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Sent: Monday, 21 October 2024 6:05 pm
To: Emily Lutz
Subject: AMO Policy Update – Advocacy on Transportation, Energy and Housing Policy

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AMO Policy Update - Advocacy on Transportation, Energy and Housing Policy

Responding to *Bill 212: Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act*

The Minister of Transportation tabled *Bill 212: Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act* that proposes a series of changes to:

- Expedite highway construction for Highway 413, Bradford Bypass, Garden City Skyway Bridge (and future potential priority highway projects) including accelerating property acquisitions and facilitating 24/7 construction, among other measures
- Create a faster environmental assessment process for Highway 413 and the extensions of Highways 410 and 427, and exempt certain nearby early works
- Require municipalities to receive approval from the province before installing new bike lanes that would result in the removal of lanes for traffic
- Freeze fees for driver testing
- Make a Tow Zone Pilot permanent on four sections of 400-series highways in the GTA

- Provide the Minister of Infrastructure with the ability to use an expedited expropriations process for establishing easements that internet service providers require to install and build new broadband infrastructure

AMO will submit comments and seek to speak at Standing Committee to relay the challenges some of the Bill's components create for municipalities. As a start, AMO recently outlined that municipal expertise is best positioned to make decisions on bike lanes and local transportation planning, and these proposed changes are an overreach into municipal jurisdiction.

In addition to the Bill, the government announced related proposals including plans to consult with municipalities on a new pothole fund for the 2025 construction season. This fund would help small municipalities maintain their roads, which are often difficult to fund due to limited tax bases. AMO will collaborate with the province on the development and rollout of this new fund.

Ontario Announces New Electricity Distribution Funding Legislation

The Minister of Energy and Electrification has announced plans to introduce legislation that would allow the province to regulate electricity distribution infrastructure costs for new homes and businesses. The Minister has also directed the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) to implement recommendations from its Housing Connections Report Back to the Minister which was recently made public.

This proposal would allow distributors to spread the costs of new infrastructure over 40 years instead of 25. It would also require the OEB to review the current practice of collecting upfront costs from early connectors within the first five years and convene a table with municipalities, utilities, and builders to explore ways to reduce the costs of new connections.

This direction aligns with AMO's June submission to the OEB, which advocated for a series of principles to guide funding model changes. In particular, it advances the principle of fairness by ensuring that the upfront costs of new electricity infrastructure are balanced between existing and new residents.

Advancing Advocacy on Energy Procurements

AMO has sent the IESO comments to support the design of the upcoming LT2 Procurement process. Submissions for LT2 projects are expected to be

open from December 2024 to Fall 2025, and municipalities are likely to be contacted by proponents seeking municipal support during this time.

Our advocacy stresses the importance of ensuring municipalities have support to make sound local decisions on energy projects and encouraging energy builders to engage early and often with municipalities. This includes calling on the IESO to ensure LT2 is clear on requirements for project location (including incentives for siting on Crown land and in northern communities), agricultural protection, and Indigenous participation.

AMO has also called for community benefit agreements (CBAs) to become a standard part of energy procurements. This would ensure municipalities receive revenue to offset costs to service energy project sites, and to hire experts to support local energy approvals including energy or legal consultants.

Improving Ontario's Housing Data

Questions and concerns persist on how housing targets are being measured. AMO has worked closely with the province, municipalities and the CMHC to improve data to maximize municipal Building Faster Fund allocations this year. In a recent [letter to Minister Calandra](#), we urged the province to fix 2024 allocations and commit to implementing advice from the sector on how to improve housing data.

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