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# The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

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From: Chief Administrative Officer  
Report: #2023-INFO-104  
Date: December 15, 2023

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**Subject:**

Government Relations Annual Update

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**Recommendation:**

Receive for Information

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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Council on key government relations activities and outcomes from 2023.

**2. Background**

2.1 The Region undertakes strategic government relations activities to advance regional priorities. Advocacy priorities are guided by the Strategic Plan, Regional Council direction, emerging issues, and funding opportunities.

2.2 Intergovernmental exchanges occur at an elected official-to-elected official level (e.g., Regional elected officials engaging with MPPs and MPs, including Ministers) or through staff-to-staff meetings and discussions (e.g., CAO to Deputy Ministers).

2.3 Government relations activities are strengthened through joint advocacy efforts on broader issues via staff and Regional elected official participation in associations and networks such as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario (MARCO), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Mayors and Chairs, the Municipal Government Relations Network (MGRN), the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA), and others.

- 2.4 Intergovernmental engagement can include meetings, letters, and formal feedback (e.g., pre-Budget submissions, Environmental Registry of Ontario submissions, consultations, Standing Committee submissions).
- The goals of intergovernmental engagement are to build relationships to strengthen opportunities for future partnerships, raise awareness of Regional issues, and secure senior-government funding, policy changes or other supports.
- 2.5 Regional Council is updated on key government relations activities through the CAO's monthly briefing note update and through periodic Council reports as appropriate.
- 2.6 Briefing notes and key messages on government relations topics are prepared for Regional Councillors, the Region's representatives on AMO and FCM and the Regional Chair as appropriate to provide background, context and recommended messaging to support the advancement of Regional priorities.
- 2.7 The execution of government relations activities is managed by one designated staff person and is coordinated between the Regional Chair, members of Council, the CAO, and senior staff. When letters or formal correspondence are sent by the Chair, all members of Regional Council are copied.
- 2.8 In 2023, Strategy Corp was selected as the Region's government relations consultant through a Request-for-Proposals process. To enable effective advocacy, Strategy Corp is registered to act as a lobbyist on behalf of the Region at the provincial and federal levels.
- In addition to providing strategic value-added advice and advocacy materials, Strategy Corp's lobbying activities include leveraging their extensive network to undertake intelligence gathering, educating and building buy-in on Regional approaches with key Minister's Office staff and securing meetings with elected decision-makers to advance Regional priorities.
- 2.9 On an annual basis, planned actions to support key objectives of the government relations framework are identified and tracked. At the end of the year, the outputs and outcomes are analyzed and used to plan for the following year.
- 2.10 A report to Committee of the Whole in 2024 will outline the Region's government relations priorities and strategies in 2024.
- Government relations priorities will reflect the Strategic Plan, ongoing priorities from 2023, Council direction and anticipated emerging issues.
  - The planned government relations strategies in 2024 will include the involvement of Regional Councillors as advocates and the use of public communication strategies where appropriate.

### 3. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 3.1 An update of 2022 government relations activities and 2023 priorities was provided in [2023-COW-5](#).

### 4. Highlights of 2023 Government Relations Actions and Outcomes

- 4.1 In 2023, the Regional government relations team worked to advance 19 different files, which is more than the 15 priorities that were addressed in the previous year. The highlights of the actions taken by the provincial and federal governments and the outcomes achieved are outlined in the table below in section 4.13.
- 4.2 In 2023, Strategy Corp was directed to advance Durham Region's GO East Station strategy, homelessness, mental health and addictions supports, and addressing Bill 23 impacts as its core priorities. In addition, Strategy Corp provided engagement and advocacy services on other emerging issues as requested.

#### Provincial Government

- 4.3 The Regional Chair, Regional Councillors and Regional staff met with MPPs, Ministers and their staff on 18 occasions. This includes five AMO delegations and participation in pre-budget consultations to advance priority files including homelessness supports and the Lakeshore GO East station strategy. This is in addition to lobbying interactions led by Strategy Corp and the many informal discussions at meetings, announcements, and events. This compares to 15 times in 2022.
- 4.4 Through the government relations actions, the Region has fostered positive working relationships with MPPs through two roundtable meetings and regular staff-level meetings.
- 4.5 In addition to meetings, the Regional Chair and senior staff presented to Standing Committee on two occasions in 2023 to promote the Region's formal position on key issues. The Region also issued 15 letters to provincial representatives.
- 4.6 Two Regional Councillors, Rhonda Mulcahy and Marilyn Crawford, were elected to the Regional and Single Tier Caucus at AMO where their participation advances the Region's voice in the setting of provincial advocacy priorities and approaches.
- 4.7 There were many successful outcomes from provincial government relations actions in 2023. One of the highlights is securing the development and [introduction of a new developer-paid revenue tool](#) to advance the planned four Lakeshore GO East stations in Durham by working closely with the Ministry of Infrastructure, Ministry of Transportation and Metrolinx. Ongoing discussions were held with the Municipality of Clarington and City of Oshawa to receive input and

remain aligned. Staff supported the approval of Bill 131 by meeting with AMO and other interested parties and by preparing a formal presentation to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Culture to foster support for Bill 131 and the Station Contribution Fee.

