

# Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association Strategic Plan 2022 – 2027



## Introduction:

This is NOMA's initial strategic plan. Northwestern Ontario has a current population of about 190,000 and covers a land mass of 526,417km<sup>2</sup>. NOMA's membership had input to the preparation of this Plan with a strong survey response from members of councils and heads of administration. That input was valuable in framing out a Strategic Plan which reflects one or more four (4) A's – analysis, action, advocacy and amplification. NOMA will focus its resources on efforts that support the role of municipal governments and that can contribute to thriving communities in Northwestern Ontario. NOMA will focus its efforts on those interests that are largely shared. It will support other municipal government associations where there are common interests and where a northwest perspective is important.

NOMA is led by its Vision, Mission and Core Values. NOMA will report regularly on the progress of this Strategic Plan to its members and will undertake periodic reviews and consider any socio-economic shifts. It will also need to consider any changes in the priorities and policy plans of other orders of government. Municipal governments are the frontline order of government. The role of municipal governments in enriching their communities is also work in strengthening the province and the nation.

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**Vision:** To amplify the collective voice of Northwestern Ontario as a superior place to work, play and raise families in caring and prosperous communities.

**Mission:** NOMA will advance the needs of municipal governments whose services contribute greatly to the community well-being in Northwestern Ontario. It will promote activities and support partnerships that contribute to our vibrant and vital region.

## NOMA's Core values:

- NOMA is non-partisan and objective in how it presents itself and undertakes its work
- NOMA builds trusting relationships by acting with honesty and integrity
- NOMA brings credible solutions for matters broadly shared by Northwestern Ontario
- NOMA communicates appropriately and timely
- NOMA values diversity
- NOMA attaches importance to partnerships and teamwork

## NOMA's Strategic Activities are grouped into four areas:

- i. Initiatives to bolster progress in Ontario's Northwest Region
- ii. Policy and program development on key broad interests
- iii. Facilitate the transfer of information to support municipal governance
- iv. Enhance NOMA's administration in support of its Strategic Plan and its membership

## **OUR ACTIVITIES:**

### ***i. NOMA Initiatives to Bolster Progress in Ontario's Northwest Region***

- a) Investigate the interest in the preparation of a Pan Northwest Economic Plan that looks comprehensively at actions that help retain our economic activities and also support new economic opportunities. NOMA will reach out to different sectors across the region to discuss building an inclusive and integrated economic plan, rooted in strengthening the Northwest. If there is solid interest, a Charter and work plan will be prepared in concert with others to build a Northwest Economic Plan as quickly as possible.
- b) Support the implementation of the Broadband Plan for Northwest communities. Broadband is a key to being competitive and one component of economic growth and retention.
- c) Build on the January 2022 Rural/North housing summit as housing supply is limited in many of our communities. Without actions that achieve a range of housing choices, employment opportunities and relocation can be hampered.
- d) Build members' knowledge of Indigenous trust as the initial step to moving to reconciliation. Truth and reconciliation builds the path to stronger relationships among neighbours.
- e) Prepare a briefing document to use with other orders of government at both the political and senior staff levels to help them understand what Northwest Ontario looks like, what makes it different and why. We are different. We are important to the rest of the province and other orders of government must actively appreciate this.

### ***ii. Policy and Program Development on Key Broad Interests***

***(Some interests are shared within the Northwest and others shared across the municipal sector)***

- a) From a regional perspective, analyze the municipal asset management data and how the available financial tools and programs work or fall short in helping meet the maintenance, repair and replacement needs and consider options for any gaps.
- b) Investigate what savings and other efficiencies might be achieved through a shared community facility design and/or construction, such as fire halls and community centres. Working collectively to reduce core costs is one way to stretch infrastructure funds.
- c) Track the fiscal condition of Northwestern municipal governments using the Financial Information Return System (FIRS). Along with the asset data, this will help build a picture of fiscal capacity and sustainability of municipal governments across the region, information important to policy and program work.
- d) NOMA will provide input to the provincial Northern Transportation Group (NTG) and will update members on progress as much as possible. Northern transportation is a key part of success for the region and all of Ontario.
- e) Community wellness is about health services to people, involving the full range of health related services and delivery structures. NOMA, along with others will look at the gaps and solutions to support the health of our citizens such as addictions and mental health work, physician recruitment, para/community medicine and the municipal role in health teams.
- f) Community wellness also involves social services and NOMA will provide a northwestern perspective on needs including provincial funding and service delivery.
- g) NOMA will continue to amplify through the provincial election period and post-election period, key policy and program priorities of a northwest regional interest and those that align with others and shared across the municipal sector. Similar work will also happen at the federal level.

### ***iii. Facilitate the Transfer of Information to Support Municipal Governance***

- a) Governance practices evolve and NOMA will profile how other jurisdictions have undertaken such activities as youth engagement, succession planning and diversity. Members identified these areas of greatest interest now and in the coming years.
- b) Create an inventory of municipal “modernization projects” that focus on improving the efficiencies and public’s access to services in the Northwest. A repository of different types of “modernization” projects on NOMA’s website will facilitate the sharing and profiling of progress in the Northwest.
- c) Climate change impacts will continue and adaptation and mitigation technics are important to the resiliency of communities and infrastructure. NOMA will collect and disseminate information such as resiliency planning. It will also monitor policy trends such as more recent provincial emphasis on electric vehicles and supporting infrastructure.
- d) In advance of the 2026 municipal election, NOMA will create an inventory of council remuneration and approaches in the Northwest. It will involve a membership survey.
- e) Amplify existing programs and services that are available to help Northwestern municipal governments save money on equipment/services.
- f) Yearly, NOMA will undertake several virtual focused and short learning sessions for members that will share practices and lessons learned on topics relevant to the northwest.
- g) To keep members informed, NOMA will continue to report out on its Board meetings as well as the progress of the activities within its Strategic Plan and how NOMA’s work with others on shared policy interests is proceeding.

### ***iv. Enhance NOMA’s Administration in Support of Its Strategic Plan and Its Membership***

- a) Investigate and build linkages with local educational institutes on the use of their students or project assignments to it on some of this Strategic Plan’s activities. These experiences may encourage students to consider local government for future employment.
- b) Look at federal or provincial summer student placement programs and investigate how other groups might assist NOMA on projects and gain work experience.
- c) Update the NOMA website to describe the Northwest, host the Strategic Plan and other information. People pull information from websites and will serve members.
- d) Build an elected officials mailing list post 2022 municipal election so that NOMA can communicate directly with council members and be compliant with Canada's anti-spam legislation (CASL). NOMA will gain efficiency in its communications and council members will get it in a timely manner.
- e) Look at different approaches to the annual conference planning. Conference planning involves a high level of intensive, time sensitive work that can impact progress on the Strategic Plan. The annual event is a significant political platform and is critical to NOMA’s reputation and finances.
- f) The activities of this Strategic Plan will be monitored regularly by the Board. It will undertake an annual review, adjust as the Plan as needed. It will prepare a final report in 2027. The annual review will consider any emerging issues and changing circumstances which may impact the activities and timing of the Plan.
- g) The evaluation of this Plan, the resources, approaches and outcomes will be valuable as NOMA works on a successor Strategic Plan process in 2025-2026.