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Media Release

The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM), the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, and the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association jointly discussed the crisis of Homelessness, Mental Health, and the Opioid Crisis with the Provincial Government. FONOM President Danny Whalen, NOMA Executive Member Rick Dumas, and NOSDA Vice-Chair Mark King shared with the seven Provincial Minister, Associate Minister, and a Parliamentary Assistant the experiences in our communities during the Annual AMO Conference. The Municipal organizations believe the three topics are intertwined, and our presentation clarified that to the ministries. Danny Whalen commented, *“this was the first time our three Organizations have collaborated on any issue,”* and *“with the impact these issues are having in our communities, working together is imperative.”*

The organizations appreciate the efforts, of all the agencies working to help and support those addicted to opioids. In some districts, over 30 agencies are providing some assistance. But we would like to see more coordination with Municipalities/DSSAB’s or consolidation of these agencies with the input of Municipalities/DSSAB’s and local stakeholders. As we believe, a streamlined agency would be able to put the combined funds to better use. We hope these agencies would willingly work this out between themselves. Danny Whalen commented, *“But if not, we would ask that our local Ontario Health Teams, in consultation with Municipalities/DSSAB’s and local stakeholders, support a province-wide strategy that supports such consolidation.”*

Mayor Dumas shared, *“The province must apply a rural and northern lens and work in collaboration with ministries to construct a plan for affordable and supportive housing”* and asked, *“for the province to develop a housing strategy for the North and capital funding to address the shortage of affordable housing.”*

Councillor King thanked the Province for the significant commitment this government has made in allocating 3.8 billion dollars over the next ten years. But the organizations called on the Province to take an all of government approach, to manage and find made in the North solutions to the Mental Health and Addictions Crisis. They called on the Premier to establish a Northern Ontario Joint Partnership table to manage the Mental Health and Addictions Crisis in Northern Ontario. King commented, *“we want to work with this government to ensure the right resources are put in the right communities to reach people who need the resources where they live”*, further *“above all, we ask that this government recognize municipalities and NOSDA as a partner in our collective efforts to address the growing mental health and addiction challenges.”*

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