- 4.8 In addition, the Region raised awareness of the challenges surrounding homelessness and promoted opportunities for partnership by drafting and sharing the [Addressing Homelessness and other Related Challenges](#) policy paper. The paper was distributed broadly to Ministers, local MPPs and other key partners. Related to the policy paper, the Region received additional permanent funding under the Homelessness Prevention Program. Durham Region secured a funding increase of 62 per cent compared to the provincial average of 40 per cent.

### Federal Government

- 4.9 The Regional Chair and staff also work to build effective working relationships and advocate at the federal level.
- 4.10 In 2023, there were more government relations priorities that were related to the federal government than in 2022. The Regional Chair and CAO met formally with MPs, Ministers and their staff four times and sent six advocacy letters to support the Region's priorities in 2023.
- 4.11 The Region has established regular staff-level meetings with local MP offices to strengthen relationships and improve information sharing. This was augmented by a series of meeting with federal Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers to discuss Regional federal priorities.
- 4.12 Below is a summary table of government relations Actions and Outcomes for 2023.

Table: 1 Government Relations Highlights

Priority	Ask	Actions/Engagement	Outcomes*
<b>Provincial</b>			
Advancing Lakeshore GO East Extension	Approved station strategy for the 4 planned new stations; continued momentum for the Extension to be completed	Meetings with local MPPs, Metrolinx and key Ministers  Formal presentation at Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy  Staff-level meetings  Briefings with stakeholder groups e.g., AMO	Bill 131 introduced and passed  Continued commitment in Budget 2023

Priority	Ask	Actions/Engagement	Outcomes*
Restoring the Greenbelt boundaries	Reversal of the decision to amend the Greenbelt boundaries in Durham	<p>Letter to Minister Clark</p> <p>Raised issue at Durham MPP Roundtable</p> <p>Formal ERO feedback</p> <p>Building on 2022 actions (e.g., Chair statement, key messages prepared for Councillors and FAQ posted on <a href="http://durham.ca/bill23">durham.ca/bill23</a>)</p>	Decision reversed and land restored in the Greenbelt
Addressing the Financial Impacts of Bill 23	Ensure Durham Region does not suffer negative financial impacts of Bill 23	<p>Letter sent to Minister MMAH</p> <p>Raised as a topic at Durham MPP Roundtable</p> <p>Pre-budget consultation topic</p> <p>Bill 134 feedback on the “affordable unit” definition</p> <p>Provided input and feedback on AMO’s response to Bill 23</p> <p>Continue to build upon 2022 engagement (e.g., letters to Ministers, launch of <a href="http://durham.ca/bill23">durham.ca/bill23</a> to inform the public of impacts, ERO feedback letters to Ministers)</p>	<p>The province indicated they will work with municipalities to review elements of Bill 23 in 2024 (e.g. the five-year phase-in and studies as ineligible expenses)</p> <p>Advocacy to continue in 2024</p>
Responding to the review of Regional governments	Two-tier structure in Durham maintained and efficiencies realized	<p>Joint statement from the Mayors and Chair</p> <p>Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy presentation</p> <p>Chair statement</p> <p>MPP Roundtable topic</p>	<p>Review moved from facilitators to a multi-party Standing Committee process</p> <p>Outcome to be determined</p>

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Ask</b>	<b>Actions/Engagement</b>	<b>Outcomes*</b>
Advancing Durham-Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit	Project advancement in a timely manner	Staff-level meetings with Metrolinx	Durham work is proceeding in 2024 and draft preliminary business case is expected in 2024
North Pickering Long-Term Care (LTC) Home	Increased provincial investment in new LTC home	Political and staff level meetings	Additional \$10 million in capital and an additional \$2.5 million in Construction Fee Subsidy per year for 25 years
Addressing paramedic offload delays	Increased provincial supports to address offload delays	Worked with Lakeridge Health on a funding application  Demonstrated alignment with stakeholders	Dedicated offload nurse position opened at Lakeridge and assisted with offload delays
Emergency Psychiatric Assessment and Treatment and Healing (EmPATH) at Ontario Shores	Awarded a capital planning grant	Inclusion in pre-budget consultations and AMO delegation to the Minister of Health  MPP Roundtable topic  Staff working closely with Ontario Shores	Ministry of Health is aware of the program and addressing questions with Ontario Shores
Lakeridge hospital planning grant	Awarded a capital planning grant	Inclusion in pre-budget consultations  AMO delegation to the Minister of Health  MPP Roundtable topic	Outcome to be determined
<b>Federal</b>			
High Frequency Rail	Stop in Durham Region	Staff level meetings including CAO to DM	Gained information on decision timelines and

