



## **Government Relations Framework**

In the municipal context, Government relations is usually thought of as the interaction between the province and a municipality. However, it can encompass much more from relations with the federal government, upper and lower tiers, between regions, government agencies and more.

Government relations take place with both political representatives and staff.

Actions related to government relations include ways different government bodies can cooperate, negotiate, and coordinate policies to address shared issues.

### ***A Government Relations Strategy is important for Dufferin County***

Policy and funding decisions from other levels of government can have a significant impact on Dufferin County and other municipalities. Building relationships with other levels of government increases the ability to influence policy decisions and request support for local priorities.

### **Components for successful Government Relations**

Successful Government Relations Strategies create a win-win situation where all parties benefit from the relationship by advancing shared priorities and goals. Working to first build connection and trust by advancing shared priorities enables an environment to have productive conversations when positions diverge. A strong government relations strategy seeks to:

- Have consistent, select priorities
- Align and link goals
- Be data-driven with evidence-based positions
- Have strong partnerships and collaboration
- Propose solutions, be a leader

### **Measuring Success**

Government relations is a long game making it difficult to measure. However, there is often incremental success. Performance metrics can include:

- Policy commitments
- Granting of funding requests
- Increased collaboration & partnerships

---

**A Community That Grows Together.**

Collaboration | Accountability | Innovation | Compassion | Courage

- Number of high-level meetings
- Increased media coverage

## **How can Dufferin County engage in effective Government Relations?**

Dufferin can build effective Government Relations by breaking actions and activities into three distinct phases with several tactics that can be employed in each phase:

### Connect and Learn

Review and analyze Provincial and Federal policy directions to gain a clear understanding of local/regional impacts, risks and opportunities. Assess where strategic priorities and local goals align and support Provincial and Federal policy and where they may diverge. Identify, coordinate and collaborate with partners who have similar objectives. Partners may include other counties, local municipalities, political associations, staff professional associations, local business, resident groups, educational institutions, and more. Build connections at the staff and political level.

#### *Tactics*

- *Alignment of goals with policy, identify risks*
- *Gather data, develop evidenced based positions*
- *Build partnerships – work with advocacy groups, engage with private sector allies, mobilize community support*
- *Collaborate on shared objectives*
- *Connect with Provincial and Federal counterparts (staff and Council)*
- *Participate in Boards and Committees that engage in advocacy*

### Inform and Influence

Identify opportunities to inform and demonstrate how the County is advancing initiatives that support Provincial or Federal Policy direction. Demonstrate that the County is solutions focused and is taking a leadership role. This approach will help build relationships at the staff and political level. Utilize established channels to influence changes to the policy when it presents a risk.

#### *Tactics*

- *Select specific priorities that align*
- *Identify areas where there may be risk*
- *Provide feedback on newly introduced policy emphasizing opportunities and risks*

- *Develop targeted Information packages*
- *Set regular meetings with MPP and MP to provide updates on major initiatives and demonstrate alignment*
- *Participate in delegation meetings and other events to build awareness and relationships*

### Advocate and Advance

By developing relationships with key decision- makers and demonstrating leadership to successfully implement and support policy objectives; the County will be able to ask for new Provincial and Federal policies and funding that support the objectives of the County's strategic plan and local goals. The first two phases lay the foundation and build trust.

#### *Tactics*

- *Develop targeted, actionable briefing notes*
- *Gain support from local MPP and/or MP*
- *Work within establish partnerships*
- *Volunteer for pilot projects*
- *Participate in delegation meetings and other events to build on relationships and make specific asks for policy changes, new policies, and funding*
- *Set up staff and political meetings on specific issues*

## **Government Relations Strategy and Action Plan for 2025-2026**

### *Introduction*

At the May 8, 2025 Council meeting, Council discussed items of importance that would benefit from advocacy during the remainder of this term of Council. The priorities along with information about how each item advances the County Strategic Plan, links or aligns to Provincial or Federal Priorities, what evidence is available to support the priority, what is currently happening or planned to develop a solution, potential partners, and proposed actions are identified below. In addition, to specific actions related to the priority areas, there are several more general actions for both Council and staff to connect and learn and inform and influence that will build the relationships that form the foundation of future advocacy efforts.

### *Provincial Alignment*

During recent meetings and events, both government relations specialists and Provincial staff have emphasized the need for alignment with Provincial priorities when developing

government relations and performing advocacy work. The government values relationships and is looking for municipal partners who have something to bring to the table, are solutions focused, and ready to take a leadership role working with multiple partners.

The Province of Ontario 2025 Budget was released on May 15, 2025 and includes the following priority areas:

- [Helping Workers and Businesses Weather the Storm](#)
- [Building a More Competitive, Resilient and Self-Reliant Economy](#)
- [Building Ontario](#)
- [Cleaning Up Our Streets](#)
- [Keeping Costs Down](#)
- [Delivering Better Services](#)

### *Federal Alignment*

Although Federal priorities likely include the economy, housing and affordability issues, specific policy positions will not be known until after the release of the next Federal Budget.

