

For Information

REPORT TITLE: **Update on the Region of Peel's Advocacy Priorities**

FROM: Kathryn Lockyer, Interim Commissioner of Corporate Services

OBJECTIVE

To provide a summary of the work and progress of the Government Relations Committee (GRC) related to Region of Peel advocacy priorities. In addition, this report highlights next steps and potential opportunities related to high-priority Region of Peel advocacy positions.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- This report provides an update of Region of Peel advocacy activities, including those related to the impacts of COVID-19, since the last Government Relations Committee (GRC) meeting held on June 18, 2020. This report also provides an overview of next steps and potential opportunities related to Region of Peel advocacy priorities, including activities related to the 2020 Virtual AMO Annual Conference, held on Aug 17-19, 2020.
 - The Region will continue to be flexible in its approach to the provincial and federal governments with respect to advocacy and intergovernmental relations to achieve legislative, regulatory and policy changes and additional funding required to support the Region's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
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DISCUSSION

Since the last Government Relations Committee (GRC), held on June 18, 2020, the Region of Peel implemented government relations strategies to advance key advocacy priorities at the provincial and federal levels of government. Advocacy activities have focused on advancing Council endorsed positions related to the impacts of COVID-19 on Regional operations and its core service delivery.

This report provides an update on the advocacy initiatives that were brought forward to the June GRC meeting. It also describes the various additional advocacy opportunities that the Region has leveraged over the past several months. In addition, this report also includes notable progress on key Regional priorities and how the Region will move forward on key advocacy positions.

1. 2020 Virtual Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Annual Conference

- The Region leveraged advocacy opportunities available at the 2020 AMO Conference that was held virtually on August 17-19, 2020.

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- This included meeting with Ministers as well the leaders of the opposition parties to discuss Peel's key priorities.
- In advance of the virtual conference the Region held briefing sessions with Peel MPs and MPPs on August 13, 2020 to raise awareness and support for the priorities that were raised during delegation meetings.

Minister Delegation Meetings

- The Region secured nine delegation meetings with provincial ministers and opposition party leaders.
- While each of the meetings was specifically tailored to communicate advocacy positions related to their respective ministry or party, the following two key asks were raised at several of the delegation meetings:
 - Additional funding to offset the substantial incremental costs and loss of revenue associated with the COVID pandemic
 - Increased infrastructure funding to stimulate Peel's economic recovery and that an allocation model be implemented to distribute funds expeditiously
- Several additional Region of Peel Council endorsed advocacy priorities were raised with the Ministers and their staff as seen in the table below.
 - These priorities were validated and confirmed at the AMO Conference Preparation Workshop held on July 16, 2020.

Minister	Key Regional Advocacy Priorities Addressed
Finance, Hon. Rod Philips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Federal and Provincial Funding for Associated COVID-19 Costs ● Stimulus Infrastructure Funding ● Maintaining a strong Early Years and Child Care System ● Provide Service Managers the funding and flexibility for affordable housing
Infrastructure, Hon. Laurie Scott	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide Service Managers the funding and flexibility for affordable housing ● Stimulus Infrastructure Funding
Education, Hon. Stephen Lecce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintaining a strong Early Years and Child Care System
Mental Health and Addiction Services, Hon. Michael Tibollo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mental Health and Addiction Services
Long-Term Care, Hon. Merrilee Fullerton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provincial Inquiry into Long Term Care
Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues, Hon. Jill Dunlop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Human Sex Trafficking

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Meeting with Opposition Parties

- The Region was also able to maximize advocacy efforts by engaging with the leaders of the opposition parties, including:
 - Andrea Horwath, Ontario NDP (Official Opposition)
 - Mike Schreiner, Green Party of Ontario
 - Steven Del Duca, Liberal Party of Ontario
- During these discussions, the Region's delegation focused on the need for the provincial government to work with municipalities to address the Region's key priorities, including:
 - Financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Stimulus infrastructure funding
 - Long-Term Care
 - Mental Health and Addiction Services