Priority	Ask	Actions/Engagement	Outcomes*
			processes needed to get a stop in Durham
Refugee and asylum seekers response	Improved federal coordination, supports and funding (e.g., hotel accommodations)	<p>Chair-convened and led meeting with GTHA mayors and chairs</p> <p>Joint GTHA letter to Minister Miller</p> <p>Joint GTHA statement</p> <p>Staff-level meetings with Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)</p> <p>Interim Housing Assistance Program (IHAP) application submitted</p> <p>Engagement with FCM</p>	<p>A new reception centre for asylum seekers with 800 temporary shelter beds to be opened near Pearson Airport</p> <p>The IHAP funding has received an extension of IHAP funding</p> <p>Received IRCC guidance on Durham's IHAP application</p> <p>Supported Community Development Council Durham (CDCD) on funding applications</p>
DRT Fleet Expansion and Electrification	Successful Zero Emission Transit Fund (ZETF) application	<p>Staff-level meetings</p> <p>Status inquiries</p> <p>Meeting with MP Turnbull</p> <p>Information package created and shared with MPs</p>	Linkage to ZETF submission and DRT's transformation plan is understood locally
<b>Federal and Provincial</b>			
Homelessness, mental health and addictions	Improved supports (e.g., income supports, affordable housing funding)	<p>Letters to all the federal party leaders and Premier</p> <p>Meetings with MPPs</p>	Further follow-up meetings initiated by elected officials

Priority	Ask	Actions/Engagement	Outcomes*
		<p>Meeting with MP Turnbull</p> <p>Delegations with Ministers of Health, Children Community and Social Services and the Associate Minister of Housing at AMO</p> <p>Durham Policy Paper created and distributed to relevant ministers, copied to Regional Council</p> <p>On-site tour of primary care outreach program (PCOP) with Minister and local MPPs</p>	<p>Minister Tibollo requested a subsequent meeting</p> <p>Provincial Homelessness Prevention Program funding for Durham was above the provincial average</p> <p>Alignment and amplification of messaging from stakeholders</p>
Infrastructure related to growth	Funding and supports to advance new infrastructure	<p>Included in pre-budget consultations</p> <p>MPP Roundtable topic</p> <p>Staff-level meetings including CAO to DM</p> <p>Input on AMO and FCM approaches</p> <p>Letters to relevant Ministers</p> <p>Letters to the Premier on expediting work on the Ajax Water Supply Plant</p>	<p>Outcome to be determined</p> <p>Continue advocacy in 2024</p>
Broadband expansion	Funding for broadband infrastructure in underserved areas	<p>Staff-level meetings</p> <p>Inclusion in pre-budget consultations</p>	<p>July 27, 2023 funding announcement which includes Universal Broadband Fund and Improving Connectivity for Ontario</p>



<b>Priority</b>	<b>Ask</b>	<b>Actions/Engagement</b>	<b>Outcomes*</b>
Economic development investments	Increase awareness of Durham potential for strategic economic development investments	<p>Invitations to key Ministers and public servants to attend the Durham booth at Collision</p> <p>AMO delegation with Minister Fedeli</p> <p>Staff-level meetings including DM to CAO</p> <p>MPP Roundtable topic</p>	<p>Ministers Fedeli and Champagne visited Durham's booth at the Collision conference resulting in requests for more information on key investments in Durham</p>
Affordable and supportive housing	Senior-level investment in affordable housing projects	<p>Staff-level meetings including DM to CAO</p> <p>MPP roundtable topic</p> <p>Included in the policy paper on Addressing Homelessness and Related Challenges</p> <p>AMO delegations topic with Associate Minister of Housing and the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services</p>	<p>Infrastructure Ontario engagement on DRLHC revitalization</p>

\*Relationship building and increasing awareness of an issue are important outcomes of all engagement and so not specifically referenced.

## **5. Relationship to Strategic Plan**

5.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

- a. Goal 5: Service Excellence. Objective: To provide exceptional value to Durham taxpayers through responsive, effective, and fiscally sustainable service delivery.
  - 5.1 Optimize resources and partnerships to deliver exceptional quality services and value.
  - 5.3 Demonstrate commitment to continuous quality improvement and communicating results.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Government relations activities in 2023 were aligned with Regional priorities and adapted to meet the needs of addressing emerging issues. Outcomes achieved helped to advance Regional priorities through increased awareness of investment opportunities in Durham Region, legislative and policy changes and favourable senior-level funding decisions.
- 6.2 A report to Committee of the Whole in 2024 will outline the Region's government relations priorities and strategies in 2024.
- Government relations priorities identified will reflect the Strategic Plan, ongoing priorities from 2023 and anticipated areas of required advocacy. Priorities will evolve to meet emerging issues.
  - The planned government relations strategies in 2024 will outline the key tactics that will be employed to advance Regional priorities including the use of media where appropriate.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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