

Staff Report

Report To: City Council

Report From: Michelle Palmer, Senior Manager Strategic Initiatives and Operational Effectiveness

Meeting Date: December 18, 2023

Report Code: CM-23-008

Subject: Intergovernmental Relations – Update on Actions and Proposed Priorities for 2024 and 2025

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CM-23-008 respecting Intergovernmental Relations – Update on Actions and Proposed Priorities for 2024 and 2025, City Council:

1. Approves the 2024-2025 advocacy priorities; and
2. Directs staff to report back to Council in Q4 2025 to provide an update on intergovernmental core activities and to propose advocacy priorities for 2026-2027.

Highlights:

- All areas of municipal operations are impacted by policy, service, and program decisions by other levels of government.
- Partnerships with other levels of government and stakeholders are critical to advocate policy changes.
- The City will continue to support the advocacy work of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Western Ontario Warden’s Caucus, and Grey County

Strategic Plan Alignment:

This report supports the delivery of Core Service.

Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Previous Report/Authority:

[CM-21-031 Intergovernmental Relations Action Plan](#)

Background:

Municipalities exist in order to execute provincial policy and legislation but can't directly affect provincial and federal decisions. Municipalities across Ontario and Canada share common concerns. It is most effective for municipalities to speak with a united voice on these issues. The City primarily works with three municipal advocacy organizations: The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), and the Western Ontario Warden's Caucus (WOWC).

The City's Intergovernmental Relations Action Plan was developed in 2021 and identified the core activities (advocacy, education, and collaboration) and advocacy priorities for 2022–2023. The advocacy priorities were developed based on the findings from the citizen satisfaction survey with additional input from relevant, timely priorities identified at Council and Committee meetings.

The advocacy priorities for 2022 and 2023 were:

- Affordable housing
- COVID-19
- Health (physician recruitment)
- Employment and workforce development
- Climate action
- Escalating municipal insurance costs
- Stable and sustainable funding (including funding for court security and the awarding of grants that align with the municipal budget process)
- Development of a Regional Comprehensive Transportation Plan for Georgian Bay and the Bruce Peninsula

As noted during the approval of the 2022-2023 action plan, some of the most critical items are not under the sole purview of the City.

Analysis:

In addition to the 'ad hoc' intergovernmental activities (responding to policy consultations, developing funding applications, participating in municipal associations, etc.) that all City divisions engage in, staff and Council have participated in various activities to advocate and collaborate on the City's advocacy priorities.

Throughout 2022 and 2023, these activities include, but are not limited to:

- Delegations to provincial ministers at AMO and ROMA conferences
- Letters to provincial ministries
- Meetings with Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP Rick Byers and Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MP Alex Ruff
- Roundtables with neighbouring municipalities

While the action plan for 2022 and 2023 has enabled the City to voice concerns with the provincial government and local municipalities actively, it failed to recognize the importance of time needed for research. Due to the broad number of priorities, it sometimes felt unfocused or like a blanket approach.

Based on this, staff are recommending that the City shift to a more focused action plan with the following core activities and priorities:

Core Activities:

- Advocacy and Collaboration
- Relationship Support and Development
- Research and Analysis

Priorities:

- Stable and sustainable funding (including topics such as insurance, court security, and timing of grants)
- Physician recruitment

The City will continue to support the advocacy work of FCM, AMO, Western Ontario Warden's Caucus, and Grey County related to the topics of:

- Affordable housing
- Mental health and addictions
- Indigenous relations
- Workforce development
- Land use planning, and

- Climate change

The core activities and priorities will be assessed in Q3 2025 based on the findings of the citizen satisfaction survey (planned for 2025) and the outcome of the 2050 Strategic Plan.

Financial Implications:

There are no new financial implications associated with the updated advocacy priorities. Implementation will be funded using existing budgeted resources.

Communication Strategy:

This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the Council meeting.

Consultation:

The Strategic Leadership Team was consulted in the development of the Intergovernmental Relations Action Plan 2024 – 2025 and this report.

Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Intergovernmental Relations Action Plan 2024 - 2025

Recommended by:

Michelle Palmer, Senior Manager, Strategic Initiatives and Operational Effectiveness

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Michelle Palmer, Senior Manager, Strategic Initiatives and Operational Effectiveness, at mpalmer@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 1246.