Communications Campaign

- To help broaden outreach of the Region's advocacy efforts, links to this year's conference materials were posted on the Region's website (<https://peelregion.ca/advocacy/>)
- Social media support was provided before, during and after the conference, including posting of photos from virtual delegation meetings, tagging of ministers and ministries, partnerships, etc. related to advocacy efforts.
- A series of issue-specific videos were produced to help illustrate the importance of a number of high-profile priorities, including mental health, seniors and childcare.
 - The videos included interviews with community stakeholders/advocates to highlight the community needs in Peel and provide first-person experiences and challenges.
 - Weblinks to these videos were incorporated into conference materials and were actively pushed out via the Region's social media accounts.

AMO Conference Ministers Forum

- This year's virtual AMO Conference also provided the opportunity for municipal elected officials to submit questions to be posed by a moderator during the three Ministers' Forums held throughout the conference.
- The Region submitted questions on the following topics:
 - **Mental Health and Addictions Services** – address historical inequalities in provincial funding
 - **Paramedics Services** – provide additional funding related to COVID response by paramedic services
 - **Child Care** – commit to delaying the child care funding cuts
 - **Blue Box Program** - include in the regulations all taxpayer funded locations (e.g. parks and recreation, libraries) as eligible sources of recycling material
- Of the four submitted, the Region's questions on child care and paramedics services were posed by the moderator to the respective Ministers.

While the questions raised awareness of the issues posed, the Ministers' responses were not definitive and ongoing advocacy will continue.

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Follow-up Action Items

- To build on momentum and strengthen the Region's relationships with Ministers and the Opposition Party Leaders, post-conference letters were sent, which included key highlights from the discussion as well as follow-up action items.
- Several requests were made by Ministers and Peel MPPs to visit sites related to Regional services, including the services hub and emergency shelter for victims of human sex trafficking as well as the Butterfly Model LTC home.
 - Regional staff is working with provincial staff to arrange these follow up meetings.

2. Recent Progress on Region of Peel Priorities

- Updates on key advocacy priorities that are critical to the implementation of the Region's long-term strategic plan, including those advanced at this year's AMO conference, are included in Appendix I.
 - The table highlights activities since the last GRC meeting, as well as next steps and potential opportunities.

3. Upcoming Advocacy Opportunities

Quarterly meetings with Peel MPs/Peel MPPs

- As part of the Region's strategy to continue to engage with Peel MPs and MPPs, monthly meetings are being arranged on an ongoing basis.
- The purpose of these meetings will be to discuss and raise awareness of key priorities that are critical to the well being of Peel residents and businesses.
- These meeting will also be used to discuss how the Region can work with the federal and provincial on addressing key challenges impacting Peel's communities.
- The next meeting will take place mid-November 2020.

2020 Provincial and Federal Budgets

- This year, the Provincial and Federal Budgets will be of particular importance to municipalities as there will be ongoing need for short- and long-term financial support from the upper levels of government for essential service delivery and recovery efforts.
- While details have not been released, the provincial government has indicated that their budget will be released no later than November 15, 2020.
 - The Minister of Finance invited submissions by October 16, 2020 as part of the government's pre-budget consultation process.
- The Region of Peel's recommendations were submitted by the deadline.
- The federal government has indicated that it will be releasing its budget or a fiscal update some time in fall 2020.
 - The Region will monitor for opportunities to participate in consultation opportunities, which could include in-person/virtual hearings as well as submitting written comments.

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CONCLUSION

This report is intended to provide an update on the GRC's efforts to advance the Region's interests at the federal and provincial levels of government and to provide an overview of recent and upcoming activities. Additional issues impacting the Region and advocacy initiatives are expected to arise from time to time and may be addressed at the Committee's discretion.

APPENDICES

Appendix I – Region of Peel Advocacy Priorities Update

For further information regarding this report, please contact Keith Medenblik, Manager, Strategic Public Policy & External Relations, Ext. 4777, Keith.Medenblik@peelregion.ca.

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