



## Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 22, 2024

### ST. THOMAS DELEGATION ATTENDANCE AT 2024 ROMA CONFERENCE

ST. THOMAS, ON — Mayor Joe Preston, Councillor Gary Clarke, Councillor Jim Herbert, City Manager Sandra Datars Bere, and over 1,600 participants from municipalities and organizations from across Ontario are in attendance this week at the 2024 ROMA Annual General Meeting and Conference. This year's event is being held from January 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> in downtown Toronto.

The 2024 conference theme, Closer to Home, speaks directly to ROMA's advocacy work over the past year. ROMA Chair Robin Jones will present the Board's latest research paper, Fill the Gaps Closer to Home, that focuses on solutions to accessing equitable primary healthcare services in rural Ontario.

Key presenters for the 2024 conference include Ontario Premier Doug Ford, opposition leaders, and provincial and federal ministers. Keynote speakers at this year's event include social entrepreneur Shane Feldman, speaking about the future of work, and award-winning journalist Althia Raj, discussing the impact of polarization on local decision-making.

Today through delegation meetings, City Council members, supported with information from city staff, met with four provincial ministers to discuss municipal updates and current and ongoing challenges faced by the City of St. Thomas for which provincial collaboration and support would be beneficial. These delegations also provide an opportunity for the City to highlight its recent successes and achievements.

On Monday January 22<sup>nd</sup>, the City of St. Thomas delegation team met with:

- Hon. Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health
- Hon. Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education
- Hon. Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Hon. Andrea Khanjin, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks



As part of these delegations, discussion topics and municipal requests this year included calls for advocacy and support for physician recruitment, increased resources for withdrawal management and residential treatment in the community, and brownfield remediation funding. Additionally, the City continues to advocate for affordable housing supports, specifically related to Project Tiny Hope and the ongoing successful partnership with Indwell. The City also presented information related to overcrowding at local schools and the need for better collaboration around capacity planning, as well as the need for support for additional capital funding to support new builds and the expansion of the early years system, including resources and advocacy for retaining and recruiting staff.

The City's delegation team had great success in showcasing the ongoing priorities and directions of Council as they relate to working with the elected Provincial government to realize our strategic plan goals of being compassionate, vibrant, and thriving community.

**For further information contact:**

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**About ROMA**

ROMA takes pride in promoting, supporting and enhancing strong and effective rural governments. About 270 of Ontario's 444 municipalities have populations of less than 10,000, while scores more are rural in character. The rural arm of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, ROMA advocates for policies and programs that will help build thriving rural Ontario communities.

For more information about ROMA or the 2024 Conference, contact:  
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Follow the conference on X: @ROMA\_Ont, Hashtag: #ROMA2024

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