

Local Municipalities Appeal to Province for Help with Infrastructure Costs

Township of Georgian Bluffs – April 25, 2024

Yesterday morning, representatives from across Grey County attended a delegation at the Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA) Conference in Toronto to make the case for additional funding for critical municipal infrastructure.

The delegation, comprised of Elected Officials and Senior Staff members, shared joint concerns from Georgian Bluffs, Southgate, West Grey, Owen Sound, and Hanover with the Ministry of Infrastructure. The focus was on the financial capacity needed to maintain and upgrade aging roads, bridges, and water systems as they reach the end of their lifecycle.

Georgian Bluffs noted it has bridges nearing 100 years old in need of repairs and replacement, and 40-year-old water systems due for significant upgrades. The City of Owen Sound reported an annual deficit of more than \$22 million to maintain existing service levels, while growth in both Hanover and Southgate has escalated the need for substantial wastewater work and increased capacity.

Without provincial support, municipalities rely solely on property taxes to fund repairs and replacements. The delegation with the ministry hopes to highlight the struggles municipalities face with their aging infrastructure, and the need for additional funding to support maintenance, repairs, and replacements.

The Ontario Good Roads Association, established in 1894, supports municipalities in managing roads and related infrastructure. Its annual conference, held this week in Toronto, is expected to draw delegates from across Ontario, offering opportunities for learning, professional development, and interaction with provincial ministries. The joint delegation from Georgian Bluffs, Southgate, West Grey, Owen Sound and Hanover was scheduled for Wednesday, April 24th in the late morning.

Photo Cutline

Delegation attendees pictured from left to right: Georgian Bluffs CAO Niall Loble, West Grey Director of Public Works Geoff Aitken, Hanover Deputy Mayor Warren Dickert, West Grey Councillor Joyce Nuhn, Hanover Director of Public Works Ron Cooper, Parliamentary Assistant PA Sandhu, Grey County Warden/Southgate Mayor Brian Milne, Georgian Bluffs Mayor Sue Carleton, Southgate Manager of Public Works Jim Ellis.

Quotes

"Our municipalities are facing overwhelming costs related to aging infrastructure. We have two closed bridges and water pipes that need to be upgraded at a cost of \$11 million to the Township. Uniting with



our neighbours to present our shared perspective to the minister strengthens our call for provincial support in managing essential infrastructure for all our communities. We hope today's meeting will highlight the struggles we face with aging infrastructure, and the high costs associated with maintaining it." - Mayor Sue Carleton, Georgian Bluffs

"As a joint delegation, we emphasize the critical need for provincial support to complete essential improvements for key infrastructure in our respective municipalities that is necessary for our communities to grow and progress." – Mayor Sue Paterson, Hanover

"Municipalities are required to provide expensive water, wastewater, and transportation infrastructure that are needed for our communities to thrive. We support the request to the Ontario Government for increased, fair, and consistent provincial funding to help pay for these services." Mayor Ian Boddy, Owen Sound

"Southgate is one of the fastest growing municipalities in the County of Grey, and the infrastructure needs relating to such rapid growth is staggering, along with the issue of aging infrastructure. Simply standing up houses does not, in itself, create a community. Schools, medical facilities, recreation, roads, emergency response and many other services help create a complete place to call home. We need help to provide the infrastructure support required for all of these community needs." – Mayor Brian Milne, Southgate

"The Municipality of West Grey is advocating for additional funding to support ongoing infrastructure capacity. Collaborating with neighbouring municipalities enhances the effectiveness of our message and emphasizes the importance we place on infrastructure projects. These projects are essential for the growth of our expanding community by increasing water system capacity to support housing development." – Mayor Kevin Eccles, West Grey

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