## **County Priorities for Government Relations Activity 2025-2026**

### **1. Homeless Prevention – Working to ensure vulnerable Dufferin residents have access to housing and health care**

*Strategic Plan Priority Area:* Community - Increase affordable and attainable housing options, support community well-being and safety through collaboration and partnerships, explore opportunities to improve access to healthcare; Equity – align programs and services to meet changing community needs.

*Alignment and linkages to Provincial Policy/Budget:*

- Supports 2025 Budget - Cleaning up our Streets- [Expanding Homelessness Hubs and Addiction Recovery Treatment Hubs](#) (HART), Keeping Costs Down - [Supporting Affordable Rental Housing](#), Delivering Better Services - [Supporting Affordable Rental Housing](#)
- Linkages to various Building more homes legislation, and improving access to healthcare

*Data to support an evidenced based position:* – Housing Master Plan, Homeless Individuals and Families Information Systems reports, quarterly statistical reports from Health and Human Services, population Health Care data supplied by partners.

*Proposed solutions, what are we doing?*

- Housing Strategy Implementation, building supportive housing
- Increasing housing supports through local budget allocations
- Supporting Dufferin HART Hub and and Dufferin Youth Wellness Hub Ontario
- Homelessness Task Force

*Partners:* Services and Housing In the Province, Dufferin Child and Family Services, community members in the Homelessness Task Force, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, other community partners, Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus, AMO.

*Ministries:* Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Community and Social Services.

*Actions/Next Steps:*

- Connect and Learn
  - Continue to gather data to strengthen evidence-based position that additional supports and funding is required,
  - Continue to strengthen partnerships with local providers, community, other advocacy groups,
  - Connect with Provincial and Federal counterparts (staff and Council). Staff to compile a list of potential contacts,
  - Participate in Boards and Committees that engage in advocacy. Staff to identify opportunities and report back to Council,
  - Identify specific ask for support.
- Inform and Influence
  - Develop targeted Information package,
  - Meet with MPP to provide updates on major initiatives and demonstrate alignment with provincial priorities,
  - Request delegation meetings with Minister of Municipal Affairs at AMO 2025 to build awareness of Homeless Prevention/Supportive Housing actions and build relationships.
- Advocate and Advance
  - Develop targeted, actionable briefing notes,
  - Gain support from local MPP and/or MP on specific position or ask,
  - Request ROMA and AMO 2026 delegations to build on relationships and make specific asks,
  - Set up staff and political meetings on specific issues within the broader Homeless Prevention priority.

## **2. Municipal Funding Model and Infrastructure to support growth and economic prosperity county-wide**

*Strategic Plan Priority Area:* Economy – Advance County wide economic development and workforce development, Governance – Identify opportunities to improve governance and service delivery

*Alignment and linkages to Provincial Policy/Budget:*

- Supports 2025 Budget – Building Ontario – [Building Faster, Improving Municipal Roads](#)
- Linkages to various Building more homes legislation

*Data to support evidenced based position:* County and local budget data, Capital workplans, Development Charges background studies. Additional data, analysis and consolidation is required to develop an evidence-based position.

*Proposed Solutions, what are we doing?:*

- Continuing to invest municipal tax dollars in infrastructure to mitigate infrastructure deficit
- Municipalities are individually seeking support for specific projects to support growth.

*Partners:* local municipalities, WOWC, AMO. Coordinate with local municipalities on shared goals.

*Ministries:* Ministry of Infrastructure, Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Transportation.

*Actions/Next Steps:*

- Connect and Learn
  - Gather and analyze data to build evidence-based position that additional supports and funding is required,
  - Monitor policy changes and provide feedback,
  - Identify partners,
  - Develop working group with local municipal representatives to create a joint government relations/advocacy plan around infrastructure and municipal financing,
  - Look for opportunities to provide feedback or participate in committees working on Municipal Financing issues,
  - Identify provincial connections.
- Inform and Influence

- Develop a targeted information package,
- Meet with local MPP to share updates, Fall 2025,
- Request delegation meetings with Minister Infrastructure or Finance at ROMA or AMO 2026 to share ongoing work and updates.

### **3. Road Safety – enhancing the safety of roads in Dufferin County while ensuring efficient movement of goods and people to support the economy**

*Strategic Plan Priority Area:* Community – Support Community Safety and well-being through collaboration and partnerships, Governance- Identify opportunities to improve governance and service delivery (asset management and long term infrastructure viability).

*Alignment and linkages to Provincial Policy/Budget:*

- Supports 2025 Budget – Building Ontario - [Building Stronger Communities, Improving Municipal Roads](#)

*Data to support evidenced based position:* local traffic and collision data, budget information, data and analysis from Road Rationalization Report and Roads Needs Study. Additional data and comparative analysis is likely required.

