

## TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – MINUTES – OCTOBER 10, 2023

Minutes of the Council meeting held on Tuesday, October 10, 2023 at 7 p.m. in the O'Connor Council Chambers

Present: Councillors: Crane, Racicot, Sobolta, Torkkeli  
Clerk-Treasurer Buob

Visitors: Kevin Holland, MPP – Thunder Bay - Atikokan  
Kelly Johnson, Road Superintendent  
Linda Racicot, Deputy Clerk-Treasurer

Absent: Mayor Vezina

Acting Mayor Crane called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Bishop Racicot

**THAT THE AGENDA FOR THE MEETING BE APPROVED.**

Carried

Disclosure of pecuniary interest and general nature thereof: None

2. Moved by Carly Torkkeli  
Seconded by J. Sobolta

**THAT THE MINUTES FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2023 BE ACCEPTED AS PRINTED.**

Carried

The visitors were asked if they wished to address Council and they replied, no.

Councillor Racicot was welcomed back after his recent absence from Council.

Kevin Holland, MPP Thunder Bay- Atikokan, was welcomed to the table. MPP Holland thanked Council for their time and allowing him to speak at this meeting during his constituency week. Introductions were made. He informed Council that if they ever have a concern, he is always willing to take a phone call or email to discuss the matter. He noted that he has been very busy since the election, advocating for our area and trying to ensure that the government understands northern circumstances. He has advocated for changes in funding formulas that are based on population as they are unfair to our rural municipalities. The government has increased the homelessness allocation from 5.4 million to 16.5 million and he has tried to ensure that they understand that the catchment area for the Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board's population is underestimated, as so many homeless people have no fixed address and are not being picked up on the census. He noted that, in his time as MPP, there have been 47 visits to Thunder Bay from Ministers and the Premier.

Council then addressed some of their concerns with MPP Holland, including the current, unfair funding formula for the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF). MPP Holland is well aware of the issues in this regard and has been speaking with the Minister of Finance and the Treasury Board about the concerns. It is not as simple as changing one funding formula, but they are looking into it.

The recent announcement made at Fire Con in Thunder Bay, regarding the supply of fire trucks in 17 unorganized communities was discussed. MPP Holland noted that he understands Council's concerns in this regard as we neighbour unorganized communities. These communities are receiving this equipment for free when there is no funding for Municipalities to purchase any new equipment, whether it be for the Fire Department or the Roads Department, which is a huge expense on our tax base. He has been pushing for the restrictions of the infrastructure monies to be opened up to allow for the purchase of rolling stock and will keep advocating as they head into next year's budget.

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The safety of Highway 11/17 from Kakabeka Falls to Kenora was discussed. MPP Holland noted that the government has increased the Highway standards and according to the statistics, the accidents have decreased. In regard to the driver training, he has been advocating for a National Standard for consistency in driver training, as drivers trained in other jurisdictions are not prepared for the winter conditions when they come into Northwestern Ontario. The Opposition Party is advocating against companies training their own drivers. MPP Holland will not support this as it would eliminate the opportunity for trainer facilitators who can do training on site. As an example, the volunteer fire department training programs would not be allowed.

Funding for bringing natural gas into the Township was discussed. The Township of Conmee has also tried in the past, to bring natural gas into their community. The project would be cost prohibited, as Enbridge would have to tunnel under the Kaministiquia River, and the customer base would not support the expense. MPP Holland noted that we need to continue to lobby the Federal Government to drop the carbon tax, as we have no choice but to use fuel in Northwestern Ontario.

The Respiratory Syncytial Virus vaccine was discussed. Currently only those in long-term care or senior homes can get the vaccination for free while everyone else must pay \$300. Council expressed their concern that there are a lot of seniors who cannot afford this cost and it could become a burden on the hospitals with an influx of the illness. MPP Holland will look further into this and will get back to Council on the matter.

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) University and the resolution from the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA), to be discussed further on tonight's agenda, was discussed. The resolution recognizes the urgent need for physicians in Northern Ontario. MPP Holland noted that this matter is also high on his radar. He has recently spoken with Minister Dunlop, Minister of Colleges, and Universities, in great detail in this regard. Dr. Verma, President, Vice Chancellor, Dean and CEO of NOSM University does excellent work and has a great vision for the program. He is hoping for a positive outcome. 50% of the graduates are going into family practice.

MPP Holland was thanked for what he has done for the region so far. He informed Council that if they have concerns that they would like him to move forward to government to send a 30-second pitch and he will get a meeting setup with the appropriate Minister for further discussions.

Council noted their concern for the push for electric vehicles and the shortage of available power if everyone moved to these vehicles.

