

Caledon delegation focuses on planning, transit, and more at AMO conference

By **Zachary Roman**

Mayor Allan Thompson, accompanied by members of Caledon Council, recently visited Ottawa.

While Canada's capital is a popular tourist destination, the trip they took was all business.

Thompson and Councillors Lynn Kiernan, Johanna Downey, Christina Early, Jennifer Innis and Tony Rosa attended the Association of Municipalities of Ontario's (AMO) annual conference in Ottawa from August 14 to 17.

There, they brought forward Council-approved positions on the following topics: Securing a Caledon-Vaughan GO Line; directing local planning matters; supporting municipal action on climate change; developing a framework for municipal financial stability; investing in public infrastructure, specifically roads, servicing, and stormwater; and ensuring access to affordable high-speed internet.

AMO is a non-profit organization that represents nearly all of the 444 municipalities in Ontario.

The goal of its yearly conference is to connect municipal leaders with provincial ministers and opposition parties, so the municipal leaders can bring their issues to their attention.

Thompson said he and the Caledon delegation brought pressing issues with them to the conference, including Caledon's need to be able to direct its own planning.

"This forum gave us the opportunity to discuss our needs and priorities with our provincial partners and provide a local lens," said Thompson. "We benefit greatly when we share our priorities and work together to advance what is most important to us as a Town."

Thompson was not immediately available for an interview about AMO, though he did post a reflection on the conference on his personal blog. There, he wrote that he's been attending AMO conferences for the better part of 20 years. In that time, he said he's led delegations and meetings, asked tough questions of provincial leaders, and came home with some wins and some disappointments.

Mayor Thompson explained this year's AMO conference was the first one to be held in person since 2019 due to the pandemic. He thanked the members of Council who attended with him, for taking the time away from their families and communities for the big conference.

"I'm proud of all we accomplished together," wrote Thompson. "As a team, we met and sat down at a table with Minister Piccini, Minister Mulroney and Parliamentary Assistant Sandhu. I also had the opportunity to meet with Federal Minister Gudie Hutchings on the broadband expansion file which I'm hopeful we will see a positive outcome on soon."

When it came time for Thompson to leave AMO, he said he felt a bittersweet feeling as he knew it would be the last time he'd be there representing the community of Caledon.

"When I look back on this conference and the many others, what I know for certain is that building strong relationships with the Provincial government and connecting with municipal colleagues from across Ontario is an important part of the work we do," wrote Thompson.

The Town's website elaborates further on the positions Caledon's political leaders brought with them to AMO.

In the case of the Caledon-Vaughan GO Line, their goal is to support the line's business case to completion, and include Caledon-Vaughan rail service in the next Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan Update ? with an in-service date of before 2041.

With regards to local planning, the delegation sought equity in control of planning matters with respect to growth, settlement areas, boundary expansions, transit areas, and employment lands. The delegation also asked for investment in Caledon's infrastructure, such as roads, transit, and active transportation.

Caledon's delegation also advocated for accelerating the allocation of broadband funding to address broadband gaps in Caledon, to ensure affordable broadband rates for residents and businesses.

For more information on AMO and the Town of Caledon's advocacy efforts, residents can visit caledon.ca/en/government/advocacy.