



ADVOCATING FOR WHITEWATER REGION AT THE 2026 AMO CONFERENCE

Representatives from the Township of Whitewater Region attended the 2026 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Conference in Ottawa from August 16–19. The annual conference provides an opportunity for municipal leaders to connect with provincial decision-makers, share local priorities and advocate for the investments and policy support needed to address community needs. During the conference, Township representatives met with provincial ministers and their representatives, as well as Hydro One, to discuss infrastructure, economic development, energy, water and wastewater, and other priorities affecting Whitewater Region and Renfrew County as a whole.

Advocacy Points and Discussions:

- **Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF):** In a meeting with the Ministry of Infrastructure, Council and staff advocated for a permanent increase to the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF) from \$200 million to \$400 million. The delegation emphasized that predictable and sustainable infrastructure funding is essential to maintaining and growing municipal assets.
- **Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing:** Whitewater Region representatives discussed the financial pressures facing rural municipalities, including infrastructure maintenance, affordability, and long-term asset sustainability. Whitewater Region also participated jointly with the Townships of Bonnechere Valley and Laurentian Valley, and the City of Pembroke to advocate for a Municipal Services Corporation model in response to concerns regarding water and wastewater operational knowledge loss and capital funding constraints. The advocacy highlighted support via direct provincial transition grants and to exclude self-supporting utility debt from local Annual Repayment Limits.
- **Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade:** Significant economic development opportunities within Whitewater Region were discussed, including the planned expansion of Magellan Aerospace's Haley Station operation and potential support for Magellan's funding application to Invest Ontario. Broader regional economic development priorities were also emphasized, including the magnesium (dolomite) opportunity and the proposed Class III industrial park project being advanced with Renfrew County.

- **Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility:** The Township advocated for continued annual funding for Seniors Active Living Centres and support for Whitewater Region's renewal of its Age-Friendly Community Plan grant application. The discussion also highlighted the unique needs of rural seniors, including transportation barriers, geographic distance, and limited local service availability.
- **Ministry of Energy and Mines:** Whitewater Region highlighted the importance of positioning the Upper Ottawa Valley's energy infrastructure to support future housing, economic development, and investment. The Township discussed its work with Pembroke, Laurentian Valley, Petawawa and Deep River to explore a collaborative Regional Municipal Energy Plan and requested support for a funding application to the Municipal Energy Plan Program. Preliminary discussions have taken place with partner municipalities and key energy stakeholders, including Hydro One, Enbridge Gas, Canadian Nuclear Laboratories and Garrison Petawawa. The Township also appreciated the Ministry's engagement regarding potential critical mineral development opportunities in Whitewater Region and the broader economic development opportunities associated with them.
- **Hydro One:** The discussion focused on electricity capacity constraints affecting Whitewater Region and neighbouring municipalities, as well as the importance of ensuring regional electricity infrastructure is positioned to support residential, institutional, and economic growth. Whitewater Region is taking a collaborative approach with municipal partners to better understand and address shared electricity capacity needs.
- **Ministry of Transportation:** In a joint delegation with the Townships of Bonnechere Valley and North Algona Wilberforce, Whitewater Region advocated for an increase to Provincial Gas Tax funding to support rural transit initiatives and address the unique transportation needs of rural communities.

The meetings provided an opportunity for Whitewater Region to bring local and regional priorities directly to provincial decision-makers and industry partners. Continued collaboration with neighbouring municipalities, provincial ministries and key infrastructure and energy partners will be important as the Township works to address infrastructure and service pressures, support economic activities, and position the community for long term sustainable growth.

Additional Information:

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