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## **NOMA met with Government at 2021 AMO Conference to Discuss Issues Facing Northwestern Ontario**

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Thunder Bay, ON - The Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) met with Provincial Ministers including Minister Clark, Minister Rickford, Minister Bethlenfalvy, Minister Surma, Minister Piccini, Minister Romano, Attorney General Downey, Parliamentary Assistant McDonnell, and numerous parliamentary staff during the AMO Conference this past week. Additionally, we met with Liberal Party leader Steven Del Duca and MPP Michael Gravelle. NOMA shared with them the issues Northwestern Ontario are experiencing and provided potential solutions to resolve the issues and aid with economic recovery efforts.

Municipalities are facing mounting financial pressures. Crumbling infrastructure, increasing costs in services and programs, along with a large deficit of skilled trades people to carry out work in the North and a lack of resources to attract more workers, caused municipal governments to explore options to expand financial resources. While continued financial support from the government is needed, NOMA presented some options to consider that would allow municipalities to grow their tax base by giving us some resources in the toolbox.

NOMA recognizes the importance of conserving land but expecting municipalities to fund it through their municipal tax base is completely unfair. Therefore, NOMA requested that the province either fairly compensate the municipalities for the revenues lost to the Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program, or that it places a cap on the number of hectares that can be eligible for the program in any one municipality. We recommended the province compensate municipalities for the loss of development potential and tax revenue on these properties through a per-acre compensation formula.

NOMA asked the Province of Ontario to undertake ongoing consideration of municipal taxation for railroad rights of way properties, based on a per tonne-mile concept.

We greatly appreciate the Government's \$500 million funding investment to OMPF and its stability commitment for 2022. NOMA would like reassurance that OMPF will remain stable indefinitely and that the funding allocation formula clearly reflects the needs of communities in Northwestern Ontario using a balanced approach to the funding structure that is fair for all.

NOMA asked the province to sell crown land for development within municipal boundaries. We see this as a win-win as the province would generate revenue from the sale while municipalities would then expand their property tax base.

Municipal Insurance is an issue for all municipalities across Ontario as premiums rise. NOMA members have seen a 21.5% average increase in 2021 from 2020. NOMA suggested multiple solutions and has partnered with Northern Policy Institute (NPI) to determine how best to resolve the issue. The Attorney General Doug Downey stated they “have some ideas and will work with us to road test them in the future” and is open to discussions with NPI.

The Wastewater System Effluent Regulation to Dechlorinate Wastewater is an issue for some of our smaller municipalities as they are unable to foot the bill for this Federal regulation. Minister Piccini stated “this issue is at the top of our agenda, and we will come to the table with NOMA to advocate for this issue to the Federal Government”.

We are looking forward to hearing more on Resource Revenue Sharing. Minister Rickford assured NOMA we will hear more on this in the Fall.

NOMA was pleased to hear that Government is willing to work with us on these outstanding issues. The Government did note that there are complexities to some issues that present challenges, but they are open to working with us to find a resolution.

Due to scheduling NOMA was unable to meet with the NDP at this time but we will over the next few weeks.

NOMA, the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM), and the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) jointly discussed the crisis of Homelessness, Mental Health, and Addictions, specifically Opioids, with the Provincial Government.

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