*Proposed Solutions, what are we doing?:*

- Investing in road infrastructure maintenance and upgrades, including a Southern Operations Centre to improve response to winter events
- Investing in software to analyze intersection safety and creating a plan to address areas for improvement
- Investigating options to upgrade roads to remove load restrictions
- Implementing a Road rationalization plan

*Partners:* local municipalities, Good Roads, AMO

*Ministries:* Ministry of Transportation

*Actions/Next Steps:*

- Connect and Learn
  - Continue to gather data to strengthen evidence-based position,
  - Continue to strengthen partnerships with local municipalities other advocacy groups,
  - Connect with Provincial counterparts (staff and Council),
  - Participate in Boards and Committees that engage in advocacy staff to

- identify opportunities and report back to Council,
- Concentrate on specific asks around Highway 10 improvements and Shelburne By-pass construction (in partnership with Shelburne, other local municipalities).
- Inform and Influence
  - Develop targeted Information package around Road safety, issues, current actions underway and concerns with Highway 10,
  - Meet with MPP to provide updates on major initiatives and demonstrate alignment with provincial priorities,
  - Request delegation meeting with Minister of Transportation at AMO 2025 to continue to strengthen relationship with Ministry and obtain an update on progress on Highway 10 improvements.
- Advocate and Advance
  - Partner with Shelburne to gain support from local MPP on specific ask for Shelburne By-pass,
  - Support Shelburne, if requested, at AMO 2025 and ROMA 2026 delegations.

Priorities may shift over time as provincial policy changes or local circumstances evolve. Regular review and discussion will be required to ensure priorities remain relevant.

## **Other Actions to support County Goals and Objectives**

### *Strengthen County-wide Government relations activities and advocacy efforts*

Efforts to work collectively with municipalities across Dufferin County on shared goals would raise the County-wide profile and provide a stronger voice. Identifying advocacy priorities across all municipalities would highlight common objectives and lay a foundation to share data and develop common/joint briefing notes. Joint delegations would also be advantageous.

### *Participate in Boards and Committees*

Participation in Boards and committees provides networking opportunities, access to additional information and research and can lead to additional and stronger partnerships.

Senior staff members will seek out opportunities to participate in Boards and committees including staff professional organizations, Advocacy organizations such as AMO and Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus. Staff will create a registry of who is



involved with different organizations and identify gaps where representation is lacking. Council members are also encouraged to join Boards and committees seeking input from municipal representatives. Staff will compile a list of opportunities that may be available for interested Councillors.

#### *Attendance at conferences and events*

Staff and Council members are encouraged to attend events where MPs and MPPs may be in attendance to network and build relationships. Councill members attending events as County representatives should endeavor to participate in activities geared toward upper tier issues.

#### *Monitoring Policy and Legislative changes*

Ongoing monitoring and review of changes to policy and legislation are key government relations activities. Whenever possible staff will endeavor to work in collaboration with partners and other organizations to assess the impact of legislative changes and report to Council.

### **Delegation Process**

The Provincial Government sends out a call for delegations prior to each AMO and ROMA conference inviting municipalities to submit requests. In recent years the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has started to provide some additional information to better structure the meetings and make them more meaningful for both municipalities and the various Ministers and their staff.

#### *Delegation Guidance*

At a recent conference, Ministry of Municipal Affairs staff provided detailed guidance to CAOs to further enhance the delegation experience. Delegations are 15 minutes in length but after taking off time for introductions and photos there is really only 5-7 minutes to share information. In order to make the most of this time Ministry staff strongly encourage the following:

- Keep your items to one, maximum two.
- Determine who is best to deliver the message. Political issues should be Council. Highly technical issues may be better from staff. It should be a one-to-one conversation with the Minister and speaker.
- Organize your pitch – start with what the municipality is bringing to the table, what has been achieved/committed, who are the partners, are stakeholders on board. Next - What does the municipality want and how does it align with the

province's goals. End with – "we would love to do XXX " as follow up. Offer staff to follow up.

- Think about asks from the Province's perspective what are their priorities, how can we align? How can it be win-win. Advice - Go through the budget to figure out what is supported.
- Delegations are to build and further relationship and set up for the next meeting which may be staff to staff, with the parliamentary assistant and Council members, etc.
- Have some material - a short and to the point 2 pager. Detailed information and technical briefings should be provided to staff for pre-meetings and follow up.
- Inform your MPP especially if they are a Minister. For items where you MPP is the Minister, meet with them outside of the conference.
- Advice – Do not bring up new topics during the delegation that have not been brought up in advance.

#### *Delegation Preparation Timeline*

<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Who's involved?</b>
2 to 4 weeks Prior to the Delegation Call	Review Priorities, data, partnerships and ensure information is up to date  Provide a Council report outlining proposed delegation in accordance with approved Government Relations Action Plan	Staff Lead on priority item
Delegation Call Deadline	Submit Delegations as approved by Council	CAO
6 weeks prior to the conference	Prepare and/or update Information/Briefing Notes and distribute to Council	CAO/Staff Lead
4-6 weeks prior to conference	Identify Speakers, Review Information with Councillors attending the conference  Schedule meeting with MPP to	CAO/Warden/Councillors attending conference  CAO/Warden

---

**A Community That Grows Together.**

Collaboration | Accountability | Innovation | Compassion | Courage

<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Who's involved?</b>
	review items being delegated on and provide updates	
1-2 weeks prior to conference	Submit finalized briefing notes. Confirm attendance at delegations. Send out invites.	CAO
1 week prior to conference	Meet with identified speakers to review briefing notes.	CAO/Warden