

ROMA VIRTUAL CONFERENCE 2022

DAY ONE

The conference opened with an interview with Chief Bellegarde.. He talked about the Truth and Reconciliation and how the Truth part is more important because it will effect the reconciliation. He also stated that working together will give more life to all Land Statements being spoken at meetings, just like we do in our Council meetings. Municipalities have more power than we think when dealing with indigenous issues, and would be good to have Councils meet with Tribal Councils once or twice a year. He talked about sustainability and said the business plan for the planet is 3 P's, the planet, people, and then profit, not just all profit. The Economy is a subsidiary of the environment, not the other way around, and if the environment fails, everything else will follow.

The next speaker from ROMA spoke of 8 points they are stressing to the next government after elections and will lobby on our behalf. These 8 points are on the ROMA website.

The concurrent session I attended was the New Regulations under the Conservation Authorities Act and Chair was Christine Robinson. The three speakers were from different viewpoints, being conservation, municipalities, and elected officials.

Ms Summer Esgrain-Robertson gave the C..A.'s perspective on the new Legislative Act that was amended in 2020. In Phase 1 the Conservation mandate stays the same based on the Act which effects Provincial responsibilities, service to Municipalities, etc.

So what changed?

Phase 1 Regulations redefines mandatory programs and services that conservation authorities can or must deliver. There is a requirement to have an agreement with municipalities to deliver programs and services on their behalf. There is a need for cost-apportioning agreements if the levy is supporting non-mandatory programs and services. This last agreement effects Service Delivery for Municipalities in Categories 2 and 3, which provide services to the Municipality and other services which further conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources.

Category 1 : Mandatory Programs are Risk of Natural Hazards and Conservation and Management of Land.

Category 2 : Municipal programs. These are delivered on behalf of a municipality and require an agreement like an MOU.

Category 3 : All other programs that deal with conservation, restoration, etc.

One slide showed Council responsibilities as consulting early and often with CA's in your area and to look at inventory submitted by CA's and submit any changes in the transition period. The need to enter MOU's or other agreements was again stressed.

Next session was Understanding Homelessness in Rural and Northern Ontario. The one speaker was Mr. Brian Marks, CAO of Social Services in Cochrane. I liked his analogy where rocket science was where scientists with a common goal, data, and money achieved what they needed to do. The efforts on homelessness is a team of professionals with a common goal and funding, but is fragmented with too many silos thus fragmented efforts. Need to look at it strategically and sometimes outside the box. To combat homelessness in the pandemic they put up people in college residences when school was over, and after 100 days all people had found places to stay when students were coming back.

Three points were inclusionary housing at 30% and not just in the GTA, but province wide, avoid

NIMBY'ism as it can be seen as a detriment in many areas and almost a form of discrimination. Also deal with energy poverty. A link here energypoverty.ca/background.pdf.

DAY 2

Opened up with a session on ROLE of SCIENCE in POLICY. This was an emphasis on Net-zero economies. I found it interesting that it echoed the ideas put forth by Chief Bellegrade the day before. Planet, People, and Profit. The first part of the equation in sustainability is realizing the economy is not the first part of the bigger equation. Link is www.transitionaccelerator.ca.

The concurrent session dealt with FINES and ENFORCEMENT. Three points were evident in this talk. There is a need for digital modernization in administering the fines, modernization in moving the backlog of cases, and an automated fine system for speeding where these machines can be put in trouble areas and programmed as needed or for 24/7. The pandemic showed problems in the system that have to be changed.

Next session was DIVERSE BUILDING OPTIONS in RURAL ONTARIO. This was a good seminar. First speaker was Habitat for Humanity, and it was stressed how important diverse options are. If no diversity one type of building being built will do nothing more than cause a logjam in supply thus not much help in the long run. Partnership is key, especially with municipalities and non-profits. The speaker, a Julia Deans, mentioned groupings of tiny homes. Link is jdeans@habitat.ca. Another link for tiny homes is for a zoning bylaw which deals with this in North Frontenac. www.northfrontenac.com. The talk with Mr. Justin Marchand from Ontario Aboriginal Housing Service was interesting that even though for the majority of help it is 86% off the Reserves, and help all peoples if needed, not just indigenous peoples. He stated social housing can be funded social finance programs and other partners, not just necessarily financing from municipalities. Municipalities can provide expertise in other services like planning, or surplus land or using their leverage in their credit options. And he stressed leverage does not always mean money. Diversity of housing will help alleviate the myopic lack of vision from the past 30 years. Link is jmarchand@oahssc.ca.

This need for diverse housing was also reflected in a talk from Home Opportunities. They buy land at market value and then do different forms of financing for this need of diverse housing. Links are www.homeopportunities.ca or m.labbe@homeopportunities.ca.

Another session dealt with housing but from a business outlook. Making sure we have housing for our workers. The manufacturing model is changing from global back to local. Manufacturers went overseas because of lower costs, but because of pandemic and supply chain issues because of globalization smaller manufacturers are staying or wanting to stay home as the paradigm is changing from costs to the costs of risk. Smaller manufacturers want communities with housing and industrial and commercial land available, which puts Dundalk in a good place.

I had mixed feelings of doing a virtual conference as meeting people from other areas in these forums are a big part of going to them. I did miss that aspect, however, with concurrent sessions I could have not attended in person all of them and I liked the fact that I could download all and look over the ones I did not attend at my leisure and pace. I had more information to bring back from the conference and that is why we attend. I was pleasantly surprised and thankful I was given the chance to attend.

Respectfully,
Councillor Martin Shipston