Council's concern of Provincial funding for First Nations housing was noted, as they feel that it should be a federal responsibility. MPP Holland commented that the province has stepped up to address the shortage of Federal funding, which is now causing other problems such as mental health and addiction, and the provision of services. The funding will help the First Nation communities so that they can treat their own residents and prevent the need to come to Thunder Bay, taking them away from their support services in their home communities. There will be \$40 million of additional funding for housing for supportive and assisted living for those coming out of incarceration or addiction services. MPP Holland has recently met with the Thunder Bay Police Services and received positive input and is also looking to speak with Superior North Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to see what changes they feel could be made, as they are both first on scene and know the issues that they deal with every day. He would also like to follow up and measure the outcomes of the changes in real time to see if things are working or if they need to continue to make changes. MPP Holland's main focus is to work with the frontline workers to see where they feel the system can be improved. The current funding is being distributed to several different agencies, which then thins out the pot. He would like to know if it is going to the right places.

Council asked MPP Holland what his most difficult and most positive experiences have been in his roll of MPP. He replied that the most difficult is balancing his time. He knew

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it would be a lot of work, but he has to realize his limitations. The most positive is that Northwestern Ontario is on the cusp of great changes and he wants to be there to make sure we are ready for the opportunities that are coming. The government is committed to Northwestern Ontario. The Premier, the Deputy Premier, and two Ministers were in Thunder Bay last week.

MPP Holland requested that Council send emails or call if they have any concerns as he cannot advocate if he isn't aware of their concerns. MPP Holland left the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Mr. Johnson, Road Superintendent, was welcomed to the table. A Road Department update and roadwork in general was discussed. The Whitefish River bank stabilization project was completed in four areas last week. Rock was purchased and delivered to the sites and the Township rented an excavator, with our own operator placing the rock. Mr. Johnson would still like to speak with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry regarding his concerns with the river erosion. The excavator has now been moved to the Disposal Site to do some cleanup and to dig a new hole. A line locate has been requested for Smart Road to start ditching soon. He will also be doing some brushing where needed. The employees are getting the equipment ready for winter and have finished getting the tarp roller installed.

The construction of Shop B is continuing. The electrician has to install the HVAC system and reconnect the generator. The furnace contractor will be coming to reconnect the furnace.

It was noted that the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) have been on Loghrin Road a few times now, as per Council's request, in regard to the concern with speeders.

Council asked about the digital sign in front of the office, as it has been off and on for some time. An electrician came to look at it, but unfortunately when he came to look at it it was working so he couldn't trace the problem. Council would like to have administration ask the sign company to come out and look at it.

Mr. Johnson was thanked for attending and left the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

The Administration and Roads Voucher was reviewed, and it was

3. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND ROADS VOUCHER #2023-17 DATED OCTOBER 10, 2023 TOTTALLING \$47,744.39 BE APPROVED AND PAID.**

Carried

The Financial Statements for September 30, 2023, were unavailable.

Resolutions for endorsement were read as follows:

- a) Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) regarding support for sustainable funding to NOSM University to address the urgent need for health human resources in Northern Ontario and it was

4. Moved by Bishop Racicot  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**WHEREAS THAT THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR RECOGNIZES THE URGENT NEED FOR PHYSICIANS IN NORTHERN ONTARIO AS IT IS EXPERIENCING A SHORTAGE OF TRAINED PHYSICIANS AND SPECIALIST PHYSICIANS;**

**AND WHEREAS LIFE EXPECTANCY OF NORTHERN RESIDENTS IS MORE THAN TWO YEARS LOWER THAN THE ONTARIO AVERAGE, AND THAT MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS ARE AT A 4X HIGHER RATE;**

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**AND WHEREAS ONE IN EIGHT NORTHERN RESIDENTS DOES NOT HAVE ACCESS TO A FAMILY DOCTOR AND MANY MUST TRAVEL LONG DISTANCES TO ACCESS HEALTH-CARE SERVICES REPRESENTING THE FAILURE OF HEALTH CARE IN NORTHERN ONTARIO;**

**AND WHEREAS COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN ONTARIO REQUIRE ACCESS TO EQUITABLE HEALTH CARE, ESPECIALLY UNDERSERVED RURAL, INDIGENOUS, AND FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITIES;**

**AND WHEREAS NOSM UNIVERSITY'S CURRENT BASE FUNDING RATES HAVE NOT BEEN INCREASED SUFFICIENTLY TO ACCOMMODATE GROWTH AND EXPANSION;**

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF UNPRECEDENTED MEDICAL EXPANSION FOR NOSM UNIVERSITY'S MEDICAL PROGRAMS, THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR STRONGLY REQUEST THAT THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT GRANT NOSM UNIVERSITY'S REQUEST FOR A PERMANENT INCREASE IN ANNUAL BASE FUNDING OF \$4.0 MILLION BEFORE THE END OF THIS FISCAL YEAR SO IT CAN CONTINUE TO DELIVER ON THE MANDATE THAT WAS ORIGINALLY ESTABLISHED BY THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE NEEDS OF NORTHERN MUNICIPALITIES.**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT A COPY OF THIS MOTION BE FORWARDED TO PREMIER DOUG FORD, MINISTER OF HEALTH AND DEPUTY PREMIER SYLVIA JONES, MINISTER OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES JILL DUNLOP, MPPS GREG RICKFORD, VIC FEDELI, GEORGE PIRIE, ROSS ROMANO, KEVIN HOLLAND, ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES OF ONTARIO, NORTHERN ONTARIO SCHOOL OF MEDICINE UNIVERSITY, FEDERATION OF NORTHERN ONTARIO MUNICIPALITIES, NORTHERN ONTARIO ACADEMIC MEDICINE ASSOCIATION AND THE LEADERS OF THE OPPOSITION PARTIES OF ONTARIO.**

