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2023 AMO Conference: NOMA Discussed Issues Facing Northwestern Ontario

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Thunder Bay, ON - Members of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) Board and President Wendy Landry joined more than 2,500 municipal leaders, government officials, public servants, sponsors, exhibitors, and media in the beautiful City of London from August 20 to 23 for the 2023 Association of Municipalities of Ontario's (AMO) Conference.

NOMA met with Provincial Ministers including Minister Mulroney, Minister Graydon Smith, Minister Parsa, Associate Minister Stan Cho, Associate Minister Charmaine Williams, PA Kevin Holland, PA Matthew Rae, numerous parliamentary staff, and NDP to discuss numerous issues including public health care funding, agency nurses and locums, Bill 60, the ability for municipalities to retain surplus proceeds from tax sales, reducing barriers for women and marginalized groups in politics, sale of crown land, and northern road safety.

We appreciated the announcement by Premier Doug Ford during the AMO conference regarding the new \$1.2 billion Building Faster Fund to help municipalities support the creation of new housing. We were pleased to hear that the fund will allow small and rural communities to access 10% of the fund.

We greatly appreciated the announcement by Minister Jones that starting January 1, 2024, the province will restore the 75% provincial and 25% municipal cost-share ratio for all cost-shared programs and will restore 100% funding for those programs identified as such in the public health budget for 2018-2019. Additionally, base funding for public health units will be increased by 1% annually for the next three years so that Ontario can prepare and plan with certainty. This will result in an approximate \$47 million increase in provincial annual base funding for public health units.

NOMA asked the province to work with healthcare centers and hospitals across the region to secure adequate nursing staff to avoid closures. If locums must be used, we asked the government for a cost-share funding solution to maintain affordability.

NOMA made it clear to the province that we believe that Bill 60 threatens the framework and foundations of universal public healthcare delivery in Ontario. We asked the government to rescind Bill 60 and maintain a not-for-profit healthcare system.

NOMA was pleased to hear that the province will provide funding for the municipal consultation process of crown lands. In this process, municipalities will be able to evaluate all crown land within municipal borders in Northern Ontario to determine if they are eligible to be sold for development to increase the housing supply and expand their property tax base.

NOMA asked the government to invest in ways to increase safety on northern roads and to open more maintained year-round rest stops for truck drivers and other vehicles to access washroom facilities.

NOMA, along with the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM), and the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) jointly discussed the mental health, addictions, and homelessness crisis and shared with government that the 3rd paper in the series by the Northern Policy Institute will be shared at ROMA 2024. We also discussed the transformation of our employment service system in Northern Ontario, the centre of excellence and the deficit experienced by the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

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