by Finance Minister Rod Phillips as a "first step" in supporting municipalities. But the challenges are national in scale and AMO recognizes that a collaborative federal-provincial effort is required to provide much needed financial assistance to municipalities. AMO's [May 14th letter](#) to the Prime Minister and the Premier tells the story and urges Canada and Ontario to extend their successful collaboration to support municipalities. AMO will continue to advocate strongly to move this request forward. Ontario has joined AMO and FCM in advocating for federal assistance.

Without immediate financial assistance, the alternatives of property tax increases, services cuts or deferred capital investment will undermine economic recovery.

In addition to immediate financial assistance for municipal operations, including transit, we know that municipalities are the ideal destination for federal and provincial capital investments that will help rebuild economic activity, put people back to work, and ensure much needed infrastructure is in place to sustain productive economies into the future.

And we know our members are deeply concerned about the future of public health, paramedic services and long-term care, and many other issues such as expanded broadband and the protection of our shared environment.

AMO will continue to advocate for these and other important matters. We will continue to work in partnership with members, professional and sector associations, FCM and others to ensure that the priorities of municipal government are front and center as Ontario and Canada move forward through the current crisis and into the recovery.

Members are supporting our advocacy efforts through local communications, government relations and social media, and it is making a difference. Thank you for your efforts and your support.

In the coming weeks, you will hear more about AMO's plans for our virtual Conference and AGM. There has never been a more important time to participate in the conference. Join us to share in the early lessons learned from COVID-19, the future of municipal services, first-hand interaction with the province, and the opportunity for delegation meetings to advocate directly on behalf of your community. More details will be coming soon.

AMO recognizes the remarkable leadership of municipal councils and extraordinary municipal public administrators in responding to the COVID-19 emergency and creating a foundation for recovery.

We will keep you up to date. We are keeping our COVID-19 webpage current and focusing on what's most relevant. AMO's dedicated COVID-19 email account will manage your questions, take your ideas, and facilitate your feedback. AMO's policy and member services teams look forward to hearing from you at covid19@amo.on.ca.

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