Carried

- b) City of Pickering regarding a Request to Abandon Greenbelt Development was filed.
- c) Town of Stouffville regarding Illegal Land Use Enforcement was filed.
- d) Town of Wasaga Beach regarding Illegal Car Rally – Provincial Task Force was filed.
- e) Catherine Fife, MPP Waterloo requesting support for Bill 21, Fixing Long-Term Care Amendment Act (Till Death Do Us Part), 2022. It was

- 5. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT THE RESOLUTION FROM CATHERINE FIFE, MPP WATERLOO, REQUESTING SUPPORT FOR BILL 21, FIXING LONG-TERM CARE AMENDMENT ACT, 2022 BE ENDORSED.**

Carried

- f) Municipality of Bluewater regarding Childcare Availability in Ontario and it was

- 6. Moved by Carly Torkkeli  
Seconded by J. Sobolta

**THAT THE RESOLUTION FROM THE MUNICIPALITY OF BLUEWATER ADDRESSING CRITICAL ISSUES AND CHILDCARE AVAILABILITY IN ONTARIO BE ENDORSED.**

Carried

Correspondence was read as follows:

- a) Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) – NOMA Board Meeting Summary Report for September 27, 2023.

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- b) Thunder Bay District Health Unit - Media Release regarding the launch of fall flu and COVID-19 vaccine campaign. The Respiratory Syncytial Virus Prophylaxis and the cost of the vaccine was once again discussed. It was suggested that perhaps a resolution in this regard could be brought to the next meeting for Council's consideration. Councillor Crane will look into this further.

The balance of the correspondence was passed around the table.

Under Old Business, Council discussed

- a) Update regarding Tbaytel and the lightning strike that caused damage to the Township Office. The Clerk-Treasurer reported on her conversation with Tbaytel's Finance Department. Tbaytel did not make an insurance claim for the lightning strike for their own equipment. The Clerk-Treasurer informed them of the damage that the Township received as a result of the strike. As well Council's concerns of the ground not working were expressed. They reassured the Clerk-Treasurer that there are strict regulations concerning the safety of the towers and they do meet these regulations. Regarding a request for compensation, it was noted that this would have to be brought to higher management and he would get back to me.
- b) Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) letter regarding Responding to the Housing Affordability Task Force's Recommendations. The List of 74 Housing Affordability Task Force recommendations was reviewed, as per the Ministry's request to prioritize Council's top five recommendations. Council did not feel that any of the recommendations were a priority at this time and no comment will be submitted.
- c) Update on current location of natural gas in Kakabeka Falls. The Clerk-Treasurer confirmed that as per Council's comments at the last meeting, Enbridge Gas ends at Clergue Street in Kakabeka Falls and does not go into the Kakabeka Falls Provincial Park.

Under New Business, Council discussed

- a) Report to Council regarding Chief Building Official Position. While Mr. Tempelman is in the position of Intern Building Official, his work was under the guidance of Mr. Yanishewski. Mr. Yanishewski is no longer willing to hold this position. Council would like Mr. Tempelman to continue in the role with a commitment in writing as to when he will complete the training required. Council would also like the Clerk-Treasurer to reach out to the Municipality of Neebing to see how they are dealing with this situation as well, as they provided the payment for the training. A new By-law will be brought to Council appointing Mr. Tempelman as CBO at the next meeting.
- b) Ontario Provincial Police – Municipal Policing Bureau regarding the 2024 Annual Billing Statement Package for the Township of O'Connor. The 2024 Estimated OPP Cost for the Township of O'Connor is \$72,441.

Under Further New Business, Councillor Crane read an email that he had received from the Thunder Bay District Municipal Association (TBDML) asking for photos of why we love the Township and asking for Council to share one thing working well in our municipality or just the culture of working together. Council discussed options as to what to submit. Pictures will be looked for expressing community fellowship. Council would like to relay that we live up to the Township's Motto, "Country Living at its Best" and provide photos of peaceful setting, nature, respect for the community and others, gardens, etc. Councillor Torkkeli will follow up on this.

For information purposes, no building permits have been approved since the last meeting. It was

7. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Bishop Racicot

**THAT THE COUNCIL MEETING ADJOURN TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO  
BE HELD ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2023 AT 7:00 P.M.  
TIME BEING: 9:17 P.M.**

Carried

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Mayor

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Clerk-Treasurer